

"LIVING IN TERMS OF OUR SECOND CHOICES"

Christ Church  
December 4, 1938

Most of us do our living in terms of our second, and third, and even fourth choices. Many of the factors which we do our living in terms of are not under our control. And many of the situations in which we do our living are not under our control. We might get of this world from any one of a number of angles. Our father, who is in heaven -- for example -- we were all born with certain tendencies toward certain things and personalities. And not one of us had any choice in the matter of what these tendencies or personally determined ways to be. It is quite true that personality is something which grows and develops -- we have something to say about the direction of that growth -- but the seeds of personality were given us -- and there isn't much choice on our part on that score. The result is that many a person looks angrily at someone else and says "If only I had his or her personality!" "If only I had his or her temperament!" "If only I had his or her character!"

But our father or mother, a good many people have to live in terms of their second, or third, or fourth choices. Again, we sometimes have to live in terms of second or third choices so far as our abilities are concerned. How many a person has said: "If only I had such and such an ability -- or with such and such a knowledge -- or with the capacity to read people -- or with the ability to read their interests -- but alas, my limited abilities are in such and such a direction." So far as our abilities are concerned -- many of us live in terms of our second choices.

Again, many persons are forced to live in terms of their second choices so far as their lives are concerned. How many people there are who have dreamed of entering some particular business or some particular profession -- but circumstances of one kind or other and stopped in saying "So far as your gift is concerned, you are not going to have your first choice; you are going to have to live in terms of your second, or third, or fourth choice."

## INTRODUCTION

Our thought this morning begins with the observation  
(which all of us must have made at some time or other)

THAT VERY FEW PEOPLE HAVE THE PRIVILEGE OF LIVING THEIR LIVES  
IN TERMS OF THEIR FIRST CHOICES.

Most of us do <sup>much of</sup> our living in terms of our second, and third, and even fourth choices.

Many of the terms under which we do our living,  
and many of the situations in which we do our living — ARE DICTATED TO US BY CIRCUMSTANCES  
OVER WHICH WE HAVE LITTLE OR NO CONTROL.

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We might get at this truth from any one of a number of angles:

a. For example — we were all born with certain tendencies toward particular types of temperament and personality.

And not one of us had much choice in the matter of what these temperament or personality tendencies were to be.

It is quite true that personality is something which grows, and develops — we have something to say about the direction of that growth —  
but the seeds of personality were given us — and there isn't much choice on our part on that score.

The result is that many a person looks enviously at someone else and says:  
"If only I had his or her personality;  
If only I had his or her temperament."

But for better or worse, a good many people have to do their living on this score, at least, in terms of their second or third or fourth choices.

*But alas - I have to do my living in terms of my 2nd and 3rd choices - on this score.*

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b. Again, we sometimes have to live in terms of second or third choices so far as our abilities are concerned.

How many a person has said:

If only I had <sup>been born</sup> with musical ability — or with athletic prowess — or with an interest in literature — or with the capacity to meet people — *scientific term found*  
but alas, my limited abilities lie in much less interesting areas;

So far as our abilities are concerned, — many of us live in terms of our second choices.

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c. Again, many persons are forced to live in terms of their second choices SO FAR AS THEIR LIFE-WORK IS CONCERNED.

How many people there are who have dreamed of entering some particular business or some particular profession —

→ but circumstances of one kind or other and stepped in, saying:

"So far as your work is concerned, you are not going to have your first choice; you are going to have to live in terms of your second, or third, or fourth choice."

*can't do what you most want to do.*  
*you are going to have to devote your life to some other line of work.*

d. Still other people never get their first choice so far as the place where they do their living is concerned.

<sup>may</sup> We like a small town, but we are forced to live in a city; or we like the city, and we are forced to live in a small town;

We like a community <sup>a particular type - but we are forced to live in another -</sup> where everyone knows everyone else and the people in our neighborhood have interests similar to our own -- ~~but maybe we are forced to live in a community where no one pays any attention to anyone else, seemingly, -- and congenial friends are rare~~

~~We like the east, but we have to live in the west -- or we like the west and we have to live in the east -- or we like the ocean, and we have the mountains, instead~~

→ And so we might continue indefinitely --  
POINTING OUT WAYS IN WHICH PEOPLE HAVE TO DO THEIR LIVING IN TERMS OF THEIR SECOND OR THIRD OR FOURTH CHOICES.

