

**A FEW THOUGHTS
ABOUT LIFE
GOOD NEWS, FOR SURE**

I have found a map that helps me see
where I am and the way through
this stormy wilderness.

We have to do our own thinking.
Ideas are the tools we think with.
Even if we don't agree with them,
They can be a valuable comparison.
I hope these ideas will be helpful.

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A man works up a sweat, in spite of the cold wind, when the trail is so soft. The calm peace and warmth to relax in, the hum of the teakettle, the smell of cooking, and best of all the friendly voice and embrace, were a welcome contrast to the lonely hours of tough going on the stormy trail.

Sipping a steaming cup, I gazed through the window. The trees, bending in the violent wind, were mere shadowy forms seen briefly between gusts of swirling snow. Old trails were buried. The snowshoes of lynx and martin, of rabbit and ptarmigan, as well as those of man, sank deep in the new-fallen snow.

In time the snow would settle. New trails would be made above the old. Travel would be easier again, until the next storm. But spring will come! Of old trails, only the memories and character developed on them will remain. For some, their challenge will have meant increased

vitality and new appreciations. For others...

My mind wandered up the frozen river, to the distant Eskimo village, to the wooden casket made by neighbors to just fit what the old man's spirit had recently left. In it were the earthly remains of a story teller, one who knew, word for word, the old stories that contained the history and wisdom of his people.

In his time, they were forced to take an unfamiliar trail. As for so many of us in these times, that age-long constant, change, came to them with hasty stride. This rupture in the flow of their history meant a difficult time for them.

They were caught up in the advance of a technologically stronger people. With them came confusing ideas, conflicting values and devastating diseases.

However, eventually there were some compensations. I heard a man remark: We haven't had a funeral all winter and all the older people are now getting a check each

month. He remembered when death was a common occurrence and living conditions so difficult they couldn't take care of the old people.

We are so accustomed to the marvels of recent time that we tend to take them for granted, even though we know they are relatively new in history. But I wonder what impression this thoughtful man, born into a primitive culture, had as he saw the rapid coming of enforced peace between tribes; a written language; modern tools, weapons, homes, schools, hospitals and other equipment; security from local famines; new ideas about life; a much expanded knowledge of the world; and much more, even huge machines that fly through the air and radio that carries the voice instantly to distant places, giving messages such as the one informing me that he had passed on.

But, in spite of all these recent impressive developments, some things haven't changed. Happiness is still marred

by strife and injustice, hunger and sickness, injury and sorrow, and none of us is secure from them. The old man passed on, as people have done down through the ages, leaving his wife and family in lonesome grief. They knew the same feelings people have always felt.

There have been changes of circumstance but the basic human experiences have remained the same. What is the meaning of generation after generation, down through the ages, being here for a while, experiencing enjoyment and suffering, learning to think and take initiative, then making way for others to do the same.

What is in store for me as I make my uneasy way through this experience, in quest of secure satisfaction for my needs and desires? Is there any real hope that I can find lasting satisfaction and happiness?

Disillusioning experiences came while I was still young. I grew up during

the Depression before World War II with its frustrating poverty. I was in combat in that war and saw what it did to people. War time travel also let me see the condition of some of the poorer people of the world. What is the reason for all this cruelty, poverty, oppression and misery that is such a prominent part of man's experience? Why do we have desires that are so often frustrated? Is our sense of justice based on a reality that actually provides for each of us to get what we rightfully should? In spite of suffering, I have seen surprising fortitude, generosity, hope and even happiness when it might be least expected. These experiences brought into focus some basic questions about our existence. What is the sense of it all?

After surviving combat in WWII I tried to find out why we exist and why we are so troubled and troublesome.

I found new ideas in philosophical and historical writings but no answer.

So I turned to religious writings. In one of these, the Bible, I found a reasonable account of our existence that fits us.

Genesis 1:26-27 says the Creator made us like Himself. We are not self-created but we are self-determined. However, we are intended to be friends and this is something we can learn to do. By leaving it up to us to learn to be friendly, in spite of tendencies to do otherwise; we are self-determined individuals responsible for qualifying for life or dieing by default.

