



CRANMER THEOLOGICAL HOUSE UPDATE

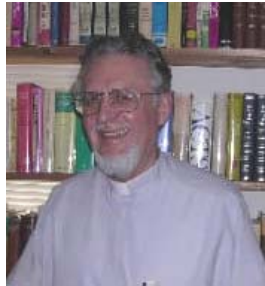
*A Reformed Episcopal
School of Ministry*

www.cranmerhouse.org

March 2010

From the Dean's Desk CTH Status Report

Our classes have gotten off to a wonderful beginning for 2010. The Venerable James Payne's class on Pastoral Administration and the Constitution and Canons of the Reformed Episcopal Church and our diocese (Diocese of Mid-America) is where the rubber meets the road. He is not only covering the national and diocesan canons, but also the ideal by-laws of a parish. Next, he will go over financial matters. As a former banker, Fr. Payne knows whereof he speaks. *You may want to order the videos and material of this class for your Vestry Retreat.*



The other course this quarter is *Scripture and Hermeneutics* taught by Dr. Crenshaw, who is teaching not only how we know we have the right books in the Bible, but how they came into the canon, what inspiration means (not inspiring!), and also how to interpret the Bible. This is a foundational course.

The third quarter (Apr-Jun) courses are:

- *Apologetics* (The Very Rev. Frank Levi)
- *Medieval Church History* (The Ven. James Payne)

Prayer Requests

Please pray for:

- A building in The Woodlands for the seminary
- More full-time students

CTH Parish Visits

Please consider scheduling one of our professors to visit your parish and present the needs of Cranmer House. We have always found these visits profitable for your parish and fun for all!

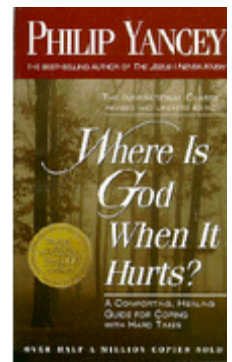
How to Donate by Shopping

Would you like to donate to CTH just by shopping online? The next time you need to buy anything from Amazon.com, start at the DMA WOC website (www.dmawomen.org), and click on the Amazon Associate link in the left navigation bar. Anything you buy from the Amazon online store during the 24-hour period after you click will return a percentage to CTH. The transaction does not raise the price of your purchase, but it does benefit the seminary. What could be better than that?

In December, earnings from the site were \$75.77, in January, \$68.67, and in February, \$13.37, for a total of \$157.81 over the past three months. As of 3 March, when 7 additional transactions are made, our rate of return goes from 4% to 6%.

Book Review: *Where is God When It Hurts?*

Philip Yancey's *Where Is God When It Hurts?* is one of the most encouraging books that I have ever read, especially the chapter 2 on pain as God's gift. Then he has such chapters as "What Is God Trying to Tell Us?", "Why Are We Here?", and several chapters regarding how people respond to suffering. I did not recommend Yancey for every book he's written, but this one is a gem.



The 1997 edition (pictured) is on sale for only \$4.99 at Christianbook.com. If you would prefer the updated edition, please purchase it by going through the Amazon Associate link at (www.dmawomen.org)

The Very Rev. Curtis I. Crenshaw, Th.D. Ω

Enjoy a sermon by Dr. Crenshaw on trusting God to meet our needs. You may click on this link to listen to the sermon:
<http://www.sfrec.recdss.org/Sermons/2009/SermonOnMount/SermonOnMount7-Hummingbird.mp3>

The Hummingbird: God Takes Care of Us

(Matthew 6:24-34)

The Very Rev. Curtis I. Crenshaw, Th.D.



Introduction

In our series in the Sermon on the Mount, today we would be covering oaths, but the Gospel lesson is about trusting our heavenly Father for our daily bread.

Therefore, look at the picture above. What do you see? Is it only a bird, or do you see God's loving provision of nectar to take care of the hummingbird? Are we not worth more than the hummingbirds? Has God forgotten us? Has the economic downturn hurt us?

What do we dislike more than anything? Trials, especially regarding our possessions. We want to have it easy, because our emphasis is on food and clothing, but God's emphasis is on character.

When I began basic training in the Army in February 1967, we had to send home everything we owned, including shoes, shirts, pants, and even underwear. The only thing I was allowed to keep was my Bible. All my possessions were in my duffel bag. I had even less in Vietnam, but when one is

facing death on a regular basis, things just do not mean much. Life means much.

Have you ever suddenly been laid off or fired? Have you seen your economic world go up in smoke? In 1980, I was managing a Christian book store, bringing home \$900 a month. One day my boss from Grand Rapids suddenly showed up, saying our sales were off so my assistant and I were going to be laid off. I had a wife, two small children, and a new house. It was close to Christmas. He told me to trust God's providence, which only added insult to injury. What he should have known from my report is that there was only one way in and out of the strip mall where the store was, and the bridge had washed out just past the store. The local through traffic was completely gone, and only those who wanted specifically to come to the store were making that effort. All the stores in the strip mall were suffering. Christian books depend to a large extent on impulse buying. There was such an outcry from pastors and individuals to the home office that I was offered my job back. I stayed long enough to find another job at an insurance and investment firm, where I discovered a fraud scheme.