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(Pause)

Now the more we think about this <sup>fact</sup> ~~the fact~~ that so much of life is lived in terms of our second choices --

The more certain <sup>it is that</sup> one of two things will happen:

either we will become pessimistic in our outlook on life -- feeling that life isn't playing quite fair with us;

→ or, we will come to a working relationship with the situation as we find it. <sup>our enforced 2nd choice -</sup>

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Obviously, becoming pessimistic about it, isn't going to help matters any -- we'll only make ourselves more miserable; likewise the people around us.

On the other hand, <sup>if we can come</sup> by coming to a working relationship with the situation  
① we shall get the most that there is to get from our second choices, ~~we shall be encouraged to draw upon the best that is in us;~~  
② and it may be -- that we shall discover some advantages in our second choices that we never even suspected.

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~~And so, I should like to suggest FOUR STEPS IN CULTIVATING A WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH OUR SECOND CHOICES - whatever they may be:~~

→ A very important part of the ART OF LIVING

is the art of coming to a working relationship with our forced second choices;

This morning, I should like to <sup>suggest</sup> ~~four elements~~ <sup>things involved in coming to such</sup> which will be of help to any ~~person in coming to such a working relationship.~~ <sup>a working relationship.</sup>

The first is this:

*The Realization*  
~~COMING TO RECOGNIZE THAT ALMOST EVERYONE ELSE~~ *around us* is doing at least a part of his living in terms of second choices. **No person is alone in facing this prob**

One of the most pernicious diseases in the world is self-pity, and one of the best ways of acquiring a severe case of self-pity is to say to oneself: "Here I am, having to do all sorts of things I don't like to do, while everyone else is doing just what he wants to do."

Probably almost everyone is tempted to say something of that sort, at sometime or other, ---

*yet, probably*  
~~yet I would hazard the opinion that it is a comparatively small percentage of people who do most most of their living in terms of their first choices.~~

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If life, therefore, seems rather stern - in not giving us our first choices ---

we at least have this consolation as a starting point ---  
we are not alone --- **life is so organized that much of it, for almost all peoples, must be lived in terms of second and third choices.**

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*realizes*  
Anyone who reads biography to any extent, how often this is the case with famous people -- ~~when a casual observer might well envy:~~

Whistler, the artist, whose portrait of "His Mother" is known to all of us, didn't want to be an artist --- he wanted to be a soldier (that was his first choice) But at West Point he failed because he could not pass in chemistry --- *turned to art*  
**The talent he possessed was his second choice.**

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Philipps Brooks, one of the most influential clergymen in the history of our country --- wanted to be a teacher,

*His talents lay in another direction ---*  
But he made a miserable failure of teaching, and so ~~later went into the church~~ *with such preeminent success that* now, a hundred years later, he is regarded as one of the greatest pulpiteers our country has produced.

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Sir Walter Scott dreamed of being a poet --- **he had his heart set on it;**

But things didn't go the way he wanted them to --- and he had to give it up.

So, half-heartedly, he took to writing novels --- but at first he was so ashamed of what he was doing that he published them anonymously. ---

After a time he produced an Ivanhoe - and others. **A novelist of world-fame, but by second choice.**

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This list might be continued indefinitely --- folk who have been called upon to live in terms of second choices.

*IF we want to come to a working relat - with enforced 2nd choice*  
~~AND TO RECOGNIZE THAT WE ARE NO EXCEPTION IN BEING DENIED OUR FIRST CHOICES OFTIMES~~ --- is the first step in coming to a working relationship with our situations, whatever they may be.

*must be - That is a Part of life - but that is as best that*

Another essential element <sup>II.</sup>

A second step in coming to a working relationship with our second choices is in RECOGNIZING THAT THERE ARE TWO FACTORS INVOLVED IN ANY SITUATION:

the external condition -- about which we may not be able to do very much; ~~and~~ and then -- deal.

the attitude which we take toward the situation -- about which we can do a great

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And I think if we will look over the genuinely happy people whom we know, they are the people who find their satisfactions -- not so much because their have external conditions just the way they want them; but because they have learned the importance of right attitudes.

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And any individual who does work out a satisfactory working relationship with a situation which is his second or third choice -- ~~will have to~~ FIND THAT RELATIONSHIP IN LARGE PART THROUGH THE ATTITUDE WHICH HE TAKES TOWARD IT.

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The story is told that a well-meaning, but not too adroit, visitor went to call on a woman who had been an invalid for years;

The visitor tried to be sympathetic ~~with her~~ and said: "Troubles does so color life, doesn't it?"

To which the cheerful patient replied: "Yes, but I propose to choose the color!"  
So, <sup>our</sup> enforced situations of life, do color life - but our attitudes help to determine the color.

Some of us, perhaps, are familiar with the story of "The Man Who Played God."

It is the story of a great musician, who seemed to possess all that one could desire -- health, wealth, and fame.