Since our need for friends is a basic part of our nature and we are like the Creator this says he also wants friends. This is born out by His historic relationship to mankind and the fact that we are made with the ability to be friends. This was the key to seeing why we exist and why we are the way we are. It was like seeing a campfire that guided me

through a dark swamp to a comfortable camp.

The earth is our birthplace where the power of the Creator is not overwhelmingly obvious. Here we learn about good and evil. These two conditions enable us to make choices and be responsible individuals capable of friendship; we can be friends even if we aren't equal in every way.

We don't need to be told how to be friendly. It is done by learning to love our neighbors as ourselves. The importance of this is indicated in Matthew 22:39. That inner guide is rightly called the Golden Rule. Love wants others to have what is good for them. Only people who develop this friendly attitude can be trusted with eternal life. For in a society where everyone can be satisfied they all have to be considerate of the rights, needs, and feelings of everyone.

Love can be given to anyone if we are willing and self-disciplined enough to

do so (even if it is a spanking). Love encourages friendship. But, friendship is not like love in that it can only be felt for those we trust and appreciate.

So, if we are to be friends of the Creator, He not only needs to see we are becoming friendly but He also needs to show He is friendly.

In the Bible, we are told about what is being done to show He is friendly. It needs to be easy to see without His power being so overwhelming that we lose the freedom to choose.

This was done by Jesus, the Word, coming to live with us. He was a man that could be ignored or rejected. Even so He showed the authority, the love for us, the desire for our friendship, and the friendly nature of the Creator! So to further guarantee our freedom to choose, an alternative influence is provided.

Paul, the founder of Christianity, provides a subtle alternative that tends to obscure what Jesus taught. A comparison

of the ideas taught by Paul with those of Jesus, the Word, showed they were not the same. This gives us a choice. It seems to me that Paul could be one of those people Jesus talked about in MT 7:15-23.

Why are these conflicting ideas both in the Bible? If we think about it, without comparisons we can't be aware, think, appreciate good, make reasoned choices or be capable of friendship. So it is no wonder the Creator provided for this need when revealing His nature.

Two things that needed to happen when Jesus came were shown in the introduction to these scriptures.

One was for Adam and Eve, who represent mankind, to have a comparison and choice. Satan provided that. He was disguised as the most subtle creature in the garden. He said the Creator was not honest and encouraged Adam and Eve to disregard what He said.

The other one is the Creator's responsibility for the existence of sin and what He is doing about it. To begin with Adam and Eve had no experience with good and evil. They could only act according to the instincts given to them by the Creator. So the Creator was responsible for what they did when they ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It was only after learning about good and evil that they could make responsible choices and be individuals in their own right who could become friends.

Even though Adam and Eve could not be responsible for their childish rebellion they felt the results of doing so. That is the way we learn.

After realizing what they had done they no longer trusted each other and were afraid of the Creator. The feeling of separation, loneliness, and fear is associated with death. The Creator's warning actually happened. This was the

first evidence Adam and Eve had that the Creator was trustworthy!

After knowing about good and evil, Adam and Eve could and would be punished for the harmfulness they were responsible for. And also, if in the process of their life they didn't become willing to be friendly people they would eventually cease to exist as conscious beings. They were the same as dead until they demonstrated they could be trusted with life. And of course Adam and Eve represent all of us.

I don't see how being punished forever can be justified. Mt. 5:26 says it is not. Even so, death is permanent. Death is a reality.

However, Adam and Eve showed by what they did that they had changed. They both knew that the other one was feeling as uncomfortable as they were. So they each did something to make the other one feel more comfortable. They were practicing the Golden Rule and that

attitude made a renewed friendship possible. But they still feared the Creator and death. By practicing the Golden Rule they had, without knowing it, also made His friendship possible.

Seeing Adam and Eve being considerate of each other the Creator could trust them to be His friends, also.

His forgiveness and acceptance was shown by the skin coats given them. Unlike the partial cover of the leafy aprons the coats represented a full cover for their naked exposure to death.

Adam and Eve could blame the pain of their experience with evil on the Creator. But when He showed them, by the gift of skin coats, that it hurt Him too they could see it must be a necessity and not unfriendliness. Now they not only saw that the Creator is trustworthy but that He is also friendly. So it was that they saw Satan is a liar!

