

Evenings With the Master

by
B. H. Bruner





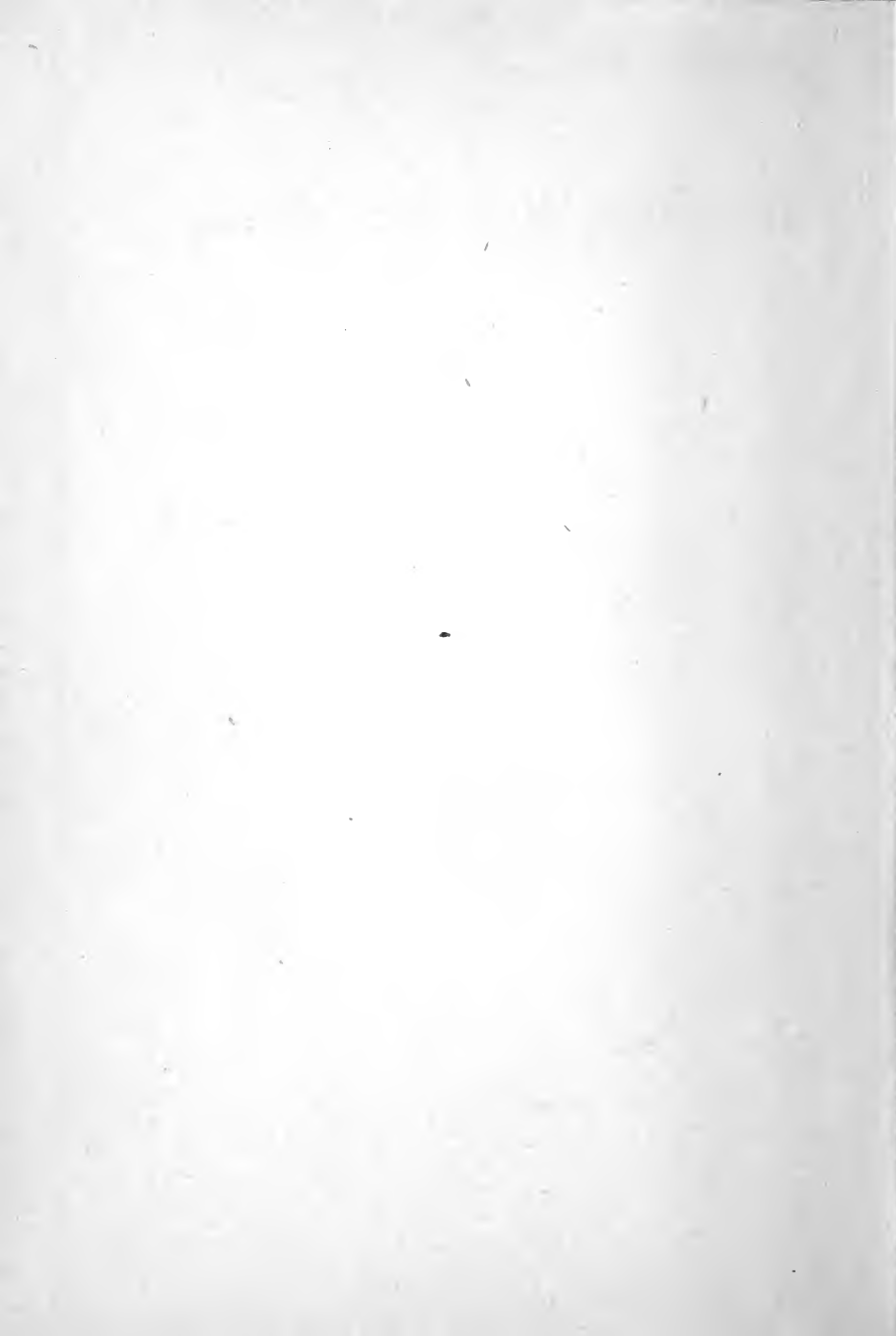
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I DEDICATE THIS LITTLE BOOK TO MY
SISTER BLANCHE, THROUGH WHOSE
SACRIFICE AND INTEREST I WAS EN-
ABLED TO GO TO COLLEGE.

IN THE COOL OF THE EVENING

IN the cool of the evening, when the low sweet whis-
pers waken,
When the laborers turn them homeward, and the
weary have their will,
When the censers of the roses o'er the forest-aisles are
shaken,
Is it but the wind that cometh o'er the far green hill?

For they say 'tis but the sunset winds that wander
through the heather,
Rustle all the meadow-grass and bend the dewy fern;
They say 'tis but the winds that bow the reeds in prayer
together,
And fill the shaken pools with fire along the shadowy
burn.

In the beauty of the twilight, in the Garden that He
loveth,
They have veiled His lovely vesture with the dark-
ness of a name!
Thro' His Garden, thro' His Garden, it is but the wind
that moveth,
No more; but O, the miracle, the miracle is the same!

In the cool of the evening, when the sky is an old story
Slowly dying, but remembered, ay, and loved with
passion still,
Hush! * * * the fringes of His garment, in the fad-
ing golden glory,
Softly rustling as He cometh o'er the far green hill.

—ALFRED NOYES.

INTRODUCTION

The chapters in this book had their beginning in a desire to interpret the life and teaching of Jesus Christ to the men in our army. While the author was in Camp Taylor serving as Religious Work Director for the Y. M. C. A. they were prepared as a series of talks to men and delivered in a week's vesper services in one of the "Y" buildings, under the title, "Evenings With The Master, Introducing Him to Men." They were also delivered in two different "Y" buildings in Camp Meade while the author was serving there as chaplain in the army.

The most urgent need of the men in our army was for a simple interpretation of the great truths of Christianity. Jesus' greatest teaching comes from his conversations, for his so-called sermons were really conversations. The method of approach is that of interpreting these conversations. This method appealed to the men. The conviction has grown upon the author since the end of the war that this same kind of teaching is greatly needed in our churches. The men we met in the camps were the same men we are

meeting now. They simply represented a cross-section of the average life of America. In this conviction the talks were expanded into their present form.

The subjects dealt with are not treated in an exhaustive manner. This is impossible within the space limits. However, they are meant to be suggestive, and it is hoped that some of the lines of thought may be carried further by the reader. For the most part the quotations from the New Testament which are used throughout the book, are from Dr. Moffatt's translation. The author is greatly indebted to a number of friends for suggestions, and especially to Mrs. Bruner. Her constructive criticisms have been an inspiration in their preparation and in all of the author's work. It has been a blessed privilege to attempt to lead men and women nearer to the Master in these simple discussions, and it is hoped that they may prove helpful as they go out to reach a larger audience.

B. H. BRUNER.

Study, Hamilton Avenue Christian Church,
St. Louis, Mo., July 30, 1920.

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AN EVENING WITH A SCHOLAR

Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, who belonged to the Jewish authorities; he came one night to Jesus and said, "Rabbi, we know you have come from God to teach us, for no one could perform these signs of yours unless God were with him." Jesus replied, "Truly, truly, I tell you, no one can see God's Realm unless he is born from above."—John 3:1-4.

AN EVENING WITH A SCHOLAR

These startling words of Jesus form the beginning of a conversation in which He endeavors to explain to this ripe scholar of the Jewish religion, the mysteries and power of the spiritual religion of the Kingdom of God.

Here are some of the great things, aside from our text, which Jesus said in this evening conversation: "Indeed, the Son of man must be lifted on high, just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. For God loved the world so dearly that he gave up his only Son, so that every one who believes in Him may have eternal life, instead of perishing. God did not send his Son into the world to pass sentence on it, but to save the world by him: He who believes in him is not sentenced; he who will not believe is sentenced already, for having refused to believe in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the sentence of condemnation, that the light has entered the world and yet men have preferred darkness to light. It is because their actions have been evil;

for any one whose practices are corrupt loathes the light and will not come out into it, in case his actions are exposed, whereas any one whose life is true comes out into the light, to make it plain that his actions have been divinely prompted." No-where in the gospels is there a more marvelous revelation of the motive and fact of redemption, the true way of salvation, and the consequences for those who refuse to walk in that way. We are not surprised that Nicodemus, great scholar that he was, should marvel and ask how these things could be.

Prof. A. T. Robertson says: "It is notorious that scholars are the most difficult men to teach because they know so much already. In the case of Nicodemus, he had his own theology concerning the Messiah and the Kingdom of God, and it was clear that Jesus did not fit into his theories, and yet he was fascinated by Jesus. The effort of Jesus is a kindly and gracious way of enabling Nicodemus to understand the new viewpoint. He sees into the mind of Nicodemus and may have read the Pharisaic books, for He shows always a thorough understanding of the defects of Pharisaic theology and practice. The new birth, which so puzzled Nicodemus, is

the door into the real Kingdom of God which is spiritual. Nicodemus is a tragic instance of the preacher or teacher of heavenly things who has no personal experience behind his words and merely repeats logical conclusions or the parrot-like repetition of sentences which he has been taught. Jesus shows him his ignorance of the elements of true religion and opens the door into the purposes of God in heaven, the great theological problems that concern God's redemptive love."

As Dr. John Kelman has so well pointed out in his Yale Lectures, the teaching of such scholars as Nicodemus, "with its passion for the elaboration of the truth already given, its constant fallacy of a revelation closed and sealed at some point before contemporary times, its supercilious habit of withdrawing such knowledge as has been attained into a secret lore to which the common worshipers had no access, had all but succeeded in stripping popular religion of the last vestige of intelligibility and reality." It was because Jesus, as a friend of the common people, "had insisted that religion is a thing which men can understand, had drawn it down from ballooning in their misty sky, and had shown it familiarly walking with

them in the ways of their daily life," that such men as Nicodemus were puzzled.

When Jesus allowed Nicodemus to look into the heart of the Father-God of this universe, He revealed to Judaism and to all the world the divine motive of redemption. John 3:16 has well been called "the wonderful little gospel," for in the love of God there is revealed the background of the gospel, the need for the gospel, and the gospel itself. The motive of redemption can be traced back to the very beginning of God's dealings with the race. In the sixth chapter of Genesis we read that when "Jehovah saw that the wickedness of man was great upon the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually; it repented Jehovah that he had made man on the earth and it grieved him at heart." Why was God grieved at the first mastery of sin over the race? Because He loved, for "grieved" is a love term. The grief of God over the sin of the race is not merely the "grief of an artist over a disfigured landscape; but the grief of a love for men so complete that when its beneficent purpose was foiled nothing in the universe could bring solace to His heart. Sin tortures the love whose intent it thwarts, be-

cause the very essence of sin is the breaking of all fellowship, both human and divine.”

John the apostle, writing years after the death of Jesus, urges upon his readers the necessity of rightly understanding the motive of redemption in these words, “This is how the love of God has appeared for us, by God sending his only Son into the world, so that by him we might live. Love lies not in this, not in our love for him, but in his love for us—in the sending of his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” Paul grasped the real motive of redemption, and in his letter to the Romans states it thus: “But God proves his love for us by this, that Christ died for us while we were yet sinners. Much more then, now that we are justified by his blood, shall we be saved by him from wrath. If we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son when we were enemies, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. Not only so, but we triumph in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we now enjoy our reconciliation.”