My grandfather in the Ozarks was swindled out of his restaurant by legal theft, and at about 60 years of age, he was left with nothing. He returned to Memphis with my grandmother, and went to work behind the counter for another man. He never liked to work for someone else. It was humbling, but he got back on his feet, but God's grace.

In His temptation, Jesus saw God's hand in His circumstances: "Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God."

When we say, "Give us this day, our daily bread," we are showing dependence on Him and His providence for our physical needs.

I. We Cannot Serve Two Masters: God and Money (v. 24)

The hummingbird serves God. I had a friend once who had a very successful business, and he was taking out about \$50,000 per week, much of it in cash, before it was deposited into the bank. He hired a so-called Christian lady to be his on site

bookkeeper and to write checks for his bills. He gave her signature authority over his account. About a year later he became suspicious so he began to look over his books. He could not find some of the checks that were missing, and no record of them anywhere. He went to the bank and discovered that they were written to the woman's credit card companies, to the tune of \$250,000. In his fury he called the FBI, but they wanted to have an audit. Since he had taken more than what she had embezzled by many times over, hiding it from the IRS, he dropped the whole thing. He was furious at her and claimed that she could not serve two masters, but he was trying to do the same.

We have to make a commitment to serve one master, and this commitment must be chosen, self-conscious. We can serve two masters if they are not contrary to one another, but the Lord's point here is that one cannot serve two contrary masters, especially God and money. Each demands total allegiance; each pays its own reward, one life, the other death.

People serve money for security of the future, but such is illusive outside of Christ. **Our security is not in the gifts that God's gives, but in the Giver.** Too many people look at the gifts, the things, the retirement plan, and think that security is in those things. Now don't misunderstand: those things are important, but they are not the security.

Remember that the prodigal son lost all his fortune, but his security was in his father back home.

Just think how secure the people of New Orleans felt once the hurricane hit. They could not even get money out of their banks. They had nothing, not even a tooth brush, much less their homes and cars.

Both money and God require total dedication, complete surrender, the total destruction of the self in being consumed in the pursuit. Consider the contrasts of the two masters:

- God is forever but money is only for a short time.
- One can have Christ for sure but money is elusive. How many times have some millionaires been broke?

- There is often a conflict between the flesh and the Spirit in the pursuit of each.
- Riches promise true happiness but only the Lord can truly give such.
- If one devotes his life to riches, he/she worships the creature rather than the Creator.
- Money pays us now and is gone when we die, but God pays us both now and at the Last Day, and the payment never fades away.

We can tell whom we are serving **by what we do**, not by what we say, and **covetousness is idolatry**, which is why we can't serve God and money (Col 3:5).

Luke 16:10-13:

He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much. Therefore **if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the TRUE riches?** And if you have not been faithful in what is another man's, who will give you what is your own? **No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.**

Some people claim to be Christians, but they love this present world more than Christ. One can tell a person's real God by their priorities as revealed in their pursuits. **Our heart is where our treasure is.** If a man's treasure is on earth, his heart will be there also, and things and possessions will rule in his life. If a person's treasure is in heaven, his heart will be there also, and God will rule his heart.

Did you hear about the farmer whose cow gave birth to very fine twin calves? One was white faced and the other red faced. He told his wife that he would raise them and give one to the Lord. When she asked which one, he said: "I don't know yet, but I'll take equally good care of them." Some months later he came into the house and said: "I have some bad news. The Lord's calf died." That is often the way we are. We give God the leftovers.

II. The Hummingbird Knows that God Is in Control (vv. 25-30)

Anxiety is the characteristic of our age, but we Christians have the answer: **trust in God's providence**, which is what He has ordained each day for us.

Can we add an inch to our stature (v. 27)? If not, then why do we worry, for what can we change? The sooner we can learn that God is the author of all our circumstances, the sooner we will quiet our hearts and be content.

Have you heard that you can do whatever you put your mind to, that if you must have the power of positive thinking, you can do anything? God does not bless the power of positive thinking but the power of humble prayer and using the means to make money His way, which is through honesty, integrity, serving others genuinely, and seeking their good with honest advertising.

Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit"; whereas you do not know what *will happen* tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. Instead you *ought* to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that." But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do *it*, to him it is sin (James 4:13-17).

God is in control, not us, and though we must always use the human means to accomplish what we need, yet let us humbly recognize that He can turn off and turn on the fountain of blessing whenever He wishes. BUT He **always** takes care of us! This passage contains two illustrations of lesser to greater:

(1) **Birds** (vv. 26)

Consider the hummingbirds who dance and flutter around honeysuckle and other flowers. Are they worried? Does God provide for them? Has not the Father given the hummingbird a special beak to pierce the flowers?

