

The City Church, New York

The Prayer of Thanksgiving and Intercession – Sunday December 17, 2006

Bill Borden graduated from Yale University and Princeton Seminary. Then, he gave away his full inheritance in his family's milk business – \$40 million dollars in today's money. And on this day in 1912, he sailed for Egypt to preach the Gospel of Christ to Muslims. He was 25 years old. Four months later he died of meningitis. He'd written these words inside his Bible: "No Reserve! No Retreat! No Regrets!"

Let us pray.

Savior Christ: We call You "Savior" and "Christ" for the best of reasons: You're truly God's Anointed One and our only hope of a way out of the mess where we've mired ourselves. In our delusions and distractions we found no way out for us. But You found a way. Love always finds a way. And Love's way was to be The Way, Yourself. Love's way was to come down into our mess – Love, Himself, with us – to take on our mess as Love's own, and to take it on, all the way down to death, the death that we deserved.

So, Lord, if angels, who never sinned and never needed salvation, could praise You for coming into our fallen world to be salvation to us, how can we not join in their joy?

How can we not raise our voices in grateful rejoicing: Glory to You, O God in the Highest, for Your peace to us on earth, for Your goodwill to us all? Lord, we're amazed at Your coming here among us – knowing what it would cost You, knowing that beyond the stinking cradle in a cattle stall loomed the stark cruelty of a cross on Calvary's hill.

So, then, why should not our life's motto be the same as our brother Bill's: "No reserve! No retreat! No regrets!"? Lord, may it be so for us. You alone are worthy of our holding nothing back, of our retreating not one step, and of our regretting nothing that it has cost us or might ever cost us to follow You wherever You lead, through whatever privileges of pilgrimage we have left in this world before we, too, are called Home to our Father's House. Give us a renewed and renewing wonder at Your coming, for without Your having come to save us, we'd still be dead in all our sin and without hope.

Lord, help us to keep Christmas as our brother kept it – in season and out of season – in an everyday living of glad and fullest obedience of deep discipleship, even unto death.

May we be willing and able to receive Your answer to this prayer we dare to pray by Your will, by Your grace. So, too, we add the words You taught us to pray, saying:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day, our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.