The gospel is a wonderfully simple statement of this great love of the Father, and yet we have so complicated it in our interpretations and presentations that the

world has not yet realized or appreciated its meaning. The concrete fact of redemption, the objective reality of the death of Jesus upon the cross, has always been accepted as the basic message and the all-prevailing power of the gospel. But the motive back of this concrete fact has led to much bewilderment and endless theories and theological systems. And yet the real meaning of the death of Jesus must be found in the motive of the God who gave his only Son to die for a sinful world.

The various theories of the death of Christ, upon which most of the creeds are based, make very little appeal to the modern man. The Ransom Theory in which Jesus suffers and dies to pay a ransom to the devil, sounds like a crude myth of the earlier ages. The theory of Anselm, that man has contracted an enormous debt, and that nothing short of the death of an innocent victim can ever pay that debt and satisfy God, sounds hollow and mechanical when you try to put it into a modern setting. The Governmental Theory, that the laws of divine justice have been transgressed, the government of God insulted, and that in order to vindicate these principles of justice and righteousness and pacify an angry God a sinless man must

be sacrificed, is incredible to the mind that is thinking in terms of the twentieth century. When we deal with any of the great theories of the death of Christ we find ourselves lost in the realm of the external, the mechanical and the theatrical.

What, then, is the explanation? What is the answer to the "why" of Jesus' death upon the cross? Without denying the fact that there is much of truth in all the attempts which have been made to explain the death of Christ, and that the cross is fundamental in God's relationship to sin in that it presents His deepest reaction against sin; when we look into the heart of the Father of Jesus Christ we are convinced that His reaction against sin in the cross is that of suffering and not of punishment. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. God so loved that he gave—suffered in the giving. "We see the terribleness of sin, not in the suffering of the lost hereafter, but in the suffering of Christ and God for those who have been caught in the awful grip of sin. The final truth of sin is in God's suffering rather than the sinners." And the answer, the motive back of it all was love. The "why" of Jesus' death is the love of our Father in heaven. The motive of redemption which

most nearly meets all the facts, and which appeals most powerfully to the hearts of men, is that of love.

The way of salvation for men, the way in which men are to appropriate redemption, is that of the "new birth" or "the birth from above." Many ways of salvation have been preached by men; Jesus preached only one way. "Truly, truly, I tell you, no one can see God's Realm unless he is born from above." The first great demand of Jesus was for regeneration. In his first public preaching he called men to repentance, urged them to become converted. The birth from above implies more than conversion. In conversion man is an active agent; he turns to God. In the birth from above, or regeneration, man is the passive agent; he receives from God. Conversion is a change of mind, a turning around; regeneration is a change of nature. It is the putting off of the old man and the putting on of the new which Paul talks about. It is becoming dead, unresponsive to sin; and alive, or responsive to God. It was this first great demand that puzzled Nicodemus, and the simplicity of Jesus' statement of the way into the new life of the Kingdom of God has always puzzled men who have sought to

state the way of salvation in dogma and creed.

Jesus makes this birth from above a universal necessity. There are no exceptions and no limits are assigned to the vast obligation. Jesus was not talking about Nicodemus or any other Jew but about any man and every man. Except a man be born from above, except he be regenerated in spirit, receiving new spiritual thoughts and motives, new moral desires and emotions, new will-power, he can in no wise enter into the Realm of God's new order of things.

In his ministry Jesus did not say to all men and women, in so many words, as he did to Nicodemus, "you must be born from above." But when he came in contact with people "he put his finger here and there upon the flaws which were inherent in the very substance of their moral being, and by demanding their removal necessitated the renewal and the rearrangement of the entire life. Upon all of his inquirers Jesus laid such searching obligations as to drive them back upon the necessity of this great imperative command."

The way of salvation, then, is not the way of a system, the way of an opinion, or even the way of an intellectual conviction,

but the way of a new life. Speaking of Paul's words, "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature," Rev. John A. Hutton says: "That, I believe is a generalization, which, better than any other, will be found to embrace and give point to the entire literature of the New Testament. The New Testament does not affect me as a literature whose object is to suggest improvements here and there on what has been ordinary human practice up till its day * * * The New Testament affects me as having for its object nothing short of a reconstruction of human nature. It does not propose to make man a little happier than he was; a little better, as seeing more clearly the meaning of things which baffled his fathers; a little gentler out of respect for a gentle-hearted Saviour. The writers of the New Testament affect me as themselves believing that in Christ an entire historical period, with all its sorrows and failures, had ended, and God in his only Son, had set before the human race an open door. * * * Christ claimed for this new life, which in his own person he founded and displayed, that it alone would work; that his way of living, built as it was upon his own way of thinking about God, would never break down; that it

would help people to stand up to life, and to stand up to death; that it would keep our animal passions in their place; that it would chain up the beast that is within us; that, by its duty of mutual forgiveness, it would save solitary souls from rushing upon the tragic barriers and limits of life."

With a soul on fire with the glories of redemption which had come to the world through the death of Christ, the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews urges his readers to pay closer attention to what they have heard. "For," he says, "if the divine word spoken by angels held good, if transgression and disobedience met with due punishment in every case, how shall we escape the penalty for neglecting a salvation which was originally proclaimed by the Lord himself and guaranteed to us by those who heard him, while God corroborated their testimony with signs and wonders and a variety of miraculous powers, distributing the Holy Spirit as it pleased him."

There is probably no doctrine of the Christian religion that has been stated in more grotesque and repulsive terms than that of the future punishment of those who reject God's offer of redemption in Jesus

Christ. All religious bodies are agreed that the consequence of unbelief is some form of punishment. They are not agreed as to the kind and as to the length of time of this punishment. Dr. Chas. E. Jefferson points out the fact that when we come to an unbiased study of the gospels we are led to the following conclusions concerning the doctrine of retribution:

First, sin is punished; every sin is punished; every sin is punished inevitably. Second, sin is punished naturally, not mechanically, not arbitrarily. Third, sin is punished fairly, impartially, equitably. Fourth, all sins are not equally heinous. Fifth, every man is dealt with according to his deserts. Sixth, the consequences of sin are terrible; they are fearful beyond expression; they are awful beyond the range of thought. Seventh, the penalty of sin does not exhaust itself this side of the grave. Eighth, the penalties of sin become more grievous on the other side of death.

Now the thing concerning this future punishment of sin which Jesus makes clear in his conversation with Nicodemus, is the very thing which has made the doctrine of future punishment so repulsive to our modern mind. The doctrine of God as a

loving Father has found a ready response in the hearts of men. But how, they ask, can we reconcile the doctrine of punishment as it has been stated by the creeds, and even in the New Testament, with a God of love. Men do not believe that the God of the gospels metes out eternal punishment to any of his creatures in an arbitrary way, and it is here that Jesus illuminates the whole discussion. In the words of this third chapter of John the unmistakable teaching of Jesus is that God sends punishment upon no man, but that man, if he is condemned, condemns himself. "And this is the sentence of condemnation, that the light has entered the world and yet men have preferred the darkness to light." Neither the Father nor the Son passes this sentence of condemnation. It is passed by the man who refuses to walk in the light as the gospels reveal it.

Jesus came as the light of the world, as the pioneer of life. Men are punished not because God wills it or desires it, but because of their evil and corrupt lives which they are afraid to bring out into the clear white light of the facts of the gospel. This is the meaning of Jesus' words in the eighth chapter of John when he says to

those Scribes and Pharisees who had challenged his Sonship, "I go away, and you will search for me, but you will die in your sin; where I go, ye cannot come." What was their sin? A failure to believe on Jesus as the Son of God and the light of the world. What was their punishment? Simply the consequences of their own unbelief—eternal banishment from the presence of the Son of God.

How much richer the world is because of this evening with the Master. The conversation must have made a wonderful impression upon Nicodemus, but just how far it influenced his life we are unable to say. He did not openly become a follower of Jesus, but in the end he showed some friendliness for His cause. He may have belonged to that large group of "secret disciples," but this we know, that by his own public decision he never became a power for Christ and the kingdom.

Christ's call today is not for secret disciples. There were thousands of citizens in America who secretly believed that America was right in entering the war, but who, because of business or other reasons never voiced their convictions at first. But the government soon recognized the fact that the war could never be won with se-

cret patriots. Every citizen was forced to declare himself, to make a decision. So it was with the Master, and so it is today. His call was a call for decision. His would-be followers were confronted in the very beginning with a choice between his kingdom and the world. "No man can serve two masters. * * * Ye cannot serve God and Mammon." His call now is for men and women who will stand out openly and fearlessly for him. The greatest fear that ever entered the heart of a soldier was the fear that in a moment of weakness he might play the part of a coward. It is the greatest disgrace that can come to a soldier. There is no more room for cowards in the Army of the Lord than in the Army of our Nation. It was never easier to play the coward in things religious than it is today. So many great issues to face every hour; so many temptations to do the unrighteous and unholy thing; so many tremendous decisions to make that the average soul is bewildered. But the Master calls to something better.

Will you go away tonight as a secret disciple, or will you stand out for Jesus as your Saviour? It may mean, it will mean sacrifice. It may mean the rearrangement of your whole life. But be assured that

any changes you make in your manner of living to fit into the program of Jesus will greatly enrich your life. In our better moments we all recognize "that greater love hath no man than this; that a man lay down his life for his friends," and in our inmost souls we know that sacrifice lies at the very root of our being and at the heart of the universe.