What about the woodpecker? Does he worry? Has not God given him a special beak for getting the grubs under the bark, thus also helping the tree?

These birds did not adapt to their environments, for the hummingbird would have died of starvation before his beak developed into a long hollow tube to get the nectar from flowers, and the woodpecker would have knocked his brains out against many trees before he developed the powerful beak and neck muscles to drill through the bark. It was not the circumstances that determined the bird, but the bird that determined what circumstances that God would put him in.

(2) **Flowers** (vv. 28-30)

If our heavenly Father takes care of birds and flowers, won't He take care of those made in His image and then being recreated in the image of Christ?

"Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you." (1 Peter 5:7)

III. Resting in His Providence (vv. 33-34)

Notice again the hummingbird pictured below the title of this sermon. It is resting in the joy of the Lord, not worried about anything.

When my maternal grandmother moved to the Ozark Mountains, down the road from where Ruth lived, it was my only desire to go stay with them, to be in the country. I loved shooting my guns more than anything. I hunted frogs at night with carbide lights on my head, groundhogs with a bow and arrow, frogs during the day with a rod and reel by snagging them, squirrels with my grandfather's dog, rabbits with the same dog, and crows, and other things. I captured a tarantula and put it in a jar, kept black widows in jars, caught various kinds of snakes, one of which I wore around my neck for two weeks during the day, made war on wasps nests to swat them in the air (don't try that kids), watched spiders make their webs, captured insects of various kinds to throw in spiders' nests, observed the difference between chicken and duck feathers, and so on. I did these not by the hour, but by the days. So what is the point? God had placed each of them in their perfect environment so they could survive. And what is Jesus saying here? He

takes care of us also. We are more valuable than the animal kingdom because we are made in God's image; the other creatures are not. The other creatures do not know enough to worry, but we do; nevertheless, we are to make the self-conscious decision to rest in God's daily providential care.

Notice that the Lord commands us to **SEEK Him FIRST**, His kingdom, and His righteousness, and then—and only then—all the material things will be added to us. The point in this verse is that if we seek Him, we get this world thrown in, but if we only seek this world, we get neither Him nor this world.

Our whole lives are to be lived around the Lord so that when we arise we think of Him, when we drive we ask Him for protection and pray, when things come up in our lives we know that He is in control, when we sin, we go to Him and ask forgiveness. This is an ongoing personal relationship.

But seeking Christ first is not an excuse for being indolent, lazy, not working if we are capable. We are to be diligent like the ant (Prov. 6:6). **But there is a balance to all this:**

Do not overwork to be rich; because of your own understanding, cease! Will you set your eyes on that which is not? For *riches* certainly make themselves wings; they fly away like an eagle *toward* heaven (Prov. 23:4-5).

People who overwork to be rich have wrong priorities and often neglect both God and their families for more toys. They want the world's success rather than God's!

Two *things* I request of You (Deprive me not before I die): Remove falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches — feed me with the food allotted to me; lest I be full and deny *You*, and say, "Who is the LORD?" Or lest I be poor and steal, and profane the name of my God (Prov. 30:7-9).

God requires that if we live according to His priorities: worship, family, and work, He'll take care of us. If we are not doing these in this order, we have wrong priorities and are worried about unnecessary things.

The one who thinks he must work 7 days a week does not trust God to keep His promise that He would bless us for 7 days if we keep His Day by worshipping. He thinks that only works are what is required for getting ahead, not grace. The one who does not work thinks that faith without works is not dead. Christ calls us to the balance, which is maintained by biblical priorities.

One of the greatest blessings God gives us sometimes is to take some of our financial security away. It produces DAILY dependence: "Give us this day, our DAILY bread," not our monthly or yearly bread. It makes us look up to Him, not down to our circumstances.

When Ruth and I moved to Dallas in 1972 for me to attend seminary, she worked at Dallas Federal Savings and Loan. One of the customers was a lady who would watch TV at the department store, come into the savings and loan to eat cookies and drink coffee, wore the same dress, and rarely took a bath. Yet she had hundreds of thousands of dollars, perhaps millions, in various institutions. She was not secure even though she had money.

Our security is not in bank accounts, but in the Lord Jesus Himself. He not only gives us our salvation so that we go to be with Him when we die, but also He takes care of our "daily bread."

So we learn to be generous with others just as He is with us. The irony of the Christian life is that we keep what we give away (our faith, our possessions) and lose what we try to hoard (possessions). Those who seek to keep their possessions will lose everything at the Last Day, but those who give them away, receive them back by entrance into God's kingdom. The poor cannot repay us, so God does.

Remember this little ditty:

Said the robin to the sparrow:
"I should really like to know
Why these anxious humans beings
Rush about and worry so."

Said the sparrow to the robin:
"Friend, I think that it must be
That they have no heavenly Father,
Such as cares for you and me."

We are God's little hummingbirds. **Amen.**