The Creator's hurt was shown by the death of the animals that gave the skins

for the coats. They had not been made with responsibility for themselves as we have. So being, in some way, still a part of their Creator their death was a fit symbol of His feeling when He was rejected and saw Adam and Eve being hurt by wrong doing. In real life this was shown by the suffering of Jesus. Friendship with us must be very important to the Creator!!

If in trying to gain friends to satisfy His needs, we were to be the only ones hurt how could we feel friendly toward the Creator? That thought helps me appreciate what happened. For sure Satan lied in saying the Creator is not trustworthy!

Our need for comparison and choice is why when Jesus came Satan was also there. But this time Paul was His front. The ideas of Paul could not have come from Jesus (see Galatians 1:11-12, 16-17). When compared with what Jesus taught Matthew and John by our usual

way of communicating they are wrong. It is Satan's job to foster such lies. They give us a choice!

In Romans 1:18-20 Paul says the nature of God can be plainly seen in the things made and His wrath is on people for ignoring it.

If there is a being responsible for everything, the good things are more than offset by their unequal distribution and by their often and arbitrary withdrawal. And the cruel suffering caused by predation, hunger, disease, accident, and natural catastrophes, to say nothing of the inhuman acts of people, certainly does not indicate a good Creator that we should worship as such. The only antidote for this is the Good News about the Creator, Jesus, the Word, demonstrated and proclaimed, and an understanding of our need for choices and appreciations.

Jesus said the Golden Rule is the basis for judgment. (Matthew 19:17-19 and 25:31-46)

Matthew 25:31-46 also shows the falseness of Paul's emphasis on faith. Neither group mentioned knew about Jesus so how could they have faith in Him? Yet those that practiced the Golden Rule were worthy of life! They practiced the values represented by Jesus and His name! We are judged by what we do, it shows the kind of people we are!

In Romans 5:12-19 Paul puts the blame for sin on Adam. This is saying the Creator isn't responsible for the existence of sin and suffering, we are. So we need His mercy etc. Hence, Christian theology.

If the Creator let one immature, ignorant man determine the fate of all mankind how can we trust Him. If He then sent a savior who came too late for many and then left the fate of others in the hands of immature people it would again show He is not a trustworthy friend. How can that be good news?

This wrong idea is the basis for Christian evangelism and missionary

work. Compare it to what Jesus, the Word, taught. He said living by the Golden Rule is the way to gain eternal life. That is something no one needs to be formally taught and if we fail we can justly be denied permanent life!

The real purpose for missionary work is to gain disciples in all nations. (Matthew 28:19) Baptism into a name that represents the values of the Creator is not a symbolic act. It means learning to live by the Golden Rule that sums up the teachings of Jesus so they can help rule in the next age. (Matthew 19:28)

The reason for Paul and Christianity having so much influence is due to the nature of choice. The main trend has to be wrong in order for us to make a deliberate choice to do what is right.

Paul's teachings are the biggest fraud in the world. This is not surprising because the coming of Jesus to show the friendly nature of the Creator is the most important event in history! It would take

a great and yet subtle alternative to protect our freedom to choose.

A closer look shows Paul's conversion and commission was not the way Jesus did such things. Part of Satan's job is to set up such fakes.

When it was time for the Creator to give a more complete revelation of Himself it was done by sending Jesus to be a man here with us. Because of this He was able to call His first disciples by talking to them man to man. They learned from and about Him by spending several years with Him. After all this why would Jesus turn much of His work over to Paul who had been trained by His enemies?

Mathew and John made written records of the life and teachings of Jesus. (Luke and Mark had only second hand accounts to go by. They were influenced by Paul.)

Having a good record we can know enough about Jesus so we too can be His disciples (John 17:20). Discipleship is

for anyone but responsibility is according to ability (Matthew 25:14-15). Matthew 23: 8-10 tells us this is an individual relationship. Disciples may tell about Him. (Matthew 28:19) But He is the only one who knows our capabilities and needs and can provide the experiences we need for our development.