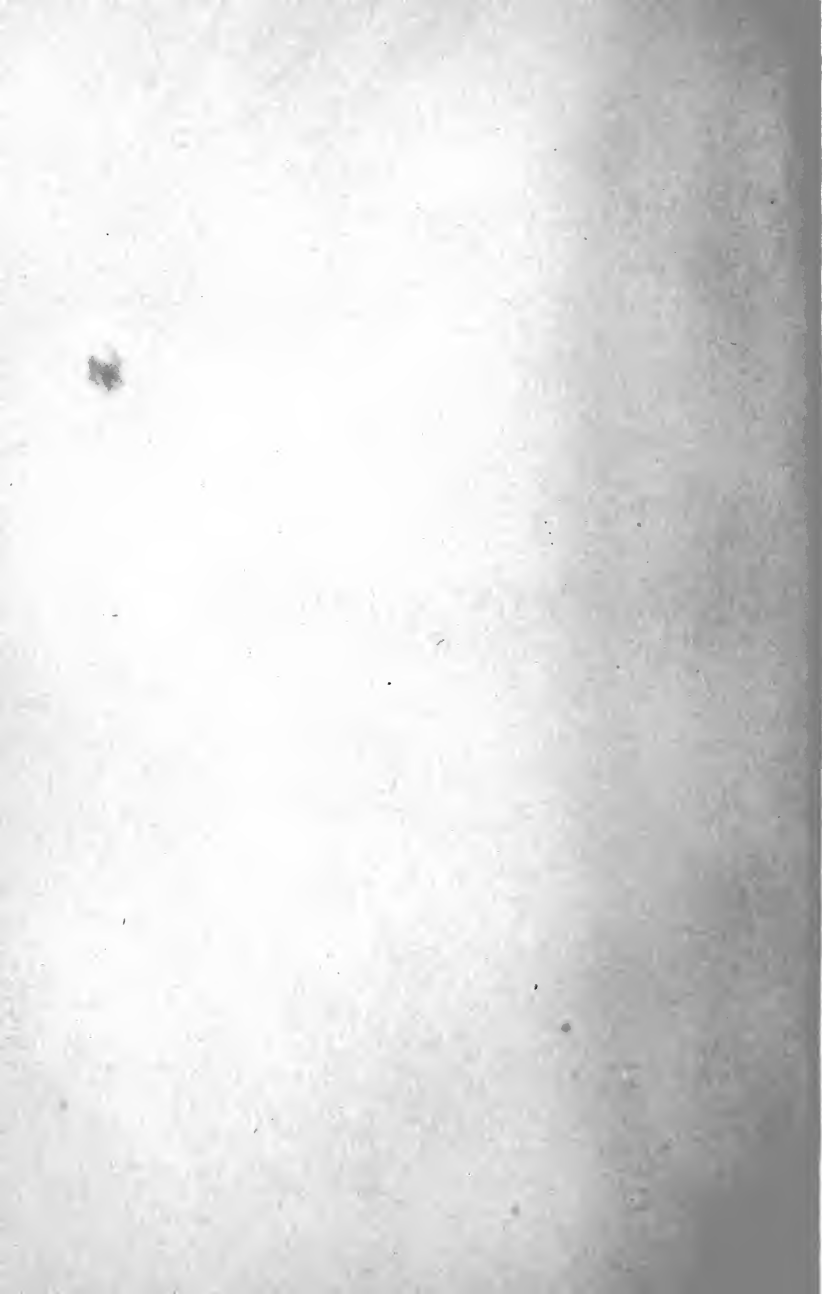
I have read of the Taj Mahal, perhaps the most beautiful tomb in all the world. The East Indian prince loved his beautiful wife as few women are ever loved. In the eagerness of his affection, and as a token of it, he planned a palace for her. But the princess went down into the mysterious land of motherhood, and the babe came back alone. Sitting by her body he cried, "Oh, my beautiful Mahal, you shall have your palace though it be a tomb." After twenty years the wonderful Taj was finished and received its precious dead. A traveler standing in the recesses alone, read aloud the inscription on the headstone. "Sacred to the memory of an undying love." A wonderful echo caught up the words and bore them toward the dome, where like a baffled bird, they fell to the pavement, again to rise, only to flutter down again, but ever repeating the chiseled

words," sacred to the memory of an undying love."

Jesus holds the world in his heart and hand today because his cross stands "sacred to the memory of an undying love"—the love of God who sent his Son, and the love of the Son who gave his life for the larger life of humanity.

When I survey the wondrous cross,
On which the Prince of Glory died;
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine
Demands my love, my life, my all.



AN EVENING IN PRACTICAL
SERVICE

At sunset all who had any people ill with any sort of disease brought them to him; he laid his hands on every one and healed them.—Luke 4:40.

AN EVENING IN PRACTICAL SERVICE

Ministering to the physical ailments of people was an essential part of Jesus' ministry. Closely connected with his mission of teaching in the synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, was his healing of all manner of disease and sickness. There is always a sense of the tragic connected with disease, and yet the picture which is suggested by our text is beautiful and full of meaning. As soon as the hot Syrian sun goes down, the people, having heard that Jesus was in their community, came from their houses bringing their sick and all those who needed healing to the Great Physician.

Dean Farrar has painted the picture in his "Life of Christ" in words which we cannot forget. "What a strange scene! There lay the limpid lake, reflecting in pale rose-color the last flush of the sunset that gilded the western hills; and here, amid the peace of nature, was exposed, in hideous variety, the sickness and misery of man, while the stillness of the Sabbath

twilight was broken by the shrieks of demoniacs who testified to the presence of the Son of God.

A lazar-house it seemed, wherein were laid
 Numbers of all diseased; all maladies
 Of ghastly spasm, and raking tortures, qualms
 Of heart-sick agony, all feverous kinds,
 Demoniac frenzy, moping melancholy
 And moonstruck madness;

and amid them all, not

Despair

Tended the sick, busiest from couch to couch,
 And over them triumphant, Death his dart
 Shook * * *

but far into the deepening dusk, the only person there who was unexcited and unalarmed—hushing by his voice the delirium of madness and the screams of epilepsy, touching disease into health again by laying on each unhappy and tortured sufferer his pure and gentle hands—moved, in his love and tenderness, the young prophet of Nazareth, the Christ, the Saviour of the world.”

Jesus recognized disease as a fact. It was one of the barriers to perfect manhood and womanhood which he came to break down. There is nothing in the teach-

ing of Jesus upon which to build a system of religion which tells people that sickness is unreal and imaginary, and which propagates the idea "that disease is purely a matter of mental notion, to be denied and never spoken of." The deep sympathy of Jesus for the suffering of humanity does not fit into the creed, "that because evil is not truth it is untrue, and, if untrue, unreal."

The danger of dwelling upon the healing ministry of Jesus is that we are apt to over-estimate its importance in his general program. The fact is, that while he did heal many, he did not promise to deliver from bodily disease at all, and there is no universal promise of physical healing in the gospel. The healing of the broken bodies of men was only an incident in the whole ministry of Jesus and in his message for the world.

It has been observed that "the personalities who have powerfully affected the world have not been merely thinkers and teachers; they have been also workers and sufferers." However we may interpret the healing ministry of Jesus we must admit that without this ministry, through which shines his deepest compassion for the sufferings of humanity, one of the

divinest aspects of his character would be lost. We must also admit that when Jesus said to his disciples, "Truly, truly, I tell you, he who believes in me will do the very deeds I do, and still greater deeds than these," he meant that they should carry forward his ministry of healing and power.

The church is to minister to the physical needs and suffering of humanity. The healing of the lame man at the "Gate Beautiful" is an illustration of how the early church fulfilled this prophecy of Jesus. The man looked for a few coins to keep his poor crippled body from starvation. He received new life and new hope, and "leaping up he stood, and began to walk; and he entered with them into the temple, walking and leaping and praising God."

The cripple still lies at the "Gate Beautiful" of the temple. Each Lord's Day as we go to our beautiful and comfortable places of worship we may see him. And in his eyes we see reflected the great modern problem of the church and the dependent classes of society. He is the embodiment of that great mass of sinning, suffering, needy humanity which seeks the heart and

hand of Christian love to lift it up, and stand it upon its feet.

In our ministry to the needy three things must be kept in mind. First, we must recognize the fact that these people must be helped in a material way. Perhaps the finest flower which Christianity has produced so far in its history is charity. But to be effective charity must be exercised in a scientific way. In most communities the church would do well to co-operate in the fullest manner with those agencies which have made a scientific study of conditions and know where help is actually needed. The second thing to remember is that above all material want, people need help to help themselves. We must teach the dependent classes how to be healthy and efficient, how to stand on their own feet, and take care of themselves. This cannot be done by absent treatment. It can be done only through personal contact. Thousands may need your money, but tens of thousands need your hand to lift them up. They need to feel the pulse of a warm heart throbbing in a hand shake. They need to look into loving eyes and see the glow of a soul that has been with Jesus.

Helping men to help themselves was the

method of Jesus. If we have thought that charity, the feeding and clothing of people in need and the caring for the sick and the crippled, is the only contribution which Christianity has made to relieve the suffering of humanity, we have thought wrong. Jesus healed and helped not simply to exercise the emotion of charity which filled his great soul, but to put men and women on their feet and give them a new and better start in life. It is not enough to toss a coin to a beggar now and then or write our annual check for the Associated Charities and the Salvation Army to satisfy the emotion of charity in our souls. We must look upon every unfortunate man, whatever be his ill, as an object of our love and care, and extend the hand and speak the word which will give him a new start in life.

The third thing is this. When we have helped people in a material way; when we have taken them by the hand and inspired them to help themselves, we must see that they have a community, a city, a state and a nation in which human beings can live at their best. Why lift a poor, weak creature to his feet, inspire him with new hope and courage, and then send him back to live under conditions which break

down the strongest of men? There are sections in every great city, and in many of our smaller cities, in which those who must live there day in and day out are predestined to a life of vice and sin. These open sores of our modern city life must be cleansed and healed before we have done our whole duty as a church to the dependent classes. These are some of the "greater things" which Jesus has set for his church to accomplish. It is along these roads that the church must travel in its healing ministry if it would be true to its mission.

In this evening of practical service one of the most outstanding characteristics of the people of Jesus' day is revealed. When they found him, at once they began to bring others to him. Not only did Jesus spend many of his evenings in healing men; his disciples and friends spent many of their evenings in bringing their companions within reach of his healing power.

It is said that "out of nearly forty specific cases of healing recorded in the four gospels, only six came of themselves. About twenty cases were brought to Christ by others, and were healed, not primarily because of their own faith and asking, but

because of the faith and asking of those who brought them. * * * Notice also that these twenty cases who were brought by others were hard cases, persons who would not or could not come of their own accord. Is this an accident? Is it unimportant that while Jesus was here on earth nearly three times as many people came to him because they were brought by others, as came by themselves?" Should it be any different today? There are many people all around us who will not attend religious services or come in contact in any way with Jesus Christ as a powerful Saviour unless they are brought by those who are interested in their spiritual welfare. You can, if you will, make the close of many a day glorious by leading some friend into the presence of the Living Christ.

Out of the literature of the Interchurch World Movement I take two cases which illustrate how far short the church in our day has come of measuring up to this New Testament ideal. Two strong successful business men in a certain community were sent by their pastor to call on a prosperous neighbor in a friendly way, and talk with him about Christ. After the social courtesies were passed one of the men said, "Our pastor sent us to see you and

to say in a friendly way that both he and we would be mighty glad if you would join us in being a loyal follower of Jesus Christ." The man was so astonished that he said, "Let me be sure that I understand you. Do I understand that you two men and your pastor are simply interested in my being a Christian?" "That is the simple proposition," replied one of the visitors. "Well," he responded, "that is mighty strange. I have had many calls from the church, some for money and some for other things. But I have never had a visit from any one who was interested in me for my own sake. You may tell your pastor that I will be in my office next Tuesday afternoon at four o'clock, and if he can show me how to be a Christian I will be mighty glad." The pastor went. The man became a Christian, joined the church and is now a powerful influence in that community. He came to Christ because two of his friends were interested enough to bring him.

