

SERMON MESSAGE-JANUARY 23, 2022

Title: Copied: The Divine Yes!
Text: I Corinthians 1:18-20

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January 16, 2022

¹⁸ For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. ¹⁹ For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate." ²⁰ Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?

I Corinthians 1:18-20

This message today is one that I had delivered before on June 7, 1998. It is a powerful message from a book published on January 01, 1975 entitled: "The Divine Yes" by E. Stanley Jones. I've never plagiarized another preachers message and feel that I have been the recipient of God's gift to be able to enjoyably research, prepare and deliver my own sermon messages. Sermon preparation and delivery are a vital part of my ministry and I fully enjoy it. I also believe that God motivates a good preacher to bring a message that is inspired by God as he speaks through his humble servant. I take great pride in attempting to be a good messenger of God's word...not only for myself but for everyone who listens or reads my message.

However, today is different...for I am going to bring to you an inspiring message from one of the greatest preacher/evangelists and writers that this century has ever known...Dr. E. Stanley Jones. Dr. Jones was a Methodist preacher of God's universal word to all people worldwide and not necessarily influenced by his Methodist background. He has written over 30 widely read Christian books (some million copy sellers), lectured in almost every free country of the world and was a missionary to the people of India for many years where he died on January 25, 1975. E. Stanley Jones has been and will remain a beacon shining brightly in the darkened world, to anyone who is searching for the real truth of religion and personal salvation.

As a side note, our organist Bill Dawson, who is a well know musical composer produced a concert that was performed in NYC revolving around the works of E. Stanley Jones.

During one of my previous pastorates, I was asked to conduct a weekly Spiritual Development Retreat. During my preparation for this retreat series, I used one of E. Stanley Jones books entitled; 'The Divine Yes'. This is a book that is full of direction for broadening our horizon of self-worth both in the spiritual and the secular world. I use this book today for my message to you in an effort that we all can further broaden our own personal horizon of self worthiness in this life....and also that our transition will be easier into the heavenly realm which we call heaven. This message brings great wisdom and inspiration to all who will listen and/or read these words.

The following are words directly from E. Stanley Jones book: 'The Divine Yes'. Listen as I quote his words: *"Jesus is the yes...the divine yes. A great many people today would like to choose Christianity, but they think it might be a no to living. You cannot do this...you cannot do that...if you are a Christian. So that common belief is manifested. This is in fact a denial of the will to live. It is the will to surrender and to die"*.

Now, let's briefly part from the book "The Divine Yes" and listen to these similar words from the apostle Paul in II Corinthians, verse 1; *"our message to you is not "Yes" and "No." For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who has preached among you by us...was not "Yes" and "No," but in him it has always been "Yes."* (v18-20) This verse in II Corinthians tells us that Jesus is the 'Divine Yes'...meaning there never was anything negative in Christ or his words. And it also says that Jesus has been at last sounded (meaning heard).... because, before Jesus Christ, life

was a 'no'. A 'no' meaning that the teachings of Jesus Christ was unknown to the world as he was not in the world yet.

With that scriptural confirmation of Christ becoming the "yes", we return to E. Stanley Jones book, *The Divine Yes*...hearing the following verbatim (exact) words. They are somewhat of a lengthy message, so listen carefully: *"Many of the ancients (meaning before Christ) did not know how to properly say 'yes' to a Spiritual being. During this time one of the greatest 'no's' was Buddha. He pondered deep and long on the problem of suffering. He came to the conclusion that existence and suffering were one. The only way to get out of suffering was to get out of existence. The only way to get out of existence was to get out of desire. Cut the root of desire...even for life...then we go out into the action less, passionless state of nirvana, the state literally of the snuffed-out candle. To the Buddhists, the world is Maya, an illusion. It is not real. Therefore, you cannot change the unreality. What you think is reality is not authentic. It is like a magician creating an unreal, illusory world around you."*

Now moving to another part of the book, we hear these words by E. Stanley Jones: *"The mood of our present-day society is cynicism. Many people are soured on life. They are cynical and negative. This age has three sneers for everything and three cheers for nothing. It has a code of 'I don't believe in this' or 'I don't believe in that' or 'I don't believe in the other'. These people are trying to live by a 'no'. And it is bad and sad...for you can't live by a 'no' and be happy. You have to live by a 'yes'.*

Furthermore, modern materialism comes to a similarly negative conclusion. A very able man who was a chemist and the head of the chemistry department of a great university once said to me; 'man is nothing but combustion, chemical combustion. He flares up for a few years and then finally dies down to an ash.' Dr. Jones replied: 'This is the view of a small brained person. If you have a small view of life (like that professor and his personal philosophy), you are going to be a poor man. If you believe that the end of life is only ash, then you are going to live life as an ash...a nothing! Now, is Jesus Christ a yes, or no? If he is no, we cannot take and accept him, because we can't live by negation (denial). We have to live by affirmation, for we are affirmative beings. Basically, we are a yes people. We can't live by no and cynicism. But so many people live in the no no no world. However, the divine yes has finally sounded. And over against these human no's loudly echo a divine yes is being heard...for in Christ all the promises of God find their yes. God, manifested in Jesus Christ, is the divine yes...not a human guess...but a divine yes. Christ affirms all the promises of God and his divine being. Jesus then is the divine yes to God and his work on earth. Many people have had a question mark as to whether or not there is a God. The Buddhists say, "we don't mind using the idea of God, or rather believing in the idea of God, but we don't use it because if we do use it, we may taint it". They believe that God is so Holy and infinitely above us that mankind may taint this concept. Now Jesus Christ, the human form of God, instead of tainting the idea of God by using it, simply and quietly say; 'he that hath seen me has seen the father.' Then I say, 'is God like Christ? If so, he is a good God and trustable.' I couldn't make God any better than what I see in the face of Jesus Christ. (Dr. Jones says) I was in a Hindu temple and there were frescoes around the walls, rather crude in design. I remarked to the pujari, the man in charge of worship; 'do these frescoes help you in your worship?' He replied; 'you have to be very strong to come into this temple to worship. Otherwise, you might go out and do what the gods do as depicted on these walls.' 'Oh', I said. 'man is going to rise higher than his gods. Show me your gods and I will show you our Man (referencing Jesus Christ).' Inwardly I said to myself, 'isn't it wonderful that I can look into the face of Jesus Christ and know what my heavenly Father is like!'