Then, suddenly one day --- a great trouble came into his life --- and his bright world --- suddenly turned black and empty.

The musician thought he had nothing for which to live, and was about to give up in despair, when a friend came to him and said: "You ought not give way to hopelessness or pessimism ---

In the past you have had almost everything you could desire --- BUT THIS IS THE FIRST TIME IN YOUR LIFE YOU'VE HAD A REAL CHANCE TO BE A HERO."

And inspired by this new attitude toward his situation - he found himself again  
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Edmund Vance Cooke has given us some worthwhile lines on trouble --- which would apply equally well to SOME SECOND OR THIRD OR FOURTH CHOICE WE HAVE BEEN FORCED TO ACCEPT:

Did you tackle that trouble that came your way  
With a resolute heart and cheerful?  
Or hide your face from the light of day  
With a craven soul and fearful?

A trouble's a ton, or a trouble's an ounce,  
A trouble is what you make it;  
And it isn't the fact that your hurt that counts,  
But only - how did you take it."

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In any situation -- there are these two elements:  
the external situation - about which we may not be able to do much-  
our attitude toward it -- about which we can do a great deal.

WE MIGHT HAVE ALL THE FIRST CHOICES IN THE WORLD -- but without the right attitude,  
they wouldn't bring us the least good;

And so the picture might be turned around --  
MANY A SECOND OR THIRD CHOICE HAS BEEN MADE EXCEEDINGLY WORTHWHILE, -- by means  
of a right attitude toward it.

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Situations do so color life --

But we have a great deal to do in the matter of choosing the color.

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### III.

And so the picture might be turned around ---  
MANY A TRIUMPHANT LIFE HAS BEEN LIVED IN TERMS OF SECOND CHOICES ---  
through the magic influence of a right attitude.

### III.

Eventually, however --- an optimistic attitude needs to have some foundation--some basis

This leads us to <sup>the next</sup> a third factor to be considered when we are denied our first choices.

Namely: THAT IN ALMOST ANY SITUATION IN WHICH WE MAY FIND OURSELVES, THERE IS SOME  
IMPORTANT SERVICE WAITING TO BE RENDERED.

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Any individual who is genuinely interested in people,  
and who really desires to enrich the lives of others -- SITUATIONS.  
CAN FIND REAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR SERVICE -- EVEN IN TERMS OF HIS SECOND CHOICE

The type of service to be rendered may in some measure be determined for him --  
but this world is in need of many kinds of service:

the\*patient, who teaches us the meaning of cheerfulness and courage in the  
the business and professional worker;  
the tradesman --  
the laborer --  
the home-worker -- ALL THESE, <sup>+ many others</sup> RENDER A SERVICE THE WORLD

CANNOT WELL GET ALONG WITHOUT.

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So, when we find ourselves in some second-choice situation, we might well *stop and ask*  
~~forget ourselves for a moment, and ask:~~

Is it possible that there is someone who is better off because I landed in this situation?

Is it possible, that being here -- I can be of service to someone whom I otherwise would not have the privilege of knowing and serving?

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Someone once said that the greatest shock which the human organism can stand is the shock of uselessness -- the sense that we are not needed.

We might reverse that, and say that one of the greatest inspirations for living is the sense that we are needed;  
that there is some service waiting to be rendered.

IF ONLY WE MIGHT APPROACH OUR SECOND CHOICE SITUATIONS IN THIS SPIRIT ----

Feeling, that although I might have wished things to be different,  
NEVERTHELESS HERE IS SOME OPPORTUNITY FOR SERVICE WHICH I SHOULD NOT  
OTHERWISE HAVE HAD ----

*speaking of.*  
we should be helped toward that working relationship, we have been

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If we should place a thirty-foot plank on the ground,  
most of us could walk across it without any difficulty.

But if we should place that same plank high up in the air ----  
many of us would have great difficulty walking across it.

What is the difference?

LARGELY IN THE ATTITUDE OF MIND WITH WHICH WE APPROACH IT ----

Up in the air, we think of ourselves as falling off into space-- we think defeat;  
Down on the ground, we take it for granted that we can cross it - and we do.

So oftentimes, when we get into second-choice situations ----  
when we have been denied some first-choice ----

WE ARE ALWAYS TEMPTED TO THINK DEFEAT -- and to approach it in that attitude.

IF ON THE OTHER HAND, WE MIGHT APPROACH OUR SECOND-CHOICE SITUATION IN THE SPIRIT THAT INVOLVED IN THIS IS SOME OPPORTUNITY FOR SERVICE -- THROUGH THIS SOMEONE'S LIFE CAN BE ENRICHED IN A WAY IT OTHERWISE WOULD NOT ----

we shall go far in achieving this working relationship we have been talking about.