A group of lay officials complained of the great spiritual indifference in their community. Their leader said, "Let us see if there is spiritual indifference here. If so, where is it?" Then he said to that group, "How many of the men present

have had a conversation about Christ with any man in this community, outside the walls of the church, during the past twelve months?" Not a man had done it. "How many have done it in the last five years?" the leader urged. Not a man responded. Then said the leader with some emphasis, "There is spiritual indifference in this community, but it is not all outside of the church." This experience may be duplicated in many churches, and there are thousands outside of the church in every community who have never been urged by their Christian friends to surrender their lives to Jesus. The redemption of the world waits upon the bringing of men and women into saving contact with the Great Healer of both body and soul.

The real greatness of Jesus was the greatness of a servant. His miracles were not great because of their show of supernatural power, but because of their ministry to people in need. And Jesus was a servant not because he was forced to be. He might have spared his young life from the rigid exactions of an unpopular leadership, lived quietly in Nazareth plying his trade as a carpenter, and died of a good old age. Jesus was a servant because he deliberately chose to suffer with and for

his people. He called himself the son of man and one of his most remarkable sayings was, "The son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister. * * *"
Jesus lived for others. The burden of his teaching was for the sake of others. He spoke of himself only that he might show men the way to the Father. The supreme fact of his life that stands out above all others is that he lived and died for others. Dr. James I. Vance has said of him, "Had he merely been a great teacher, the world would have admired him. But because he became a minister and took the place of a servant, the world worships him. * * * He came not to be a monarch but a minister, and because he became a minister he has become a mightier than any monarch."

The greatness which becomes mighty through playing the role of a servant is the greatness which the world admires. If the last few years have taught us the real meaning of the "might makes right philosophy"; they have also exalted to the highest place in our estimation the man and the nation which renders an unselfish service to humanity, and given us a new appreciation of the real greatness of Jesus Christ.

Somewhere, I have read of a lawyer in a county-seat town who one year actually earned fifty dollars. He lived like a prince. He had a summer home on the river and a winter home in the south and a house in town. He had a private income of considerable size. But his office was never crowded and nearly every one in the place considered him as a joke. He had social distinction. He and his wife dressed well. They drove a fine car, but no one took them seriously. Running for mayor he received about three votes.

Now contrast this with another office in that town. The doctor, who was much sought, had been some years before a courteous clerk in a drug store. He had worked his way through medical college. Coming back to his home town he had hung out his shingle and waited. He waited long. People began to say that the young doctor was a failure. One day three men were terribly scalded in a boiler down at the water works. The leading physician was called and after a hurried and improper examination gave them up to die. All three were poor men. At this juncture the young doctor went to the pompous physician and asked for the opportunity of serving those men. With a wave

of his hand it was granted. Then the young fellow went down to the poorest part of the town, into the miserable homes of these men and stayed there day and night, giving them every attention that the profession knew. So faithful was he that he kept glowing the spark of life remaining and slowly and painfully nursed the men back to recovery. The people of this town heard of this good work and began to turn to the young doctor. Today his offices are crowded; and yet he is still courteous and gracious serving rich and poor alike. He won his way into the heart and confidence of his community because he was among them as one who served.

The greatest man in any community is the one who serves most. The test by which we shall stand or fall in the judgment is the test of generous service to humanity in the name of Jesus Christ. The most terrible heresy is not that of denying some proposition in the creed of the church, but of selfishly withholding from a needy world some service which we can give to enrich its life. The real measure of our usefulness to the world is our service, and the measure of our service will depend upon whether or not we have made a complete surrender of our lives to Jesus

Christ the world's greatest servant. He is the Great Companion who will keep us in the line of duty.

Where cross the crowded ways of life,
Where sound the cries of race and clan,
Above the noise of selfish strife,
We hear Thy voice, O Son of Man.

In haunts of wretchedness and need,
On shadowed thresholds dark with fears,
From paths where hides the lure of greed,
We catch the vision of Thy tears.

The cup of water given for Thee
Still holds the freshness of Thy grace;
Yet long these multitudes to see
The sweet compassion of Thy face.

From tender childhood's helplessness
From woman's grief, man's burdened toil,
From famished souls, from sorrow's stress,
Thy heart has never known recoil.

O Master, from the mountain side,
Make haste to heal these hearts of pain,
Among these restless throngs abide,
O tread the city's streets again.

Till sons of men shall learn Thy love
And follow where Thy feet have trod;
Till glorious from the heaven above
Shall come the city of our God.

AN EVENING ALONE WITH THE
FATHER

Then he made the disciples embark in a boat and cross before him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds; after he had dismissed the crowds he went up the hill by himself to pray. When evening came he was there alone.
—Matt. 14:22-24.

AN EVENING ALONE WITH THE FATHER

When Jesus heard of the death of John the Baptist he sought the privacy of a desert place. He wanted to be alone, but it was impossible for that voice which had spoken a message of healing, and those hands which had touched broken and fevered bodies into new life, to evade the crowds. So eager were the multitudes for his ministry that they had anticipated the place of his retirement and when the little boat landed, they were there to meet him. Touched again with the tragedy of their infirmities he walked among them healing their ills of body and soul and the last rays of the dying sun saw him creating in a miraculous way the bread which they had neglected to bring along for their nourishment. Then, when evening came he dismissed the disciples and the crowds, and the gathering shades of night found him alone in a solitary place with his Father. He sought the "silence and solitude of the mountains. Amid the hills, and with the long shadows cast by the moonlight on the sward, in the sacred house and temple of

God he bowed himself." This picture of the Master is not only one of the most beautiful in the record of his life, but it has in it one of the most needed messages for our weary, restless age.

In a splendid essay called "Companions of The Heart," Joseph Fort Newton has voiced one of the most urgent needs of our day. "The voices of the age," he says, "call men away from the inner life; psychology seeks to dissolve it into mist and dreams; and we are almost imperceptibly led to neglect it. Today, even more than when Emerson wrote, 'things are in the saddle and ride mankind', and if—

Through the harsh noises of our day
A low, sweet prelude finds its way—

it is often hard to hear. Our life is obsessed by things external; our literature gives us little more than passing thoughts of things eternal. Science has unveiled the incredible vastness of the universe, and what we need now is to rediscover the still greater heights and depths and richness of the Kingdom of Heaven which is within." This lack of emphasis upon the reality of the inner life is nowhere felt more keenly than in an approach to the subject of pray-

er. When "things are in the saddle" men do not pray, and this is one of the most serious facts of these post-war days. The Prayer Meetings where they are still conducted, are not crowded. The family altar is a rare institution in our American homes, while the quiet hour which has been emphasized by several religious organizations, notably the Christian Endeavor societies, has no place in the lives of thousands who otherwise would be called good churchmen and orthodox Christians.

Before the war we were conscious of a dearth of prayer in our churches. To the ordinary Christian prayer had come to mean the attempt to gain in man's hour of need, and in his consciousness of his own weakness, the aid of God. Such a conception of prayer as a cry of distress, a confession of human impotence, tended toward the exaggeration of the importance of petition as the chief act of prayer. Through prayer man could prevail upon God to do certain things which He otherwise would not have done. Prayer had become a means of getting God's sanction upon the schemes and plans of men and His aid in carrying them out. Now, we are aware of the fact that the average man was coming

to feel a pronounced distrust in prayer that originated in human need and extremity. He was, as someone has suggested, prone to feel much like Milton says Adam did after he had sinned.

If by prayer

Incessant I could hope to change the will
Of him who all things can, I would not cease
To weary him with my assiduous cries:
But prayer against his absolute decree
No more avails than breath against the wind
Blown stifling back on him that breathes it forth.
Therefore, to his great bidding I submit.

But when the storm of world conflict broke in 1914 and drenched the earth with blood and tears, even those who were skeptical were brought to their knees. In their extremity they returned to the conception of prayer which they had been ready to discard. Reeling to and fro like drunken men, at their wit's end, they cried unto the Lord in their trouble. France, which before the war had been a land of atheists began to pray. In England, where according to W. Robertson Nicholl a steady drift of atheism was carrying the nation away from God and Christ, the people began to pray. The English women, sacrificing all, enduring all that the war placed

upon them, when asked for the reason of their courage in the face of hardships and dangers, and the source of their endurance, gave the quiet reply, "We pray." And in America, in the face of a spirit of greed and materialism which called forth the following criticism of our life, "There is very great danger that when the history of the world conflict be written, America's part will be that of a supposedly neutral onlooker, shrewdly speculating the while how many millions of dollars may accrue to the United States because of Europe's misfortune," the people began to pray. When the call to prayer was sounded throughout the length and breadth of the land, when at noon-time the people heard a new Angelus in the shrill whistles of industry mingled with the peals of deep-sounded church bells, they left their busy tasks and prayed.

Now that the crisis has ended and the emotional excitement has abated, the old skepticism is returning. Men who prayed during the war are not praying now. In fact, as they think of their experience, they are convinced that their prayers did not amount to anything in the final issues of the conflict. Mothers and wives and sweet-

hearts who prayed during the war are not praying now. Boys who prayed in the camps and in the trenches are not praying now; they are not even attending the services of the church as regularly as they did before, and hundreds of them have dropped out of the church altogether. Surely in the face of conditions which we know to exist, there is need for some clear thinking on the part of the church concerning the subject of prayer.

When we attempt to analyze the situation we find that this skepticism concerning the value of prayer is based upon certain conclusions of modern science, and upon the experience of men and women who have been devout and sincere in their prayer life. Modern science has greatly enlarged our conception of the material universe. When men believed that the earth was the center of the universe, it was easy to believe that all of God's attention was directed towards the affairs of the earth and his children who dwelt there. But as they have come to see the immensity of the universe it is hard for them to believe that God spends all his time in hearing and answering the petty and selfish petitions of those who pray. This enlarged conception

has made the average man doubt whether God has much to do with the petty affairs and problems that go to make up the round of his existence.

In another way modern science has strengthened this skepticism concerning the value of prayer. It is becoming evident to most people through conclusions which have been substantiated by fact, that this vast universe of which we are a part is controlled throughout by unchanging and unchangeable laws. This being the case, it is natural that some very pointed questions should be asked concerning a conception of prayer which professes to be able to get things which are not forthcoming through regular processes of natural law working in the universe. Why pray for rain, or for it to stop raining? If this conclusion of science is true, it rains or it does not rain, because of certain atmospheric conditions which are subject to the laws of the universe and not the desires of men. Why should we pray for the safety of a loved one upon the ocean, when the winds and the waves are obedient to the laws of nature and not the wishes of men? We cannot evade these questionings of sin-

cere and devout souls, and we cannot deny the fact of the skepticism which is back of them.

