

Nixon Hears An Easter Admonition

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By Lou Cannon

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KEY BISCAIYNE, Fla., April 22—President Nixon attended an Easter service today in which the Rev. John Huffman urged his parishioners to admit their past mistakes and warned them that "It's time, perhaps, for you to fish or cut bait."

The Presbyterian minister said afterward that he did not have Mr. Nixon or the Watergate bugging-case specifically in mind during the course of a delicately pointed sermon he once referred to as "tough talk" for Easter.

"Whatever the President wanted to make of what I said was between him and the Lord," Huffman said after the service. But he added that he believed there was a "relevance to what [he] said to every human situation" and said he had read every story in the Miami Herald this morning before delivering his sermon.

The first section of the Herald contained 11 stories related to the Watergate, including three on the front page.

Mr. Nixon frequently attends services at the Key Biscayne Presbyterian church, where Huffman is the chief pastor, during his weekend visits to Key Biscayne. The church is a two-minute drive from the President's villa here.

Huffman based his sermon on a literal acceptance of the miracle of the resurrection and of the ability of individuals to transform their lives

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through reliance on Jesus Christ.

"How often do we get into the company of people who are depleting our spiritual resources?" he said at one point. "... Oh, it's humbling to say I'm wrong. Change hurts. We don't want our life styles to change, do we?"

He spoke also of the necessity for genuine change, which he said would cost people some of their friendships.

"And there'll be some courageous statements that are going to be tough to make to your friends, to your enemies and the society around you," Huffman said.

Huffman said he would have preferred to give "a nice pleasant talk about the tulips coming up in the spring, the cycle of life.

"I don't like to talk about sin, but let's face it," he continued. "It's a fact of our society, it's a fact of your and my life. We can sweep it under the rug and dismiss it and walk out of here into the sunshine, to the tennis courts or the yacht club, or the beach, and say, 'Well, it was nice to be at church on Easter,' or we can walk out of here transformed individuals by the power of Jesus Christ. It's time perhaps, for you to fish or cut bait."

As Mr. Nixon entered the church, there were two demonstrators with signs. One read, "Is the President Moral?" and the other, "Dean, Mitchell, Haldeman ... Nixon?" (referring to White House counsel John W. Dean III, former Attorney General John N. Mitchell and presidential chief of staff H. R. (Bob) Haldeman).

Huffman said that the President talked with him after the service and that he has counseled Mr. Nixon in the past. He said it would be improper for him to discuss the content of those discussions.

The President left soon after the service for an afternoon of relaxation on Grand Cay, in the Bahamas, accompanied by his friend C. G. (Bebe) Rebozo, who also attended the church service.

See also SFC [AP] 13 Sep 73, this file.

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