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SPEAKER #1: Welcome to the Bethany Hour. We come to you under the auspices of grace from the Bethany Baptist Church, Brooklyn, New York; Dr. William Augustus Jones, pastor. Bethany is a church totally committed to a gospel of holism. We believe that Jesus Christ speaks to the totality of the human condition. We commend him to everyone as the all-sufficient savior. We urge you to worship him each Lord's day. Come now and unite with us as we celebrate the goodness of the Lord.

SPEAKER #2: Let us now pray together in the spirit of the Lord. Our father and our God in whom we live, in whom we move, in whom we have our being. We humbly approach the throne at this early watch to give your name thanks; to give your name the honor; to give your name the glory. Thank you, our father, for another privilege just to call on your holy and most righteous name. We realize our father; we are here not because we have been good or not that we are above others in any manner, but we hear our father for you have seen fit to allow the moments of our lives to roll on just a little while longer. I know how we thank you today that we might gather together within these hallowed walls, and I pray Lord God that you'll hear us, that you hear our individual prayers and our collective petitions for our father—we need to hear from thee for we all stand in the need of a blessing from thee and so we'll come today our father to say thank you, thank you for another week's journey. We thank you our God for last night's rest, that you saw fit to dispatch an angel and stare at us as we slept in as we slumbered, and we behold every _____?? another day. Oh, God, no not nothing made by you—your day another beautiful day. You've allowed us oh, God to behold the creation in all of his glory and all of his beauty one more time and we want to say thank you for that. We want to say thank you oh, God for all who have gathered within these hollowed walls in this place, this day and we pray oh, God that we endeavor to worship thee in spirit and in truth—that you will allow us to put ourselves aside and not to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think and open up ourselves oh God that the spirit of your divine son might move toward our very being and fill us with your spirit today if you will. We ask Lord that you will be mindful of many who are desirous of being here today, many of them oh God who are suffering in body. Some are suffering in mind, even in spirit but we're praying now oh God that your spirit might speak through this place today. Even at this early watch you if you will—and as your preacher man come forth one more time in this holy place. May we oh God sit in our ten doors _____?? and allow your word to come within us and around us oh God—to find a place within us and that the light, the light, the light, the light of your son might shine within us oh God—and there's someone who know you not, might be constrained to come to you. Oh, let your light shine oh God—and those of us who are called children, let our lives so shine that someone somewhere may see something within us. Hear us all now, Lord as we further look upon thee asking you to heal hurts and pains today and let your spirit be felt even at this hour. Let it move from heart to heart and from mind to mind and from breast to breast—and may this day oh, God alone be lifted

up to you as an offering of thanksgiving throughout this day. Before we ask it all in the name of your son Christ Jesus, our Lord, we pray.

(choir sings “Oh Lord, Have Mercy on Me” followed by another unknown song)

REV. DR. WILLIAM AUGUSTUS JONES, JR: Here now the lesson as recorded in the gospel of Matthew, chapter 6 beginning with verse 19 and ending with verse 24. “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. The light of the body is the eye. If therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness? No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.” God bless the reading of his word.

(choir sings)

JONES: Let us turn now in the hymnal to the hymn of consecration, selection 14 “Come Thou Fount”

(choir and congregation sings “Come Thou Fount”)

JONES: For this early worship service, I lift up verses 22 and 23 of chapter 6 of the Gospel as recorded by Matthew, Matthew chapter 6, verses 22 and 23. “The light of the body is the eye. If therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!” That's King James rendering of that passage, Philips's translation. Puts it in this vernacular, the lamp of the body is the eye. If your eye is sound, your whole body will be full of light but if your eye is evil, your whole body will be full of darkness. If all the light you have is darkness, it is dark indeed. I've given title to what I hope to say, “If The Light Be Darkness,” that's what I want to talk about for the next little while, “If The Light Be Darkness.” Of all deceptions, the most tragic without question is self-deception. To live the days of your years hugging an illusion and kidding yourself concerning where you stand under the sun, is really to play the fool. Put another way, if you lay claim to that which you are not or to knowledge that you do not possess, you flirt with folly and make mockery of your own existence. You've heard that little diddy “he who knows not and knows that he knows not is wise, but he who knows not and knows not that he knows not is a fool.” Jesus said it another way, said the master, “if the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness?” Nobody ever couched profundity in simplicity the way Jesus did. He had a very unique way of saying deep things—and here he combines paradox and enigma in order to make a great lesson live and last. Look at the language, “if the light be darkness, if brightness be darkness. If your vision be unclear, if your understanding be faulty. How great is the darkness?” The fault, the corruption, the misunderstanding, the stupidity, the foolishness, the ignorance, if you please. “If the light be darkness, then how great is the darkness?” If the conception of reality that you have is unreal, then how great the un-reality? If your understanding