The most dangerous phase of this skepticism, however, is that which is based upon the experiences of men and women who are not praying because they say they have through long years, never received any adequate or satisfying answer to their prayers. In days of trouble and extremity they have not seen the face of the Father, neither have they heard his voice speaking peace to their souls. Here we face some of the deepest tragedies of the human soul. Here is a father who has prayed for the success of his business that he might adequately rear his family. His business has gone to smash through no seeming fault of his own efforts or judgment, but because of forces which he could not control, and he has stopped praying. Here is a home where an only child has been the object of the prayers of parents who have dreamed great dreams for its future and who have sacrificed their best to make those dreams come true. Just as the child is ready to step out and take its place in life and fulfil those dreams, death stalks across the threshold and the idol is broken

and shattered upon the floor. Broken hearted and bewildered these parents stop praying. Here is a mother who prayed earnestly, and far into many weary, sleepless, nights that her boy might return from France. He has not returned and that mother has shut prayer out of her life. These people have been orthodox Christians and they have prayed as the church has taught them to pray through long years, and yet they have ceased to pray because after repeated efforts they have received no answer to their deepest cries. It is this practical skepticism that accounts for the fact that thousands are not praying today.

What then? In the face of this skepticism shall we give up and stop praying? In the following paragraph from a discussion of prayer by John Haynes Holmes, in which these two objections are mentioned along with others, we find the true solution. "I believe that the objections which have been properly levelled against this conception have been objections not to prayer itself, but to a false idea of prayer which has unfortunately found lodgment in the human mind. I believe that prayer, when rightly understood and practiced, is the

noblest act of which a human being is capable, and is something absolutely essential to the purity and integrity of the soul. And I believe that it is the task of our age, not to get away from the idea and practice of prayer altogether, because a false conception of its observance has been impressed upon our attention, but to get back to that true spirit of prayer, which is reflected in the utterances of all the great souls of the centuries gone by, and then yield ourselves to this spirit in spirit and in truth."

Where shall we turn for a true conception of prayer? We may turn with great profit to Judaism. To the Jew, prayer that was merely the expression of a human need was no prayer at all. To such an appeal, simply the cry of human distress, Jeremiah said God would be deaf. From such expressions as, "Trust in Him at all times, ye people; pour out your hearts before him;" or "These things I remembered and poured out my soul within me," it is evident that for the devout Jew prayer meant the turning of the heart to God as a natural expression of the religious life, and not merely as a petition in time of need.

Our greatest and most accurate source of knowledge on the subject of prayer, so

far as Christians are concerned, lies in the example and teaching of Jesus himself. Three facts in his life have never been questioned—that he believed in prayer, that he prayed himself, and that he taught his disciples to pray. The disciples were all men of prayer. They were acquainted with the prevailing conception of prayer in their day. John had taught some of them how to pray, and yet after seeing Jesus in prayer and hearing the utterances of his great soul, instinctively they recognized themselves as mere amateurs in the art and came to Jesus with the request, “Lord teach us to pray.”

Back of Jesus’ idea of prayer was the consciousness of his unique relationship with the Father. He was God’s Son. The mission he was sent to carry out was the Father’s mission. His word was not his own but the Father’s. Prayer became then, the natural expression of his soul to the Father in communion, and in his endeavor to carry out His will. Prayer was not a method by which he sought to secure the aid of God in carrying out his program, but a method whereby he sought to bring himself into line more completely with the program and will of God.

All of Jesus' teachings on prayer are enforced by his own example. He prayed at every important crisis in his ministry. It was his daily habit. In everything, for everything, and before everything he prayed. In the beginning of his life-work he prayed (Luke 3:21). It was his support for daily work (Mark 1:35). It was his refuge in popularity and success (Luke 5:15, 16). It was his preparation for solemn duties (Luke 6:12, 13). It was his attitude in a time of great spiritual elevation (Luke 9:28, 29). It was his solace in time of sorrow (Matt. 14:13). It was his retreat in times of spiritual distress (Matt. 26:36; Mark 14:32).

Only a few of Jesus' prayers are recorded. His prayer in Matthew 11:25, 26 is one of praise and thanksgiving to the Father. His prayer in John 12:27, 28 is one of submission to the will of the Father in an hour when his own soul was disquieted. His wonderful prayer in John 17 is the masterpiece of all intercession. And in the prayer in the garden, which is recorded in Luke 22:42, we see the final surrender of his will to the Father, and the final clash of the old and the new conception of prayer. For a moment, with the terribleness

of the cross before his vision, he urged the Father to take away the cup, but it was only for a moment. In his final plea, "but Thy will not mine be done," we have the secret of all prevailing prayer—not that God should help us to do our will, but that He might help us to do his will.

The most comprehensive teaching of Jesus on the subject of prayer, the teaching which is the basis of all other in the New Testament, is found in the sixth chapter of Matthew. Here the fundamental idea of true prayer is that God is our Father. Hence, men are taught to pray "Our Father who art in heaven." Over against the conception of prayer which ended in vain and empty repetitions to a deity who was reluctant to grant gifts to men, Jesus places the conception that "Our Father knoweth what we have need of before we ask him." The whole teaching of Jesus in this chapter is that prayer should be the communion of a soul with the Father, the value of this communion to be determined by the complete surrender of the soul to the will of the Father. Men are to seek first the Kingdom of God, that is, seek first to put themselves in line with the great purposes and plans of God for the world, and then expect

that the other things, which have so often been the chief burden of our prayers, should be added unto them. In the light of this teaching it is small wonder that the prayers of many people are never answered. Thousands of people who have called themselves good Christians, and who have held high positions in the church, have never approached this conception of prayer. Their chiefest concern has been for themselves and the burden of their prayers has been for God's blessing upon their own enterprises. This explains the tragedy of those who have ceased to pray because their prayers have not been answered.

Prayer that puts "these other things" first is not Christian prayer, and it can never be answered. Only the prayer of a soul that has become aware of God's great plans for the redemption of a world, and that has consciously put itself in line with those plans in an effort to help in their completion, can expect any answer to prayer. "All these things" makes room for all of the petitions and desires that may legitimately be brought to the ear of our Father in heaven. It is not that God is not interested in his world, but that he de-

mands an interest on the part of his children for its welfare. God wants sons and daughters who will commune with him about the purposes of High heaven for the world, and not nagging boys and girls who are constantly begging for the goodies which he is only too glad to give to those who love him.

Prayer then, according to the example and teaching of the Son of God, is not an effort on the part of man to change God, but to change himself. It is an attempt not to get God to adapt his mind to man's selfish ambitions and desires, but to bring these ambitions and desires in line with the will of God. It is not an attempt to persuade God to reduce the universe to the measure of man's existence, but to enlarge man's soul to the measure of divine purpose. As William Watson in a little volume on Prayer has so well said, "The purpose of prayer is not to change the will of God, but to make us fulfil it. The more intimate our friendship with God, the more wisely shall we pray. We shall discern something of the design God is working out in us, and we shall pray not because we want something, but because we are eager to take the full profit of our heritage

and cultivate that spiritual kinship with God which the world tempts us to forget.”

An evening alone with the Father—how much we all need it, and we may have it for the asking. God is always there ready to meet us in some solitary place, and he is always ready to hear us when we pray as Jesus prayed.

Each soul has its own secret place,
Where none may enter in,
Save it and God—to them alone
What goeth on therein is known—
To it and God alone.

And well for it if God be there,
And in supreme control;
For every deed comes of a seed,
And lonely seed may evil breed
In any lonely soul.

But none, except of his own will,
Need ever lonely be;
If he but quest, his Royal Guest
Will quick provide him with the best
Of all good Company.

AN EVENING IN THE STORM

That same day when evening came he said to them, "Let us cross to the other side;" so, leaving the crowd they took him just as he was in the boat, accompanied by some other boats. But a heavy squall of wind came on, and the waves splashed into the boat, so that the boat filled. He was sleeping on the cushion in the stern, so they woke him up saying, "Teacher, are we to drown for all you care?" And he woke up, checked the wind, and told the sea, "Peace, be quiet." The wind fell and there was a great calm. Then he said to them, "Why are you afraid like this? Have you no faith yet?" But they were overawed and said to each other, "Whatever can he be, when the very wind and sea obey him?"—Mark 4:35-41.

AN EVENING IN THE STORM

In this evening scene in the life of the Master, the two great characteristics of his personality stand out in bold contrast—his humanity and his divinity. In the tired and weary Jesus, asleep in the stern of the boat after a busy day in serving the multitudes, we have the picture of a man. In the Jesus who awakens to calm the strong elements of nature with his simple command, we hear the voice and witness the power of one who was more than man.

It has always been hard for men to understand how Christ could be both human and divine and the two conceptions of his nature which are so wonderfully blended in the gospel records, have divided the world into two theological camps. This is due to the fact, as Henry Van Dyke has so clearly pointed out in his great lecture on "The Human Life of God," that the later church fathers, "instead of looking at God through his revelation in Christ, began to look at Christ through a more and more abstract, precise, and inflexible statement of the metaphysical idea of God. It be-

came necessary to harmonize the Scripture record of the life of Jesus with the theories of the divine nature set forth in the decrees of the councils and defined with amazing particularity in the writings of the theologians. In the effort to accomplish this two main lines of thought were followed. One line abandoned the belief in Christ's real and complete humanity, and reduced His human life to a tenuous and filmy apparition. The other line distinguished between His humanity and His Divinity in such a way as to divide Him into two halves, either of which appears virtually complete without the other, and both of which are united, not in a single and sincere personality, but in an outward manifestation and a concealed life, covering in some mysterious way a double center of existence." While the extreme results of these two lines of thought were condemned as heresies, they were not entirely destroyed. "They continued to make themselves felt powerfully and perniciously; now in the direction of dissolving the humanity of Christ into a mere cloud enveloping His Deity; and again in the direction of dividing and destroying the unity of His person in the definition of His dual nature."

The influence of this type of thinking, and this method of interpreting Scripture is still felt, and not until we can forget some of the conceptions of Christ which have been inherited from an age of theological speculation and controversy, and come to a simple study of the New Testament, can we approach a solution of our problem, or an answer to the age-long question—"How can Jesus be both human and divine?"

When we come to a reading of the gospel narratives, unbiased by any notion of the kind of a Jesus they ought to reveal, we are struck, first of all, with the fact that the writers believed in the humanity of Jesus. They tell the story of his life as that of a man who lived and died in their midst. Two of the writers speak of his miraculous birth; the others do not mention it. They tell us how he was recognized in the communities where he preached and in the synagogues where he taught as the son of Joseph the carpenter. His growth from childhood to manhood is pictured as that of any normal boy, and there is no hint that he had any special training at the hands of his parents which was not given to the other children in the family. His mother looked upon him as her son, and

his family thought him beside himself because of his intense interest in his mission. We are told of his weariness and hunger, and he was sleeping so soundly that he was not aware of the fury of the storm which threatened destruction. He was troubled in spirit many times, and in the presence of sorrow he shed tears of compassion. When his disciples insisted upon accurate knowledge of coming events he confessed that his knowledge was limited, that there were some things which he did not know. He confessed the limitation of his power, in leaving a certain city because he could do no mighty works there. In the face of death he acted like a man, and the cry of anguish from the cross was the cry of a human heart. Unaware of the tremendous significance of what they were doing, and with a beauty and simplicity of style which has never been equaled, these unlearned men told the life-story of a man who had been their companion and friend. They do not in any way suggest that they had been living with a ghost, or a man who was acting a part. There is not the slightest evidence that the Jesus they are telling us about is a character which they have created to fit into any well worked out

plan. If Jesus was anything, we are convinced from the records that he was a human being.

