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Don't Run Away from Yourself

A few days ago I was struck by something extraordinary. In the vicinity of the central railway station in Zurich, on one of the busiest places in the city, I could hear somebody making a flamboyant speech. I thought of one having a political demonstration. By closer scrutiny, however, the following picture emerged: pressed close to the windows, full of goods, stood a group of young people, about 30 all told. In front of them was a young man with a large book in his hands, the Bible. He preached of Jesus Christ, his own revelation and freedom. His face was glistening as he spoke of Jesus and how he was delivered through His Word, of dangerous implications and came to a life of joy and exaltation. His sermon culminated in the enticement to read the Bible and enjoy life through this. Then the group started to sing some religious songs.

What impressed me most: the small audience; in spite of the fact that the street was full of people. Darkness had already started and the thousands of lights from the centre of the city had already drawn a lot of them. Young and old shun the preacher. This might have had a lot of different causes. We are not used to advertisements for religion, especially on city streets. Many would say, the question how they stand to Jesus, they would have to sort this out on their own, and nobody should dare to prey on that, especially from the city streets. Others would have walked past the words of the preacher, because religion was of no consequence to them any longer. We do walk past a lot of windows, because we are not interested in the articles on show. However, I hope that a considerable number of persons walked past the congregation, because they felt uneasy. Discomforts or embarrassments are better avoided if possible. I do also hope that they remember the time when they were members of Bible classes, because over 90 per cent of our population are still educated in religious schooling. How many could have remembered their past by the lonely song of the congregation? How many would have heard and understood the message? How many would have walked away from this time of warning?

Year after year comes the period of Lent as a preacher to us, it remembers us on the holy time in which we come back to us and renew ourself. It remembers us on the common religious inheritance, which we all received. It awakens words in the depth of our hearts in which the big question marks of life and eternity are. It shows the way to the home of God Himself. Lucky is he, who does not run away from himself.

P.A.B.

(Translated from an article in the "Nidwaldner Volksblatt, 23rd February 1977, as a prelude to Lent.)

W.R.