of existence is erroneous—you live in a state of perpetual error. You're a living contradiction of your created purpose. You're really a walking misfit at home with neither God, nor your fellow man. “If the light that is in thee be darkness, then how great is that darkness?” Jesus in this portion of his sermon on the mount, invites his disciples and us to take an inward look. He speaks in pointed personal manner; he tells each one of us: “focus on yourself. Look at you. Turn off your peripheral vision, stop looking out and round about you, look inwards. Look at your soul solitary self. Examine your own eye, your own light, your own understanding—deal specifically and decisively with yourself.” He seems to suggest that an exterior enhancement can never take place in absence of an interior inspection. Look at yourself, check yourself out. Well, this is both good sense and good religion. Our father said it well, “it's me, it's me, it's me oh Lord,” standing in the need of prayer. Shakespeare, the bard of the Avon said in his play, *Julius Caesar*, “the fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves.” The master summons us on an individual basis to a posture of self-examination. He calls it an eye examination. He admonishes us to check our eyesight, our vision—to check what the late George Butree [phonetic] called the optic nerve of the soul. See how you're seeing is, is it clear? Is it blurred? Is it blank? How is my eyesight? What do I see? What do I look for? What do I want to see? You better listen to Jesus as he preaches, the light of the body is the eye. If your eye is sound your total being will be full of light. You are exactly what you see and comprehend and understand, no more and no less. As a man sees, so is he. For to think is to see. This my friends, is one main reason why it's so important to get folks headed right early in life. A lot of people who are all mixed up and messed up now are that way because they got mixed up and messed up as little children. A lot of parents are suffering heartache now because they were not demanding enough when it came to things that really mattered in the development of their children. Oh, it's old but it's true, train up a child in the way it should go and when it is old it will not depart from it. Spare the rod and spoil the child. Remember now thy creator in the days of thy youth, before the evil days draw nigh or the years when thou shalt say I have no pleasure in them. In the morning sew thy seed! All of these games and movies and parties and rapping and what have you—all of these have their place but every child needs exposure to the eternal. Little children need to know that God made the world and sent his son to redeem it. Without a proper God, the way the earth would look is faulty but if the right vision is planted early in life—doing good and making right decisions becomes habitual. Some decisions don't even have to be thought over before you make them if you've been trained properly from your youth up. You choose correctly because you've learned properly but “If the light in you be darkness, then how great is that darkness?” Now that's our problem pure and simple, for the world at large—the light is darkness. There's a lot of knowledge but precious little wisdom. There are many opinions, but little sound judgment. There's a whole lot of sight, but very little insight. We've got a great hunger problem in certain parts of the world today, but it doesn't have to be that way it didn't have to come to this. If rich nations had simply shared their surplus and their technical know-how with smaller nations, God himself would have multiplied the fishes and the loaves but America and others decided to build bigger bombs and now we've got hunger problems in vast areas of the world. “If the light be darkness, then how great is the darkness?” Desegregation for this nation, wars and yet it is darkness. Look at all the time and energy expended, the spilt blood and unnecessary anguish over an issue that God had settled from eternity, but people seem bet on being fools. “If the light be darkness, then how great is the darkness?” What did this nation accomplish in Korea and Vietnam? All that we see is thousands upon thousands of tombstones. “If the light be darkness, how great is the darkness?” —and while we're looking around, we ought to engage in serious introspection. Quite frankly, I don't understand a lot of black folk. I can't comprehend the mentality