When we have lost the sense of the humanity of Jesus we have lost one of the most vital elements in the gospels. The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews dwells at length upon the value of a Saviour who knew what it was to be human. Paul glories in a Saviour who has left the riches of heaven to experience for the sake of men the poverty of the earth. If Jesus was not really human how can we account for his temptation? What shall we do with his experience in the garden? What shall we make of his death, if his humanity is not real? Do not those events in his life which most clearly mark his human nature, brand him as a mere actor and his life as a mere piece of stage play, if we are to believe that all the time he was essentially God and not man? If Jesus was any less than the human personality which the gospels picture him to be, then, they have given us a false revelation of God. Take away the human Jesus and the world has lost its best friend. For it is not the limited, restricted, idealized Christ of the creeds and the theologies of men that has reached the heart of humanity; but the free, human Je-

sus who walked among men as one of them and who was interested in their struggles and problems. It was this Jesus whom the "common people heard gladly," and it is this same loving, winsome personality, who will command the following of the common people today when we allow him to break through the walls which have been erected around him, and once more stand in their midst. For, quoting again from Dr. Van Dyke, "if the Father truly spared not His own Son, but delivered him up for us all, then the Father also suffered by sympathy, making an invisible sacrifice, an infinite surrender of love for our sakes. Then the Son also suffered, making a visible sacrifice and pouring out his soul unto death to redeem us from the fear of death and the power of sin. And this becomes real to our faith, and potent upon our souls only when we see the human life of God, agonizing in the garden, tortured in the judgment-hall, and expiring upon the cross. Then we can say

Oh Love Divine! that stooped to share
Our sharpest pang, our bitterest tear."

But Jesus was more than human. The same men who saw in him an attractive human friend saw something more. They

saw in him "the Christ the Son of the Living God." In Matthew's gospel he is called "Immanuel, which is, being interpreted, God with us." Mark, whose gospel is undoubtedly the oldest of the four, begins his narrative as, "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God." Luke tells of the miraculous birth and records the song of the heavenly host, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among men of good will." While John, writing out of a life of rich experience in which he had ample time to know all the facts and observe the power of the risen Christ in the new-born church, everywhere speaks of Jesus as the Son of God and identifies Him as "the Word which had ever been with God, and was God, became flesh and dwelt among us."

A great philosopher has said that a "great man condemns the world to the task of explaining him." This is what the disciples of Jesus sought to do in the gospels. Their explanation is written large on every page, but it is most accurately expressed in Peter's confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God." To them Jesus was what he claimed to be, the Son of God with power on earth to forgive sins, and this explained all. It

is true that their faith was shaken at Calvary; but after the resurrection it was revived and intensified, and in the exalted Christ, one and the same with the Jesus whom they had known in the flesh, they lived and through him found salvation for themselves and others.

The miracles of Jesus have always been closely connected with any discussion of his person. The nature miracles are among the most important in the gospels. There are two ways of approaching the miracles of Jesus. One is to simply deny that they are possible; the other is to believe in their possibility and historicity and try honestly to account for them. The first method is easy. It requires neither effort nor brains to deny things. The second method is not so easy. It requires a good measure of faith and keen intellectual ability.

The miracles of the New Testament are quite unlike those of any other literature. They differ widely from those of most ancient peoples, and from those reported to have been performed by the priests and monks of the Roman church in the Dark Ages and Middle Ages. They do not appear as the creations of any mind, but as the simple record of facts, things which

men have seen with their own eyes. There are two common ways of explaining these miracles today. The first, or the traditional method, holds the view that a miracle is a special intervention in the ordinary course of nature by which causes or effects are set aside for some special purpose. According to this view all the miracles of Jesus were for the purpose of attesting his divine nature and mission. They were continued through the first three centuries and then gradually came to an end. This view is held by many good people, but more and more the mind which has accepted the conclusions of modern science finds itself in flat contradiction with this view, and ready to give up belief in the miraculous altogether. One of the deepest convictions of the modern mind is that there are no mysteries which cannot find an ultimate explanation in some law, known or unknown, and that the universe is not governed by chance or by the caprice of a deity who is constantly interfering with its regular order.

Now because of this objection to our traditional and generally accepted view of the miraculous, which many feel is a just objection, are we to give up our belief in miracles? The second method of explaining

the miraculous in Christianity is an answer to this question, and strange as it may seem, this method rests upon two miracles. First, the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, and second, the miracle of his life and power in the life of the world.

Says Chas. E. Jefferson, "In studying the evidence for the miracles in the New Testament, it is wise to begin with the study of the greatest miracle of them all—the resurrection of Jesus. St. Paul stakes all his teaching on the truth of the resurrection. We can afford to do the same. For the resurrection of Jesus there is stronger proof than can be adduced in support of any other event in ancient history.

* * * * In the course of his work Paul had occasion to write to the church which he had founded in Corinth. That letter has been preserved. It is a part of our New Testament. It was written within twenty-five years of the death of Jesus. That it was written by Paul is admitted by every sane critic. Men who have cut other parts of the New Testament to shreds have stayed their hands on coming to this first letter to the Corinthians. If this letter is not genuine, then we can give credence to no historical document whatsoever. In this

letter, Paul takes up the resurrection of Jesus. Among other things he says: 'I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received. How that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, and that he was buried and raised the third day according to the scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the twelve, then he appeared to above five hundred persons at once, of whom the greater part remain until now.' * * * That Paul believed that Jesus rose from the dead does not admit of question."

But whatever happened at the tomb of Jesus we know that something has happened since that day. History bears witness to the power of the risen Christ in the life of the early church and in the progress of civilization. No man has ever measured heroes and great men like Carlyle and this is the way he set Jesus apart, with earth's greatest men ten thousand leagues behind: "He walked in Judea eighteen hundred years ago; his sphere-melody flowing in wild native tones took captive the ravished souls of men, and being of a truth sphere-melody, still flows and sounds, though now with thousandfold accompaniments and rich symphonies, through all our hearts

modulates and divinely leads them." Looking backward upon every movement which has been for the liberty of the race, upon every crusade of mercy, upon every struggle for righteousness and justice, upon every impulse toward social service we see emerging the figure of the risen Christ, standing with outstretched arms to lift a sinful and heart-broken world back to the Father's love. It is true, as John Oxenham has so beautifully said, that

Wherever one repenting soul
Prays, in its agonies of pain,
By God's sweet grace to be made whole—
There, Christ is born again.

Wherever—bond of ancient thrall—
A strong soul bursts its shackling chain,
And upward strains to meet the call—
There, Christ is born again.

Wherever vision of the Light
Disturbs the sleeping souls of men,
Night trails away its shadowy flight—
And Christ is born again.

Wherever soul in travail turns,
And climbs the barriers that constrain,
With steady cheer Hope's sweet lamp burns
And Christ is born again.

Where one foul thing is purged away,
And life delivered of one stain,
Love rims with gold the coming day—
And Christ is born again.

There is, there can be, no greater miracle than this undying Christ in the life of the world.

The second method explains the miracles, not as signs which are needed to prove the divinity of Jesus, but as signs which were possible because of the divinity of Jesus. It accounts for the miracles through Christ, rather than accounting for Christ through the miracles. This does not contradict the conclusions of modern science. For, in his miracles, Jesus did not necessarily suspend or interfere in any way with the established laws of the universe. What he did, as the natural thing for the Son of God to do, was to use some of the unknown laws of nature which all scientists admit do exist. If in the realm of the physical men are continually discovering new laws, why not admit that there are others yet to be discovered, and that some of them actually were discovered and used by the Son of God? Many still insist on accepting the traditional view. I do not insist upon the acceptance of this other view, or that it is the only view which may

be taken; but I do maintain that with this view the Christian can accept most of the conclusions of modern science and still be Christian, and can meet the most subtle criticism of our age without doing violence in any way to the person of Christ as he is revealed in the New Testament scriptures.

It is the Jesus of the gospels, both human and divine, that the world needs today. A Jesus who can sound the depths of the human heart and win its love, and who, at the same time, as the Son of God can release forces to quell some of the fierce storms against which humanity is battling, must be at the center of our message to this age. We need such a Jesus as Richard Watson Gilder pictures in "The Passing Christ,"

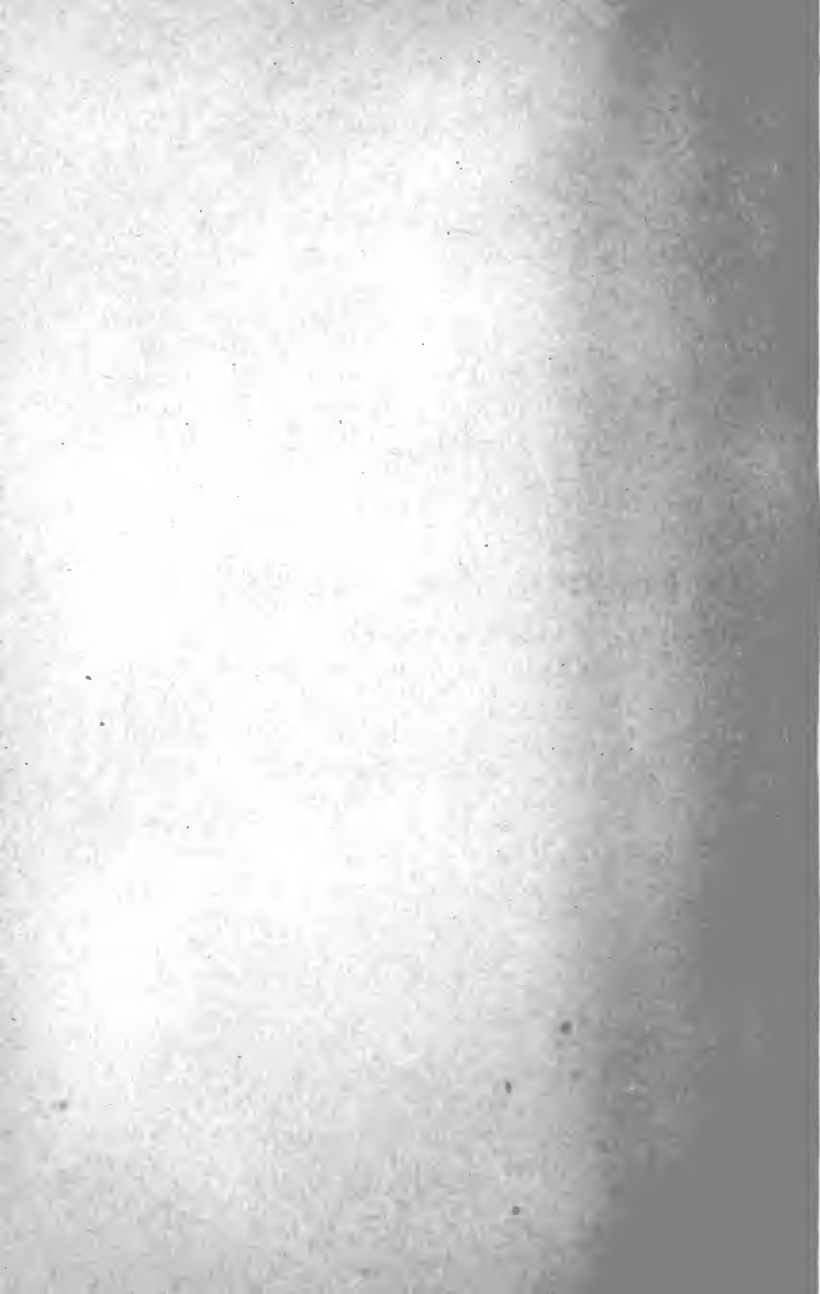
Behold Him now where He comes!
Not the Christ of our subtle creeds,
But the light of our hearts, of our homes,
Of our hopes, our prayers, our needs;
The brother of want and blame,
The lover of women and men,
With a love that puts to shame
All passions of mortal ken.