I have been writing about what is happening in this age. However, this is only part of the work assigned to Jesus. He also is preparing for a world wide demonstration of the Creator's justification for making our birth place a place of so much suffering and tribulation.

One way He is doing this is by seeking and training disciples to help Him rule in the next and final age of the earth. (Revelations 20:1-10 and Matthew 19:28)

There is a common conception in our time that the environment people grow up in determines the kind of people they will become. If people become troublemakers it is because they had unsuitable

conditions to grow up in. This implies that if there is a Creator who is responsible for our situation He has given them a bum deal. Add this to all the other troubles of life on earth and it is hard to see how He can be good and trusted with our welfare from an ordinary point of view.

Of course this is barking up the wrong tree. If there were no evil influences and experiences there would be no “us” either. Having the choice between good and bad enables us to rise above the level of the animals and become self-determined with the dignity of being responsible people who may become trustworthy friends. Some people do so, even with a bum start in life, and others born with a silver spoon in their mouth fail to do so.

Of equal importance is the development of the appreciations that can only come from experience with evil as well as good. It is these feelings of appreciation that make life worthwhile.

In the next age this slander of the Creator will be shown to be unjustified.

For that demonstration to be valid the people will need to be the same as us. It seems to me the elect Jesus will send his angels to gather in Matthew 24:31. Our people who will be saved from death in the catastrophe that ends this age. They, like Noah's family at the time of the flood, will pioneer the earth after it is habitable following that cataclysm. Matthew 24:40-41 seems to indicate they will be people with basic skills.

This age will end with the most destructive cataclysm the world has ever experienced. (Revelations 16:18) It will prepare the world for a new system. Just before that happens, some worthy people will be taken out of harm's way to repopulate the world in the next age. (Matthew 24:31;40-41). To be meaningful, the demonstration provided in that age will need to be made by a continuation of humanity as we know it

now. Those taken out of harm's way were chosen from a class of people with basic survival skills. After the earth has recovered from the great catastrophe, it seems likely those first settlers will need those pioneering skills.

The people of that time will have a seemingly ideal world to live in. Jesus will rule the world with the help of resurrected people of proven integrity from all nations who have been His disciples in this age. It will of necessity be an iron-fisted rule when it comes to seeing that would-be troublemakers behave themselves. The Tempter, the ringleader of troublemakers, will be restrained until people have had time enough to grow up with good influences.

Then the Tempter will be allowed to ply his trade again. People will again have experience with evil and have a choice to make. The predominant choice will be to try to destroy the good situation that had been restraining their instinctive yen for

freedom to do as they pleased as much as possible regardless of long range consequences or harm to others.

This final demonstration will show clearly that it isn't bad influences or circumstances that cause people to be troublemakers. It will show that experience with evil is a temporary necessity that a good Creator is justified in allowing so we can appreciate a life that is good and be willing to maintain it.

Only by having a keen feeling of this world's troubles and doing what we can to ease them by learning to live by the Golden Rule can we be trusted with a good permanent life.

Nothing is Free

In order to be the Creator's friend we need to be able to stand with Him as a dignified person in our own right. To do that the least we have to do is repay Him

for what He invested in us to make it possible.

We can, and usually do, act as if these things are ours to do as we please with. But are they really ours if we can be deprived of them at any time? They are only ours to use to develop a friendly personality.

The more we can do for ourselves using basic materials when possible, the more we are individuals in our own right. By doing this, we can be less a part of an environmentally and socially destructive culture. This is all a part of living by the Golden Rule and in so doing, becoming friendly personalities.

A friendly personality is something we do own. This is true because: we have developed it by our will and initiative, we have paid for the resources used, and since it is worthy of eternal life, it will always be ours.

But how do we pay for what we use? The Creator wants our friendship enough

to make it worthwhile for Him to supply what is needed to make it possible. So we can repay Him by becoming trustworthy people who can be His friends!

From Existence to Life

In Matthew 19:16-30 tells about a wealthy young man who asked Jesus what good thing he could do to get eternal life. After Jesus identified Himself He told the man if he would have life to obey the commandments do not murder, commit adultery, steal, or give false witness; to honor his father and mother and to love his neighbor as himself.

The young man said he had done that and asked what more he should do.