A little boy was in the states while his father and mother were across the seas as missionaries. Christmas day came and the principal of the school said to himself, "that boy will be homesick for his parents." So, he went to see the little boy and said to him "what would you like most of all on this Christmas morning?" The little boy thought a moment and pointing to a picture of his father on his dresser said, "I would like most of all that my father would

step out of that frame and come and be with me” Folks, that has happened over and over again! God has stepped out of the frame of the universe, and we have seen him in the face of Jesus Christ. He is God with us always...even in our darkest hour. For Jesus Christ is our heavenly Father, personalized and with us always. He is the yes to that cry of humanity for some power over us.

Yes...yes...yes! Human nature can be changed! This too is a promise of God. Some people in the east and west think human nature never changes. It is fixed and unchangeable, and you are destined to be what you are. Jesus give a new birth in this life. The first birth brought us into the natural universe, and the second birth brings us into the kingdom of God. This change is so radical that it is called new birth.

Jesus said to a man rather up in his years: “except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” (John 3:3) Nicodemus looked into his eyes and said, “how can a man be born again when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” (John 3:4) Jesus answered; “no, it isn’t that. But you can undergo a new birth in this life. It is a birth from above, through the Spirit of God.” Many people believe in rebirth; that is, reincarnation, the notion that you come back to earth again and again...physical birth after birth. The Hindus say one must go through eighty-four million rebirths before you can find God and then be released from the cycle of continuous rebirths. To have to come back again and again eighty-four million times before you are free from this samsara (as they call it), is a somber prospect! It is absurd to believe one must be punished in this birth for misdeeds done in the last birth according to the law of karma. This belief has placed a paralyzing hand on India as well as the Buddhist countries where this concept is held.

But Jesus said, yes to a new birth...a Spiritual birth. He said you can be born again in this life. All you have had in a natural birth is through your parents. But with Christ one may be born from above...a heavenly birth. In this rebirth of Christianity, you don’t need to be the kind of person you are now. You can be born anew and this new birth extends to the conscious and subconscious mind. You can start anew. The accumulated guilt of the past is removed...forgiven. You can be released by a new birth. “therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things become new.” (II Corinthians 5:17)

Jesus is that yes that you need to be different and need not be the same. But can human nature be changed? It is more changeable than anything on earth. It is the nature of human nature to change. The new birth can turn you from hate to love, from defeat to victory, and make you a different person. I don’t care what you have been or what you are. Jesus is the yes to a new birth. Furthermore, Jesus is the yes to the fullness of one with the Holy Spirit. We want not only to be spiritually born again but to be able to meet anything that can happen with our new resources, that are full and adequate. This new power is from the Holy Spirit. (repeat)

When the apostles first went into the upper room after the resurrection, they were timid believers. They were behind closed doors and full of fear. Even though Jesus was risen and they had heard the news, they were caught in elemental fears. Then something happened; we call it Pentecost. They personally hadn’t won a single person during the three years they were with Jesus, but in three hours after Pentecost they won three thousand. Something had happened. The Holy Spirit had moved into their subconscious mind and cleansed them and they were new creatures in Christ.

So, now we see and know that Jesus is the Divine Yes that God can and does rule in the innermost recesses of our hearts....and turns our troubled hearts into resolving our most difficult problems. Jesus is in the subconscious mind which we can’t control. There he can cleanse us and make us adequate to do his work. So, Jesus is the yes to the upper room. Jesus is the open door and through him we have a new life. And if you accept him...through the Holy

Spirit, then you become like him. At last, finally, at long last the divine yes has sounded through him...and through each of us. Jesus is the yes to all of God's promises:

- *First, that there is our God...a heavenly Father lying behind this universe caring for all creation;*
- *Second, that this heavenly Father is manifested in the being of Jesus Christ...for each of us...as a Christlike God...so that humankind can be different, and life can be utterly changed;*
- *Third, that the emptiness of our life can be full of goodness, as every recess of our inner and outer being is invaded and empowered by the Holy Spirit of God/Christ.*

That ends the inspiring words of Dr. E. Stanley Jones and I close with these personal words to you: To every individual, Jesus Christ is the Divine Yes, and we who accept him as our Lord and Savior belong to him. And if you belong to Jesus, you belong to the kingdom of God that cannot be shaken through old age or even death. Christianity means that we say yes to our devotion and love for the Trinity (Almighty God, Jesus Christ, Holy Spirit as one entity). The answer is plain and simple. Surrender your life to God's will and you will be saying; yes...yes...yes to the divine yes! And your life will be forever changed.