* * *

Ah no, thou life of the heart,
Never shalt thou depart!
Not till the leaven of God
Shall lighten each human clod;

Not till the world shall climb
To thy height serene, sublime,
Shall the Christ who enters our door
Pass to return no more.

Many are the days we close to enter upon a stormy night. The waves of loneliness, of passion, and perhaps the winds of an outraged conscience, almost engulf us. But if we have taken Jesus with us there is no need for fear. The same voice which calmed the troubled seas and brought peace to the anxious hearts of the disciples, can calm every troublesome element in our lives. Oh, those stormy nights, fearful almost beyond description, because we have not had Jesus with us! At the close of a day—at the close of this day will you not take him with you as a Saviour?



AN EVENING WITH THE HUNGRY
MULTITUDE

When evening fell, the disciples came up to him and said, "It is a desert place and the day is now gone; send off the crowds to buy food for themselves in the villages." Jesus said to them, "They do not need to go away; give them some food yourselves." They said, "We have only five loaves with us and two fish." He said, "Bring them here to me." Then he ordered the crowds to recline on the grass, and after taking the five loaves and the two fish he looked up to heaven, blessed them, and after breaking the loaves handed them to the disciples, and the disciples handed them to the crowds. They all ate and had enough; besides, they picked up the fragments left over and filled twelve baskets with them. The men who ate numbered about five thousand, apart from the women and children.—Matt. 14:15-21.

AN EVENING WITH THE HUNGRY MULTITUDE

The news of the death of John the Baptist, the probable desire of Jesus to leave the dominions of Herod, and the great need of the disciples for rest and an opportunity to tell Jesus of the results of their mission tour from which they had just returned, led the little company to cross the Sea of Galilee to an uninhabited region on the northeastern shore. But the crowd, which had given them no leisure even to eat, watched the course of their boat and followed on foot around the head of the sea, their numbers increased as John suggests, by pilgrims on their way to the passover at Jerusalem. As usual, Jesus was moved at the sight of this needy multitude, and the act of love and compassion which this evening hour embodies, is perhaps, the most important of his nature miracles. It is the only miracle recorded in all four gospels, and stands out prominently in the record of his life.

We have dealt with the miraculous element in Christianity in another sermon of this series. In the discussion of this mira-

cle we shall think only of its practical message for modern disciples and for the church. The emergency which the disciples faced is very real in our day. Around us, the multitudes, running into the millions, are surging and pressing day and night. And they are very hungry. How shall we face them and "give them to eat?" Perhaps this evening experience of the Master and his first disciples can teach us the way.

Notice the contrast in the attitude of Jesus and his disciples in the face of human need and a great emergency. The disciples said, "Send off the crowds to buy food for themselves in the villages." Jesus said, "They do not need to go away, give them some food yourselves." They protested, "We have only five loaves with us and two fishes." Jesus said, "Bring them to me," and he took what resources they had and blessed them and the result was marvelous. The crowds ate and were full, and there was more than enough left to take care of the needs of the disciples.

It has been suggested that there were two classes of men among the disciples; those who had compassion without faith, and those who were selfish and thinking more about what they themselves should

eat than the needs of the multitudes. The very fact that certain of the disciples discovered the suffering of the crowds shows a sympathetic appreciation of their needs. But along with this sympathetic appreciation there was very little faith in their ability to minister to those needs. "Along with their sensitive discernment of the need they had a paralyzing conception of their poverty. They appeared to say to themselves, 'The need is real, but the task is gigantic! Our resources are only a handful and it cannot be done!' Did you ever read a more discouraging summary than that which they presented to the Lord? The place is barren, the time is late, the people are many, the need is great!"

From what we know of the disciples some of them were intensely selfish. It is not hard to believe that the self-seeking of one or two made them unconscious of the needs of the multitude. The provisions on hand would make only a meager meal for themselves, and tired and weary as they must have been, they protested against giving these away. Someone has imagined the following argument by one of the disciples when Jesus commands them to give him the five loaves and two fish:

“This will never do. The Lord is all right when it comes to preaching and telling us about heaven and how to get there; but he does not understand the practical side of life. He will give away the last crumb we have, and we will all go hungry out here in the desert. Let us go away from this crowd over on some grassy spot, and try and get the Lord to come with us, while we divide these five barley loaves and two small fish among ourselves.”

Is the contrast between Jesus and his first disciples in the face of a great emergency so different from that of Jesus and his church today? Are not these two classes of men with us yet? In the face of a hungry world, and the greatest emergency the church has ever faced we are saying with the disciples, “Send off the crowds to have their hunger satisfied elsewhere.” Every year a great procession of aged disciples who have kept the faith and light burning in some of our best churches, pass by appealing for a place in our Homes for the Aged. But the doors of many of these institutions are closed and we are saying, “Send them off to the poorhouses, or to the homes erected by organizations outside the church. We cannot, with the meager support which our Benevolent work has

been getting, take care of them." Is there anything more pathetic or tragic than helpless and poverty-stricken old age? Only one thing, and that is the church of the Living Christ unable to care for its own.

The cries of little children, homeless children, fill the air today as never before. The war, the terrible scourge of Influenza which has swept the land for two years, the terrific pressure of the high cost of living, all these have broken up thousands of homes and thrown thousands of children upon the world. And in the face of this emergency the doors of our Orphanages are closed because there is no room. And many modern disciples rather than make possible the building of larger Orphanages are saying, "Send them away to the state institutions. We are unable to care for these little ones in the name of Jesus."

And the aged ministers of Christ, those who have spent the best years of their lives in toil and sacrifice for the church we profess to love, these also appeal in vain for a compensation that is at all worthy of their years of service. In the face of this dire need we are saying, "Send them away, these saints of God, to the poorhouse or anywhere they may be able to find enough to keep body and soul together."

The multitudes in India who are asking for the gospel, we would send away to their heathen gods. The millions of black men in Africa who are responding in such a marvelous way to the gospel appeal where it is preached, we would send away to the Moslem priest and delay the coming of the Kingdom in that continent for another century. In China and Japan where western learning and industry are revolutionizing the life of the people, and where there is an earnest appeal for the message of Christianity, we would send the multitudes away to their materialism and atheism. Just as Jesus rebuked his disciples so he is rebuking his church. In the face of our home and foreign needs he says, "They do not need to go away, give ye them to eat." This is his ringing challenge to the church!

In the face of this challenge we have two classes of people with which to deal; those who have compassion without faith, and those who are purely selfish. The first class always knows what it is impossible to do, but it does not have enough faith to attempt the impossible. It is made up of people who are moved to the depths of their souls, and shed many tears when the

appeal is made, but who always vote that the task is too large to attempt. Their resources are always so small that they cannot be of any possible service in the emergency. Then, there are the purely selfish. It is pure selfishness on the part of the members that has kept many churches poor, and hindered their fellowship in the larger work of the Kingdom. One does not have to strain his imagination very much to hear some modern disciples—deacons and elders in the church—saying: “Our preacher may be a good speaker and a bright man. He can tell men what to do to be saved and get to heaven. He is sound in the faith, but when it comes to practical business affairs he has very little sense. Why, he would have us take our resources and help support an Orphanage in St. Louis, an Old People’s Home in Jacksonville, or a Hospital or a mission station on some foreign field, when it looks very much as if we would not be able to pay our own expenses and might have to close the doors of our own church. Let us talk him out of this notion (or more often let us get another preacher) and simply pay our own running expenses, and come apart from the world of suffering and need on Sunday and have

our own services in our own church." And because we have listened to these men of little faith and selfish motives the multitudes have not been fed and great reproach has fallen upon the church of Jesus Christ.

Now notice the method of Jesus. What he really said to the disciples was, "Bring what little resources you have to me and let me make use of them." It was not a question of how much they had, but of a willingness to let Jesus use it to the best advantage. Here we find a fundamental principle which has been largely overlooked in our planning for the kingdom. We have always said in the face of some great need, "We have no resources, we cannot do anything." It is not a question of how much we have. It is a question of our attitude toward what we do have. Is it ours, or are we simply holding it in trust for God? As disciples have we made a complete surrender to Jesus? When we accepted him as Lord and Master did we do it with reservations? Did we say, "Lord I believe that thou art the Christ the Son of the Living God and I accept Thee as my personal Saviour, but I reserve the right to do as I please with my life and my material possessions." Now that is

not what any of us said, but that is what many of us have done. We have lived our own lives regardless of the claims of Christ upon them. We have bought the things which satisfied our own selfish desires with our money, and then doled out a small per cent of what was left to meet the needs of the world. If the membership of the churches of America would give even a small per cent of their wealth to Jesus Christ, there would be no need for appeals from any pulpit, and the hungry multitudes would be fed.

I do not know how much you have, but I do know that Jesus needs it and needs it now. We are passing through a world crisis and the greatest for the church since the days of the apostles. The next few years will determine whether the next generation is to be Christian or Pagan, whether a fundamental democracy shall be the foundation of this earth's governments, or whether the old philosophy of "might makes right" shall again come into its own. We have witnessed the magnificent spectacle of a great people placing their all at the disposal of their government in an hour of need. Are the Christians of America more loyal to their government than to

their Christ? What we have invested for the government will pay interest. But some will never live to enjoy this interest. What you have invested in the church will also pay interest, and whether you live or die that interest will be paid in full. Looked at in the light of eternity, how paltry the interest on a Liberty bond, beside the consciousness that your money has saved a living soul and brought a wandering son back to the Father's Love! Let us put our resources where Jesus can use them.

