

June 2002

The Meyer Minute for June 3, 2002

Keyword: Symbol

The 50th anniversary of Queen Elizabeth's coronation is being celebrated these days throughout the British Commonwealth. Media coverage of the celebration includes the predictable waste of time about the utility of a monarchy in this day and age.

"Waste of time," I say, because the importance of the monarchy is its symbolism. You remember the homage paid to the Queen Mother at her funeral? That was because her steadfastness during the Blitz symbolized what Churchill had predicted would be Britain's "finest hour."

As you go about the duties of a new week, think about the symbolism that goes with your role in life. A father or a mother is not just a biological automaton. A parent symbolizes both society's and God's interest in raising a useful new generation.

A pastor or priest symbolizes, should symbolize, all that is good, right and holy as God deals with us through His church.

A president, a queen, symbolizes the aspirations of a nation.

So carry yourself well today. There's more to you than meets the eye!

The Meyer Minute for June 4, 2002

The Israelis and Palestinians, India and Pakistan, Al-Quaida and terrorism...the world is a dangerous place.

Let's put this in biblical perspective. Jesus spoke about the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in a way that foreshadows the end of the world, the day of God's Judgment. "When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places, and famines. These are the beginning of birth pains." (Mark 13:6-8)

The perspective Jesus lays on us is not end-time speculation, like the "Left Behind" series. "No one knows about that day or hour... Be on guard! Be alert!" (32, 33) Instead, he invites our perspective to be on Him. "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away." (31)

So put world news in His eternal perspective. As Jesus says, "Be faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life" (Revelation 2:10)

The Meyer Minute for June 5, 2002

It started June 4th and concluded on June 6th, 1942. Today's "Minute" commemorates the 60th anniversary of the Battle of Midway.

Midway is located 1,200 miles northwest of Hawaii. The United States Navy had learned that Japan intended to capture Midway to serve as an outpost in the war. As a large contingent of the Japanese navy steamed toward Midway, it was ambushed by forces under the command of Admiral Chester Nimitz. American losses were heavy: one aircraft carrier and 150 planes. Torpedo Squadron 8, flying outdated planes, lost all but one of its 30 pilots and gunners. But their sacrifice allowed higher-flying Dauntless dive-bombers to attack. Japan's navy was crippled for the rest of the war, losing 4 of its 9 aircraft carriers. The Battle of Midway turned the tide of the war.

The generation of our parents and grandparents was willing to face the horrors of war so that you and I could live as we do today, in freedom and in hope. May we prove ourselves worthy of the trust given to us by those who fought and died 60 years ago at Midway.

The Meyer Minute for June 6, 2002

I host a weekly TV show for Lutheran Hour Ministries called "On Main Street." Yesterday I taped an interview with Morton Kondracke, a well-known political commentator. Mr. Kondracke has written [Saving Millie](#), a book about his wife's 15-year struggle with Parkinson's Disease. It's really a book about love.

Daily duties too often shove love aside. You have this job that needs to be done, that worry that sours your disposition, your need to be alone. We don't renounce our love for those closest to us; we just put it aside. "I'll make it up to you tomorrow," we say. It reminds me of a restaurant ad I saw in the south: All meals free...tomorrow. If you keep waiting 'til tomorrow to show love, you'll starve yourself.

"I have learned from watching Milly and her friends share joy and woe that love is like a bank account. When much is put in, much is there to be drawn out" (p. 35).

So make a deposit of love...today. When you do that often enough, tomorrow will bring your return, the nurture of love.

The Meyer Minute for June 7, 2002

I often get agitated when my seminary students hand in their sermons. "Who in the real world can understand this stuff? Your sermon is full of church jargon. What you say is true, but it's jargon. It doesn't communicate."

Oh, I'm afraid the jargon will fly this Sunday! The word "mercy" occurs in several readings. In western civilization mercy often means feeling sorry for someone who is

worse off than you are. But the Bible is largely an eastern, Hebraic book, not a western book. In the Bible mercy means acts of loving kindness that people in a relationship do for one another. Mercy in the Bible is not feeling but action.