of people who tear up their own communities. I can't decipher for the life of me that that brand of behavior that causes one to paint graffiti on buildings in one's own neighborhood. As badly as we need new housing, it seems that buildings are vandalized before completion. "If the light be darkness, how great is the darkness?" There's something wrong with any community that has 15 liquor stores and 10 bars for every drugstore. Something, something strange and irrational and illogical about outsiders controlling the basics of life in our community—the food, the clothing, and the housing. I tell you, "If the light be darkness, how great is the darkness?" and shall I go on to mention the crime and murder rate? Blacks are killing blacks on a wholesale scale. I'm more fearful of blacks than I am of whites—and it's gotten to the point where slogans like "black is beautiful" mean very little to me. Black can be beautiful; ethnicity is all right, but we need ethics as well. Cain and Abel had ethnicity, they were flesh brothers and soul brothers, but you know what happened? Cain killed Abel. "If the light be darkness, how great is the darkness?" In this sixth chapter of the gospel as recorded by Matthew, Jesus cites by inference, three states of being that will darken your vision and corrupt your understanding—and I lift them up briefly. The first is that of false religiosity, which he puts under the banner of hypocrisy. He says now, "whatever you do—don't do your deeds to be seen of men. Don't be a religious show-off. For if that's your thing, you already have your reward. Don't get up to pray and put on a show. For good religion is an inner posture not an outer performance"—and says Jesus, "if you decide to fast, don't advertise it with sad countenance and a hung down head. Rather, look the best you can, anoint your head and wash your face. Look good, for after all it's between you and God." Don't engage in false religiosity, if you do it's a sign of faulty vision and spiritual blindness. Secondly says Jesus, "a sign of darkened vision is that of the misplacement of values." People who put goods ahead of God can't see. Anybody who spends more on amusements than they give for kingdom work is in a state of darkness. I know people who'll pay twenty-five dollars to see a prize fight on closed circuit television and then come to worship—to a live performance of the eternal God at work and give as little as they can. Something wrong with that kind of posture. It's blindness and it makes for darkness. Jesus said, "where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." We give to that which we honor and love—and finally says the master, "a sure sign of darkened vision is an evil eye." Listen to the way he puts it—"if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness." An evil eye darkens your total being. I've never seen it otherwise. People look the way they see. Do you hear me? You look like you see. If you're given to an evil eye, evil it will make its imprint on your total personality and it will be so pronounced that before you open your mouth, before you speak a single word your evil nature will manifest itself. I can walk in a room without you opening your mouth and tell where you stand in terms of your attitude. An evil eye makes for an evil heart, an evil tongue, an evil disposition—you just evil all over and there's nowhere in the world you can be evil and serve the Lord. Now you may live an exemplary life in terms of your conduct, but you will never know anything about the joy of his salvation if your eye is evil. If you're always looking for the beam in somebody else's eye, if you're always anxious to hear the worst about another, if you prefer saying a bad word rather than something good about your brother or your sister, if you enjoy tattling and blackmailing then your eye is evil, and you are full of darkness. If you'd rather destroy than heal, put down than lift up, hinder than help—your vision is darkened, and "If the light be darkness, how great is the darkness?" I love Jesus for a lot of reasons but one of the reasons I really love him is because he went around pulling the best out of people. He told ranked senators, "I forgive you, go and sin no more." He came upon sick people and said, "do you want to be made whole?" He told hypocrites, "let him that is without sin cast the first stone." He told everybody as he would that "men do unto you, do even also unto them." He came with love for the loveless and

mercy for the misdirected—that's why I love him. His grace is made perfect in weakness and thank God his grace is sufficient for all our need and all of us ought to want to walk in the light. I want the light of the world to shine in me every day of my life I pray “shine on me, shine on me, let the light from the lighthouse shine on me!” Our daily prayer ought to be “Lord deliver us from darkness. Lord, let my religion be real. Lord, let my values be straight. Lord, let my eye be sound, let me look for no evil and speak no evil” and if any of us are living in darkness, if your light has become darkness, you won't make your way to Dr. Jesus like the blind man of old and say “Lord, that I might receive my sight. Fix me Jesus, that ought to be our petition, “fix me Jesus! fix me. I want to think right. I want to talk right. I want to look right. I want to feel right. I want to walk right. I want to live right! I want to do right and when I die, I want to die right! Humble me Lord, and let me do your will.” So, regardless of what a world bent on self-destruction does in its crazy mixed-up map—you who claim an affinity with the Lord Christ, emulate him. Walk in the light as he is in the light, and he will make company with you in ways that no other can do. Remember, “if the light that is in thee be darkness, then how great is the darkness?” The doors of the church open, the doors of the church are open. Anybody here this morning who wants to walk in the light? Anybody who wants to declare for Jesus? We're going to sing the hymn of invitation “Have Thine Own Way Lord” selection 125. “Have Thine Own Way Lord.” If you have not submitted your life to Jesus Christ and accepted him as Lord and savior, we bid you do so, and if a chance there are person's present who live in this city who know Christ, but you have no church home, we want to invite you to come and unite with us here at Bethany. Let us stand and lift this hymn to the glory of the everlasting Christ.

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