Jesus told him if he would be perfect to sell his possessions, give to the poor and he would have treasure in Heaven then come to follow Him.

The young mans first question implied he thought he had life and he

wanted a permanent extension of it. Jesus reply indicated he didn't have life. He only had existence with a possibility of gaining life by obeying those commandments. The young mans statement about obeying the commandments showed he didn't understand how he had failed so he was told in detail.

Being told to sell his possessions and give to the poor as much as said it rightfully belonged to the poor. By taking more than his share the wealthy man was being heedless of the Golden Rule and guilty of theft.

Also a culture that encourages such a thing is faulty. To be a willing part of an unfair culture is to be unfair. So he was told in effect to come out of it by following Jesus. See Revelations 18:4-7. If he did it would be the perfection of the relationship with the Creator we are designed for.

Unlike that young man, we can't be disciples of Jesus the man. Even so, we can be his disciples by learning to practice his teachings.

We have to live in our present circumstances until we can do better. But we can be willing to see and try to avoid doing harmful and unfair things as part of living by the Golden Rule. Debt and careless spending are anchors to an irresponsible involvement and perpetuates the system.

Why is honoring father and mother an essential command? It seems to me this command is referring to a major institution. In spite of the failings of some parents the family is the basic cultural unit that children are born into. It has the primary responsibility for raising children. It goes without saying that the command means for parents to be honorable so they can be honored. If parents do not act honorably children are less likely to learn good values and self-

discipline. So the culture produces fewer and fewer friendly people.

I wonder if the young man going away sad instead of defiant meant he was going to do what Jesus told him to do. If so he would be feeling grief because of the loss of what had been very important to him.

After the young man left Jesus told His disciples it is very hard for a wealthy man to enter the kingdom of heaven, even so it is possible with His help.

Peter was listening when the young man was told he could have treasure in heaven. So he asked what he and the other disciples would have. Jesus said they would help rule in the next age and have much more than they left.

It seems to me the very large compensation the disciples were to receive could come by them having the affection of the people they govern. It could be almost like a family.

The story about the first being last may have been given to keep the first disciples from feeling superior to new comers. I wonder if it was told in expectation of the young mans return. Seems likely.

A summary in a larger perspective

The Creator has made us enough like Himself so that we can become His friends and companions. (John 15:15)

We are not God but we are in many ways like Him. We are self determined. That means we are our own god to the extent that we determine our own fate. We can become people who can be trusted with eternal life or we can fail to do so and be punished for wrong doing and die.

Being like the Creator we have a capability for good or evil that no other

form of life on earth has. This means we are also capable of being responsible and must learn to live responsibly if we are to live on.

This is more than ever true in our enlightened time. We can see far back in time through our written history. We can be aware of what is happening all over the globe through modern communications. We can see how we influence the world and its inhabitants because of our science.

We can know why we exist and what our responsibilities and privileges are because of the revelations found in the Bible. Also because of them we can see the broad outline of the future to the end of the history of the earth and on into eternity. And this includes our own personal history!

The Creator is a friendly being who wants friendly companions. He is building a Kingdom with our help in which that desire will be satisfied. By becoming worthy of life in the Kingdom

we are helping build it, for friendship is a voluntary relationship the Creator can't just make, yet it is a vital part.

Compared to this concept, the Christian formula for salvation is self-centered and undignified.

I am amazed that even I can help satisfy the Creator's desire for friends and have his friendship!

With all this perspective available we have a tremendous responsibility for what we do, each according to his ability. It is foolish to let ourselves be blinded to the big long range perspective by the values of the majority of people. They are on the road that leads to the wide gate. (Matthew 7:13)

Life is only for those who take the narrow road to the small gate.

The only thing of real value for us is to gain never ending life as friendly companions of the Creator.

We are kingdom builders that tend to build our individual kingdoms as grandly

as our ability and circumstances allow. But we are also intelligent social beings.

The wealth of our culture that makes it possible for so many of us to have a wastefully high standard of living has come at the expense of the suffering of many people.

If we use more than we need we are guilty of theft from those people. We are taking more than our share and this lack of consideration for the welfare of others is a breach of the friendliness that qualifies us for life.