Jesus says in Matthew 9:13, "I desire mercy, not sacrifice." God wants action. In church He wants your head and heart active as He gives you His mercies, His acts of loving kindness. Then He wants you to go out and show mercy to others. Don't just feel for them. Do something for them. Real, sincere worship results in good works.

There, now I'm happy. One word of church jargon explained.

The Meyer Minute for June 10, 2002

I was stunned when I read the headline on the morning of October 17, 2000. Missouri Governor Mel Carnahan had been killed in a plane crash.

The official report was issued last week. Randy Carnahan, the governor's son and an experienced pilot, had reported that an instrument called the "attitude indicator" was not working properly. Compounding that problem, the weather was awful. Investigators concluded that the pilot became disoriented. Although he still had other instruments he could rely on, he trusted his own senses. The same thing happened in the tragic death of John Kennedy, Jr. The pilots trusted their fallible senses...with fatal results.

"Your Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path" (Psalm 119:105). There will be plenty of times this week when you'll be tempted to fly by your senses, to follow your emotions. If your instincts were fail-safe, God wouldn't have bothered giving us the Bible. So fly by the instruments of Christian life. Fly by His commandments, by forgiveness, by holy living. And when you're disoriented, remember, "Thy word is truth" (John 17:17).

The Meyer Minute for June 11, 2002

Timothy McVeigh was executed a year ago today. As his final statement, the unrepentant McVeigh gave out the poem "Invictus," written by W.E. Henley in 1875.

Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the Pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears

Looms but the Horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds, and shall find, me unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul.

2000 years ago one repentant criminal said to an unrepentant criminal: “Do you not fear God?” Between them the Son of God was dying to pay the price for all our sins, great and small. Yet, only one criminal heard the promise, “Today you shall be with Me in paradise.” Only the one who repented was taken to heaven.

The Meyer Minute for June 12, 2002

“Tear down this wall!” 25 years ago today President Ronald Reagan stood at the Berlin Wall and challenged Soviet premier Mikhail Gorbachev, “Tear down this wall!”

There’s a piece of concrete the size of a fist in my office at home. It’s a part of that wall. “Where there is no vision, the people perish” (Proverbs 29:18). The President’s clearly articulated vision helped tear down that wall of hostility.

In the first century there was another wall of hostility, between Jews and Gentiles. St. Paul had a vision, a revelation from God. “Jesus Christ...is our peace. In His body He has made Jewish and non-Jewish people one by breaking down the wall of hostility that kept them apart. So He made peace. He came with the Good News of peace for you...” (Ephesians 2:14ff.)

The question for today: What wall of hostility stands between you and someone for whom Christ died? The challenge of Christ to you today is simple: Tear down this wall!

The Meyer Minute for June 14, 2002

“God Allows U-Turns” is a great collection of inspirational stories gathered by Allison Bottke. The following comes from Candace Carteen.

“By the time I was ten, I was totally ashamed of my father. All my friends called him names: Quasi-Modo, hunchback, monster.... My father was born with something called parastremmatic dwarfism. I hated to be seen with him. By the time I was seventeen I was blaming all my problems on my father.”

But U-turns happen. At the senior prom her friends told her how wonderful her dad was, how he always had time to listen to their problems.

When she graduated, she gave the valedictory speech. “Father, I owe you a big apology. I based my love for you on what I saw.... I forgot to look at the one part of you that meant the most, the big, big heart God gave you. ...I want you to know I could not have had a better father. You were always there for me, and no matter how badly I hurt you, you still showed up. Thank you!”

“For the first time, I saw my father through God’s eyes, and I felt honored to be seen with him.”

The Meyer Minute for June 17, 2002

Michael Powers tells the following story in Allison Bottke’s inspiring collection, “God Allows U-Turns.”

