

NIXON'S MINISTER TALKS ABOUT SIN

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Says It Can Be Glossed Over
or Cleaned Out—President
and Family Hear Sermon

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KEY BISCAYNE, Fla., April 22—President Nixon went to church this Easter Sunday and heard a sermon about sin and redemption, about the need to break off old friendships and make a "clean, complete transformation."

"This is Easter 1973 tough talk," said the Rev. John A. Huffman Jr., minister of the Key Biscayne Presbyterian Church. "Sorry, I'd like to give a nice pleasant talk about spring, the cycle of life.

"I don't like to talk about sin, but let's face it, it's a fact in our society and a fact in your life. We can sweep it under the rug and dismiss it and walk out of here into the sunshine, to the tennis court, to the yacht club and to the beach and say, 'We'll, it was nice to have been in church on Easter.'

"Or you can walk out of here transformed," he continued. "The time is perhaps for you to fish or cut bait."

After the President, with his family, had walked out of the church, waving and smiling, Mr. Huffman was asked if his sermon had any connection with the Watergate scandals that have been breaking around the President in the last few days.

"I preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ," he replied. "I speak clearly. You can draw any implication you want to. Whatever the President wishes to make of it was between him and the Lord."

Flowers and Bunnies

The Nixon family made its appearance at 10:45 A.M. for pictures as a soft breeze rustled the blossoms of two baskets of hydrangeas, one topped with a pink bunny and the other with a yellow duck, on the lawn of the Nixon home.

The President wore a medium blue suit and white shirt; Mrs. Nixon a green suit; Mrs. David Eisenhower, their daughter, a yellow vest and blue and white skirt; her husband, a gray suit; Mrs. Edward F. Cox, the other Nixon daughter, a floppy hat and green and white dress, and her husband, an Army Reserve first lieutenant's uniform.

All were smiling. Mrs. Nixon sang out, "Happy Easter" to photographers and reporters and added, "The Easter bunny was by to see me. He brought me some chocolate eggs."

The President, gesturing at the baskets, said, "We have half a dozen beautiful things. We're going to send them over to Children's Hospital."

Then the family drove off in a motorcade to church, the President waving to small knots of neighbors clustered along Harbor Drive.

sources?" Mr. Huffman asked. "Oh, it's humbling to say, 'I'm wrong.' Change hurts. We don't want our life styles to change, do we?"

One reason people refuse to change, he said, is embarrassment—"After all I've done and the life I've lived, what will my cronies think?"

Some, he said, are "culturally religious" but never become serious about it—"You'll notice the business dealings you'll have to stay out of. And you know there'll be some friendships that you have to break off. And there'll be some courageous statements that are going to be tough to make, to your friend, to your enemies and the society around you."

During the sermon, the President appeared attentive. Afterward, the minister and the President chatted, then shook hands outside the church.

The President waved to a small crowd, stepped into his limousine and was driven off. Later he departed by helicopter for an afternoon at Grand Cay in the Bahamas.

No one would say what the President thought of the sermon. Had the President taken it personally? Mr. Huffman was asked.

"I cannot say," he replied. "You are free to quote what he says to me if you are close enough to hear. Otherwise I cannot say."

Trial of Paul Cited

It was the first time that Mr. Nixon had attended Mr. Huffman's church since Jan. 28, when the minister praised the President's efforts in Vietnam that had produced a cease-fire, Mr. Huffman said that the January 12 sermon was the only one in four years that Mr. Nixon had been attending his sermons that he shaped his statements from the pulpit for a Presidential audience.

Today, Mr. Huffman took his text from the 26th chapter of Acts, in which Paul is on trial before the Judean king, Agrippa, in the presence of Festus, a Roman official. At one point Festus tells Paul he had lost his mind from too much learning and Paul answers:

"I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak forth the words of truth and soberness. For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely; for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner."

Mr. Huffman said Agrippa refused to believe because he was "dependent upon Festus for his job. If Festus would communicate to the emperor in Rome that Agrippa had become a religious nut, he could lose out.

"How often do we get into the company of people who are depleting our spiritual re-



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President Nixon with the Rev. John A. Huffman Jr. after Easter service at Key Biscayne Presbyterian Church.