



Service of Humanity, by Albert Schweitzer

From my childhood up, I was troubled about my right to happiness as a matter of course and about the pain which prevails in the world around me. As long ago as my student days, it struck me as incomprehensible that I should be allowed to live such a happy life while I saw so many people around me wrestling with care and suffering. Out of the depths of my feeling of happiness, there gradually grew up within me and understanding of the saying that we must not treat our lives as being for ourselves alone. While at the University of Strasburg and enjoying the happiness of being able to study, and even to produce some results in science and art, I could not help thinking of others who were denied that happiness by their material circumstances or their health. Then, one brilliant summer morning during the Whitsuntide holidays, I awoke with the thought that I must not accept this happiness as a matter of course, but must give something in return for it. That morning, with the birds singing outside, I settled that I would consider myself justified in living until I was 30 for science and art in order to devote myself from that time forward to the direct service of humanity. -- Albert Schweitzer (after the age of 30, he served humanity tirelessly till his death in 1965; more at <http://www.schweitzer.org>)