Brian “was a special education student at the small high school I attended. He was constantly searching for love and attention. It usually came for the wrong reasons, from students who wanted to have some ‘fun.’ He was the joke of the school...”

Mike defended Brian, even had him over to the house. “Hey, Mike,” Brian asked. “How come you’re not like some of the other kids at school?” Mike told him about the love of God the Father.

“Brian really opened up to me. He explained that his dad had left him and his mom when he was five years old. He told Brian he couldn’t deal with having a son like him anymore, then he walked out of Brian’s life and was never seen again. Brian told me that he had been looking for his dad ever since.

“Now I knew why the tears kept flowing that day in my bedroom. His search was over. He found what he had been looking for since he was five years old. A Father’s love.

“He would never again be alone.”

The Meyer Minute for June 18, 2002

The talk in church this past weekend was something said at the Southern Baptist Convention last week in St. Louis. Rev. Jerry Vines of Jacksonville, Florida said that the prophet Mohammed, the founder of Islam, was a “devil-possessed pedophile.” (St. Louis Post-Dispatch, June 16, B1).

The brouhaha reminds me of a radio message I prepared at the start of the Gulf War. It was intended for American military personnel in the Middle East but the Far Eastern Broadcast Company refused to air it, unless I would take out the American references. Their reason was this: Those American references were likely to turn off any Muslim listener who otherwise might be receptive to the Good News of Jesus Christ.

The Meyer Minute for June 20, 2002

“Fear not.” The Bible says it Lord knows how many times. Preachers pontificate about it. But I’m here to tell you, I’m afraid...of many things.

The Midwest had a minor earthquake the other day. Am I afraid of an earthquake? No, not if I’m standing in the middle of an Illinois cornfield. But you know where I’ll be when the big one hits? I’ll be stuck in traffic on a bridge over the Mississippi River. Plop. How long can I tread water?

Suicide bombers...every day on the news. Experts say that it’s only a matter of time before it happens here. In the shopping mall I’m visiting? At the restaurant? At church?

Personally, I’m sick and tired of religious people mouthing that there’s nothing to be afraid of. There is; get your heads out of the clouds. The Lord knows we’re afraid. Couldn’t you and I help each other much more if we’d acknowledge it, if we’d hold onto each other, and then...only then...in total honesty hear His words?

“Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are mine” (Isaiah 43:2).

Their criticism was right. I took out the American references and they broadcast our messages to the Middle East throughout the Gulf War.

The flap over Rev. Vines’ remarks points out that some Christian attacks on other religions may be true but the result is counterproductive. The first job of a witness to the forgiveness and life that Christ offers is to gain their attentive hearing. Attacks close ears instead of opening them.

The Meyer Minute for June 21, 2002

“U.S.A. U.S.A!” Some of us have been wildly cheering the United States soccer team on in the World Cup. Are you among them, up early this morning to watch? Others, I among them, are not the least bit interested.

It reminds us that not everyone sees the world the same way you or I do. Your friend, your parent, your child, your spouse... they often have a different point of view than you do. While that makes life interesting, it can also lead us to be self-centered. My opinion, my point of view... It’s all about me.

Hopefully we get wiser as we get older. Be it soccer, or more important, relationships at work or home, striving to see things from someone else’s point of view is what the

Golden Rule is all about. Jesus says, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you” (Matthew 7:12).

The Meyer Minute for June 24, 2002

Life has its rhythms, and for most of us Monday means the rhythm moves us back to work, to the tough reality of making it in this world. Long ago the Christian church established special times of worship in the year, its own rhythm to keep us mindful that we are not subject only to the challenges and problems of the workaday world but also have a heavenly pulse beating within our heart. In the world, we are, but not of the world.

