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Speech at the New Canaan Society

C. William Pollard

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Talk for The New Canaan Society

January 15, 2016

It is January 15th, 2016. Another new year. Some of us have once again made New Year's Resolutions. It is a good time to reflect upon the past as we think about our future. There are Tides in our life, both high tides and low tides. I found that life comes with a treasure chest of opportunities and bucketfuls of trials and disappointments.

So what is this life all about? What is the purpose of our lives and, yes, our work? Who are we? Where are we going? Is there life beyond this life?

Last Friday was the 60th anniversary of the death of 5 young men who were killed as they were trying to bring God's good news of the Gospel to the unreached tribe of Auca Indians in the jungles of Ecuador.

One of these young men was Jim Elliot who 6 months earlier had described his answer to the questions he just raised by saying: "He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."

As I raise these questions about the meaning and purpose of life, I do so not as a philosopher or pastor or minister, but simply as one who has spent most of his working life in business to

serve customers, generate a profit and integrate my faith with my work. My life has not always involved work and I am a grateful husband for a wife who has been with me for over 60 years, a father of 4 children, 15 grandchildren and more recently a great granddaughter.

I am a person of faith. I have embraced the redemptive love as a follower of Jesus Christ. My faith has provided a framework for my life. The lessons I have learned have come from successes and failures. The mentors in my life who have played a significant role are my wife and children, Ken Hansen

and Ken Wessner who were my predecessors at ServiceMaster,
Peter Drucker, Warren Buffet and Billy Graham.

Let me share with you just a few of those lessons, even
though a number of them occurred several years ago, but I am
still learning from them:

- 1) The lesson of servant leadership when I joined
ServiceMaster;
- 2) Assuming a major risk is part of achieving an objective;
- 3) Learning from the arrogance of success;
- 4) Understanding the importance of a priority;
- 5) Identifying a purpose for my life beyond ServiceMaster –

a) Management As A Liberal Art

b) The Firm As a Moral Community;

6) The continuing job of learning to combine the joy of faith
with work – Chairman Shao.

I love to sail. I have sailed on the West Coast and the East
Coast, on Lake Michigan and many times on Lake Geneva. I
found that life, like sailing, involved navigating forces out of my
control including the strength and direction of the wind and the
force of the tides that require a firm hand on the tiller in order to
arrive at your destination. And so, too, is life. The question for

all of us as we steer our life, is their room for God's hand on the
tiller?

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