We are each responsible for living by the Golden Rule within the framework of the perspectives and opportunities we have available.

It can guide us to a satisfying fullness of life with the Creator if we heed it.

In trying to understand what life is all about, this is what I have come to see.

One Last Thought

During the more than fifty years these thoughts have been evolving there has been a development of sentimental appreciation for the Creator as Father and Friend. This has brought about a desire to try to live in a way that I won't be a disappointment to Him.

I'm grateful that Jesus came to show the Creators love and friendliness! There is no greater news, for sure!! I'm awestruck when I consider the significance and cost of that message.

Oliver

MY MAP AND MY COMPASS

This poem, sent long ago by an older friend, has been changed in a clumsy attempt to say, or at least hint at, the values I try to live by. It is not perfect, but it is a reminder I like.

I've traveled about a bit in my time,
Of troubles I've known a few.
Have found it better every time in every
 clime,
To Paddle my own canoe.

Needn't carry this out to the letter,
There can be room for two.
It would be better if neither's a fretter
To Paddle a shared canoe.

“White water ahead: we may soon be
dead”.

This may sure enough be true.
But I'll not live in dread: I'll look ahead
And Paddle a portage canoe.

My wants are few and I fret not at all
For I've no debts coming due.
I can stand tall, free of another man's call
When I Paddle my own canoe.

Freedom means decisions and even the
little ones lead
Or fail to lead to life anew.
Wisdom is to let everyone's needs guide
our deeds
When paddling a contrary canoe.

So living by the Golden Rule is the key,
To the gate I'd go through.
If that I'll see, honest I must be.
And Paddle a friendly canoe.

To keep friendship alive, forgiveness we
sure need
When ignorance and bias guide what we do.
One who knows our breed says learn from a
wrong deed
To Paddle a trim canoe.

Even so, since I'm responsible none can
say
I shan't suffer for what I rue.
It's better to pay while here I stay
And Paddle a hopeful canoe.

Also there's something I can take through
the gate.

Appreciations learned from life's ado.
So I'll accept my fate without any hate
When paddling a cranky canoe.

Wind and current don't ask what'll
please,
And wild storms plague me and you.
This life's not for ease so I'll face the
breeze
And Paddle a battered canoe.

There'll be no pain or sorrow in yonder
life.
The memory of them will do
To Keep appreciation rife. Hence no need
for strife
When we'll Paddle a perfect canoe.

To please the Good Friend is my will
He knows what's best to do.
Stormy or pleasant, and still, I'll paddle
till
I'm freed of this old canoe.

'Till then He'll see I can find what I need
And from within wells up a thank you.
But everyone must feed, so I'll take heed
To Paddle a frugal canoe.

Becoming considerate and trustworthy
here
Will show that we are true.
He's made His goodness clear though it
cost dear
So we can go with His canoe.

To be a friend of the very best Friend
Is the plan we're called to.
There's no better end for the time we
 spend
At Paddling a frail canoe.

DO WE DARE TO SEE

Earth wheeling through space
Tears streaming from its face!
How long can this age last?
The end is approaching fast!
For sure nothing is free,
As for sure we will soon see!

Man was put with plants and animals to be
 free,
As is sure enough easy to see.
Cain, rebel, murder, cast off the land,
A city built with men of like brand.
Man without land a dependant or thief is he,
Without direct access to needs this must be.

This is not the way it is supposed to be,
As is sure enough easy to see.
If by choice we live in a city,
We're part of a destructive system and
 guilty.
Do your best to get free,
For that's not where we should be!

WHAT I SEE CHANGES ME

An old man with a dog
Leaning back against a log

Watchin' murky waves roll in
Made by bias, folly and sin.

Man on a senseless rampage
Wasting the privileges of this age,

Thinking of what I have and haven't done
For sure, that's not much fun,

Feeling gloomy and full of dread.
Much afraid of what's ahead.

Then I remember
I'm a family member

Father is looking on without a frown
I don't want to let him down,

So I'll hang in there
He'll see it all ends up fair.

An old man not quite beat,
Sure enough He's on his feet.

Tho' walking with halting pace
There's a peaceful look on his face.

Yah! For sure!

– *Oliver Cameron*