Cover your ears. Turn away. Today that rhythm of the church has some harsh sounding notes. Today we remember the nativity of John the Baptist. “You brood of vipers!” he grew up to preach to the self-righteous religious crowds who flocked to hear him in the desert. “Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance” (Matthew 3:7-8). He laid on his hearers the necessity of repentance. Stop sinning. Stake your life on Jesus. That was John’s message. Still is.

Sin and forgiveness... a rhythm the world doesn’t know. You’re in the world but you’re not of it.

The Meyer Minute for June 25, 2002

Jack Buck, media friend of sports fans, died last week at 77. Ann Landers, counselor through 1200 newspapers, died Saturday at 83. But the death that really stopped us in our tracks: St. Louis Cardinal pitcher Darryl Kile, age 33. Life isn’t fair.

My wife has a little sign that says, “I’ve got a bad feeling about this.” Death tells us that something’s terribly wrong. God is good. We see the goodness of God in many ways, in the beauties of nature, in the love of family and friends, in the simple joys of living. You and I have been born into something wonderful called life but then death intrudes, casting a pall, extinguishing life.

Obviously there’s a disconnect between us, subject as we are to death, and the God of life. Ending that disconnect, reconciling with the God of life is where we can find hope. That’s what Jesus Christ is all about. “On this mountain He will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; He will swallow up death forever.” (Isaiah 25:7-8).

Our sympathies to all who mourn.

The Meyer Minute for June 26, 2002

A survey by National Public Radio and Harvard University found that 23% of people are “very worried” about not being able to pay for prescription drugs. 71% attribute rising costs to the drug companies’ desire for profits. (from “Capitol Spotlight” by C-Span and Congressional Quarterly)

So Congress is talking this week about the problem of prescription drug prices. Of course, it takes no genius to see what’s behind much of the talk. The debates are a rhetorical mix of sincere but divergent ideologies held by people who have their eyes on the November elections.

What’s so refreshing about the Old Testament prophets is that they didn’t care about politics or ideology. With scalpel-like words, they cut through politics, they cut through ideology. “Woe to you who are complacent in Zion, and to you who feel secure on Mount Samaria, you notable men of the foremost nation... You turn justice into bitterness and cast righteousness to the ground” (Amos 6:1, 5:7).

The best prescription for our country is for all of us to pursue justice, to stand under God’s call for justice. God, help our leaders do just that in the current debate.

The Meyer Minute for June 27, 2002

President Bush visited Arizona Tuesday. “Hang in there,” he told the people who had to evacuate their homes because of the worst wildfires in the history of the West. “Hang in there. You’re brave and great people.”

But how do you do that? Wildfires or other serious problems, how do YOU hang in there when your energies and will are almost gone?

Not easily. In my own experience I’ve found that I barely hang on, only by the skin of my teeth. “How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me?” (Psalm 13:1)

But complaining to the Lord also means we’re going to the best source of help. “I would have lost heart, unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the Lord!” (Psalm 27:13-14).

So when you barely have the strength to hang in there, hang onto His promises. God is a God of resurrection, the God of your hope.

The Meyer Minute for June 28, 2002

Domestic goddess, incarnation of the happy homemaker, she can smile because her cupboard is filled with millions of dollars... Martha Stewart may have been caught with her hand in the cookie jar. "May," I say. Martha may...or may not...be guilty of insider stock trading.

This story is so theological! Two great themes of the Bible are Law and Gospel. The Law says, "Do this and you'll be OK. Don't do this and you'll be punished." On the other hand, the Gospel announces God's forgiveness...but in a specific way. When you and I break God's rules, God doesn't say, "Shucks, I'll overlook it this time." No, God says, "Break my rules and you're liable for my punishment." What the Gospel announces is that Christ took the punishment for our transgressions.

I have no idea if Martha's guilty or not, but the story is unfolding exactly as the Law works. We're liable for what we do. When you go to church this Sunday, remember that the Gospel doesn't sweep your wrongs under the rug. The Gospel says Jesus has paid the price for your wrongs to God. As Martha would say, "It's a good thing."