IV.

If we are helped to achieve a working relationship with a second-choice situation by looking at it from SOME OTHER PERSON'S POINT OF VIEW - *in terms of service*

we might well go one step farther, and look at it from GOD'S POINT OF VIEW.

This means applying our religion to our second choice situations.

And certainly, there are many situations in life -which demand a religious attitude.

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Probably in all the Bible there is no one statement more difficult to understand - or at least to believe, than that which is found in the letter to the Romans: **"We know that to them that love God, all things work together for good."**

If the statement stopped there, most of us would not know what to make of it

But there is more, which gives point: **We know that all things work together for good to**

~~I am not sure I know what this statement means~~ **---them that love God, to them that are called**  
**or at least what the author if it meant by it --- to His Purpose."**

~~But underneath it, involved in it~~ **--- THERE IS A TEACHING WHICH IS A FUNDAMENTAL**

**RELIGIOUS TEACHING:** Whatever else this statement may mean - IT THROWS OUT THIS IMPORTANT SUGGESTION:

**namely, that IT ISN'T ENOUGH TO LOOK AT A SITUATION FROM OUR OWN POINT OF VIEW ---**  
**but if we are going to understand it - we must look at it from God's point of view.** *our purpose*

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If we stopped with saying, **"all things work together for good"** --- we should have a statement that obviously is not true --- *for from our own point of view, they don't.*

But when we add: **"We know that to them that love God, all things work together for good.."** *to them that love god - + to them that are called to His Purpose*

we are challenged to believe that **SOMEHOW IN THIS VAST SCHEME OF THINGS WE CALL THE UNIVERSE --- THERE ARE GREAT AND DIVINE PURPOSES ~~IN IT~~ --- BEING WORKED OUT ---**

**Purposes beyond the complete comprehension of man ---**

And that if we could only look at life from the point of view of these Divine purposes we should say: **"We know that to them that love God, all things work together for good,"** *to them that love god + to them called according to His Purpose.*

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Now religion asks us to venture our lives on some such faith ---

It asks us **TO GET OUTSIDE OURSELVES AND LOOK AT LIFE FROM GOD'S POINT OF VIEW ---**

And doing that -- to see new meaning in even the second, and third, and fourth choices of life.



Life takes on meaning when we have the sense of belonging to something greater than self;

To belong to a group, an organization, a tradition, a state, a nation  
*this points a foundation under life.*

And so long as we have the sense of doing things FOR this something greater than self --- we don't mind ~~doing things which ordinarily we wouldn't want to do.~~

*hardship - unpleasant*

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Now religion goes beyond all ~~these other things~~ ---  
and says --- **"When all these other things are gone -- YOU WILL STILL BELONG TO GOD."**

And it is only as a person comes to a living realization that HE BELONGS TO GOD ---  
and that he has the privilege of allying himself with Divine purposes ---  
**that he discovers the real meaning of religion.**

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It What does all this have to do with our ENFORCED  
second choice situations?

It Just this: **If in the long run we are to come to  
a working relationship with them --**

we sing:

We shall need a religious faith, a religious  
philosophy which HELPS US TO LOOK AT OUR SITUATIONS, NOT  
ONLY FROM OUR OWN, BUT FROM GOD'S POINT OF VIEW.

But  
A GOD WHOS  
An

And so, inspired by the thought that we are  
allied with Divine Purposes, we can say with Paul:  
**"We know that all things work together for  
good to them that love God -- to them that are called to  
His Purpose."**

nd in death we BELONG TO

we take toward  
us.

Do

Has our religion taken hold sufficiently that we can look upon our enforced second  
choices, and still say with Paul:

**"We know that to them that love God, all things work together for good?"**

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CONCLUSION

This morning I have suggested four things involved in coming to a working relationship  
with our second choices:

1. The realization that almost everyone around us is doing a part of his living in terms of second choices. It is a common problem we all face.
2. The realization that just as important as the situations we find ourselves in, is the ATTITUDE WHICH WE TAKE TOWARD THEM.
3. The realization that no matter what situation we find ourselves in, there is some important service in it -- waiting to be rendered;
4. THE CONVICTION THAT THESE LIVES OF OURS ARE SET IN A SCHEME OF PURPOSES BEYOND OUR COMPREHENSION -- **and therefore we ought to look at life, not only from our own, but from God's point of view.**

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*In a sense these are goals to be worked toward*

No one of us is going to realize fully these four goals --- but we can work toward them: and to the extent that we do achieve them --- we shall achieve a working relationship