“They all ate and had enough,” and there was plenty left for the disciples. This was the result of Jesus' miracle. The same miracle can happen in any age. When the disciples place their resources at the disposal of the Master the needs of the world will be met and the local church will prosper. What might have happened if the disciples had refused to give up the loaves and fish? Three things would have happened. The disciples would have had a very limited supply of food for themselves. The multitudes would have fainted from hunger. And the most tragic of all, these men would have lost Christ, for he would not have continued with them as a party to their faithlessness and selfishness. The church that shuts its ears to the world-plea

for help may have enough left to care for its local needs, but its resources will always be limited. When the church turns its back upon the world and admits by its lack of action that it cannot meet the deepest needs of humanity, then order will revert to chaos, and the race will be doomed. And when the church thus proves itself afraid or unwilling to obey the great commission of its Master, it will, so far as its life is concerned, have made null and void his last great promise, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end." When it does this it will be a Christless church.

The Master who fed the hungry multitudes and would inspire us to do the same, wants more than our material possessions. He wants our lives. How do we know what he might do with these human lives of ours if we were to give him a chance? With this thought in mind a young woman who had dedicated her life to the mission field wrote these beautiful words: "As I was thinking of this today," she says, "that marvelous masterpiece of art came before me, the Sistine Madonna. I thought, what if, when the great artist had that canvas before him upon which he wanted to put the picture of the little Christ Child, a little child—possibly a little child of his

own—had stolen into the room at night when he had laid aside his brush and ceased his work on that canvas, and the little one, thinking that it too could paint a picture, had picked up the brush and began to do his work—what would he have found when he came back to the canvas in the morning? Nothing but a great daub, and the painting would have been ruined. And that is what we are doing with our lives. Jesus Christ would have within us the very image of himself. That is the kind of work he wants to do; and if you and I would give him all this life and let him wield the brush, he would so transform these lives that there would be all the beauty and power and sweetness of Christ in them. But in our little, childish way, we go along and take up the brush. We do not know how to paint, nor do we know how to reproduce in these lives of ours the very image of Jesus Christ. What we would do is the very thing that would mar that image, and that is why when the world looks at us they see so little of him. He cannot do it unless he has all our life." At this evening hour shall we not let the great Master Artist take our lives and fashion them as he will for the perfection of our character and for the salvation of the world?

AN EVENING IN BETHANY

Six days before the festival Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus stayed (whom Jesus had raised from the dead). They gave a supper for him there; Martha waited on him, and Lazarus was among those who reclined at the table beside him. Then Mary, taking a pound of expensive perfume, real nard, anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair till the house was filled with the scent of the perfume. One of his disciples, Judas Iscariot (who was to betray him), said, "Why was not this perfume sold for ten pounds, and the money given to the poor?" (Not that he cared for the poor; he said this because he was a thief, and because he carried the money-box and pilfered what was put in.) Then said Jesus, "Let her alone, let her keep what she has for the day of my burial. You have always the poor beside you, but you have not always me."—John 12: 1-8.

AN EVENING IN BETHANY

Matthew and Mark record this feast in Bethany as taking place on Thursday evening just two days before the passover. John in his account, locates it six days before the passover. Matthew and Mark state that the supper was held in the house of Simon the leper, while John simply says, "they gave a supper for him there." We are not interested in harmonizing these accounts, and it is safe to assume that the records all speak of the same event. For the purpose of our discussion the point of interest and importance is the guests who were present, and the beautiful act of sacrifice and sentiment on the part of Mary as it is vividly contrasted with the selfish criticism of Judas.

Although the Master was sitting at a feast in the presence of his friends, his heart was sad, for the shadow of the cross had already fallen across his soul. The plot of his enemies deepened, and slowly but surely he knew that they were drawing their nets around him. And while his mind was filled with thoughts of the approaching end and of the separation which it

would mean, none save one in that company seemed sympathetic enough to enter into his thoughts. The loving heart of Mary had divined the thoughts of her Master. She felt that they would not have him with them much longer, and the thought filled her heart with unspeakable sorrow. Jesus meant much to Mary. He had given her back her brother from the dead. From the glimpses we get here and there of the visits of Jesus to Bethany, she must have sat many times at his feet drinking in the words of life, choosing the good part which could not be taken away from her. Hers was a sorrow and a love that cannot be expressed in words, and so it overflowed in this beautiful poetic action, which told more movingly than any words could possibly tell, how deeply her soul was stirred.

Speaking of this scene Dr. James Denny has said, "Uncalculating love inspired the deed, and only uncalculating love could understand it. The disciples found fault because they tried to estimate by the senses an act which had no meaning except to the soul. They called it 'waste.' So it was, by any utilitarian standard; the three hundred pence could bring in no interest now; they had been 'thrown away' upon Jesus. But this does not prove that the action was

wrong; it only proves that there are actions which have to be judged by other and higher than utilitarian standards. What a miserable world it would be if no money was ever spent in it except with a view to interest in kind. Does any one suppose that Judas was a better friend to the poor than Mary? The outburst of uncalculating love shown by this woman went to the heart of Jesus; she had done for once what he was doing all the time—'wasting' his life, 'throwing it away' for those who were not worthy of it. The fire he came to cast on the earth had flamed up for an instant in one soul. She had given a glorious illustration of the spirit which was in Jesus, and she is rewarded by having her story told in all the world to the end of time."

Aside from Jesus, two characters stand out prominently in John's story of this supper—Mary and Judas. In the action of the one we see the ascendancy of a soul to the place, where for the sake of its Lord, it unconsciously and spontaneously makes the supreme offering of the best which it has upon the altar of love. Mary is one of the world's greatest examples of those who can give without counting the cost. In the action of the other we see the degeneracy of a soul, the final expression of a soul that

has become completely deadened through self-seeking and greed. Judas is a tragic example of that cold, loveless spirit which never gives because of real love, but only grudgingly and from a sense of duty. In this evening with the Master we see one soul revealing itself from the heights of love and another revealing itself from the depths of selfishness and greed.

Very little is known of the life of Mary. We meet her only a few times, and this only for a moment, in the record of the gospels. But this gracious act of love reveals her soul. She had been with Jesus enough to catch his spirit, to be filled with a love which was akin to that of the Father in heaven. I do not believe that Mary had planned this action before hand. It was not the kind of a gift one makes after careful planning. It was the kind of a gift that comes when the full realization of a great love dawns upon the soul. Slowly but surely through the days and the months Mary had been drawn nearer to the Master. That which began in a mere wonder at the words and teaching of Jesus, which was enriched by his visits to Bethany, and which deepened into a wonderful gratitude at the restoration of her brother from the dead, had now ripened into an

uncalculating love which could stop at nothing short of the best which it possessed. This gift represents that which a soul will do when the real heights of love have been reached. In an hour, and under conditions which had not been thought of, the full flower of love blossomed out to enrich the atmosphere with its holy fragrance. It was the unconscious revelation of a soul at its highest.

With love that counted not the cost,
She broke the alabaster; filled
With but one thought: It was her friend
For whom the precious gift was spilled.

The records have more to say of Judas than of Mary, and yet the brief record of his acts is not needed to reveal his character. This act alone tells the story. Anything which was given without hope or evidence of tangible returns in kind was a foolish waste in his eyes. So low had his soul descended into the mire of greed that he had lost all power to measure the deeds of unselfish love. The criticism of Judas reveals the depths to which a soul can go when greed becomes the master. It also reveals the essential hypocrisy of such a soul. Such a greed always tries to justify

itself. Judas was a hypocrite. He had dreamed of a worldly kingdom and its glory. He had planned for himself an important place in that kingdom. A year before this incident he had seen this hope shattered. After the feeding of the five thousand when Jesus refused the demands of the multitudes to become a king and finally renounced all claims to any temporal power," "many of his disciples drew back and would not associate with him any longer. So Jesus said to the twelve, 'You do not want to go, too?' Simon Peter answered him, 'Lord, who are we to go to? You have got words of eternal life, and we believe, we are certain, that you are the holy One of God.' Jesus answered them, 'Did I not choose you, the twelve? And yet one of you is a devil!' (He meant Judas the son of Simon Iscariot; for Judas was to betray him—and he was one of the twelve)." A very recent critic of Judas, Edward A. George, says in speaking of this incident, "The Satanic thing in Judas Iscariot at this crisis, which warranted Jesus' severity, was not his misunderstanding of the kingdom, nor his disappointment, but his hypocrisy." It was because Judas, rather than abandon Jesus and his cause, "as did the many who went back and

walked with him no more," "still persisted in remaining among the apostles with a feigned loyalty," that Jesus called him a devil. And back of this hypocrisy, as John clearly implies in his statements, was that greed which he hoped to satisfy through pilfering with the money-box of the twelve. The criticism of Judas in the presence of unselfish love, revealed the degeneracy of his soul better than all the words of the evangelists. We can well believe that such a man would betray his Master for thirty pieces of silver. It is a picture of a human soul at its lowest.

In some unexpected hour every one of us will write our own biography; reveal our inmost soul to the gaze of an onlooking public. In that hour the soul that has been living on a high level and ascending toward the heights, will tell the story of an unselfish love. And in the same hour the soul that has been feeding on low things and that has descended to the depths, will reveal its ugly character. Never has there been greater need for big, unselfish souls. Never has the peril of descending into the depths of greed and selfishness been greater.

The Master is surrounded today by his enemies. The politicians, the leaders of a greedy industrialism and commercialism, the apostles of radicalism in the ranks of labor, the bigoted and zealous advocates of a divided church, the men who are fattening off the pleasures of the people—all these are fast drawing the net around the simple Jesus of the gospels, and would crucify him if they could. It is an hour when the souls of his disciples are being laid bare. It is an hour when those who profess to be his followers are revealing the real character of their souls. The great need is for multitudes of disciples who will sense the present situation as clearly as Mary sensed the situation at that evening hour. Mary acted only when she realized how much she loved Jesus, what he really meant to her, and what it would mean to lose him. The heart of the Christian world must face these two questions. How much do we really love Jesus, how much does he mean to us? What would happen to the world if sinful men should have their way and crowd him out of its life? I do not believe the heart of the church is degenerate. I am confident that when the men and women who have made the church what it is, and on whose heart the burden of the

churches' life rests in these critical days sense the real situation, there will be such an overflow of sacrificial love as we have never seen. When that hour comes the souls of men and women who have been ascending towards the heights because they have spent many hours in the presence of the Master, will reveal themselves in a supreme offering poured out at his feet. The coming of the Kingdom of God and the redemption of a race waits upon this hour.

In a little play called "The Will," James M. Barrie has traced the course of "that strange sickness of the soul called greed," and has revealed the fact that the peril which brought Judas to his tragic end is still very real in human life. The setting of the play is the office of a London lawyer. Three times the central character, Philip Ross, comes to this office for the purpose of making a will. When he first calls he is a young office clerk with a small legacy, and is accompanied by his youthful and loving bride. She is weeping at the mere suggestion of any instrument so suggestive of death as a will. Philip wishes to make the will in a single sentence, leaving everything to her. To this she will not hear, and succeeds in carrying her point of having two of her husband's

poverty-stricken cousins provided with a hundred pounds a year out of the estate, and one hundred pounds a year left to a convalescent hospital. The old lawyer is amused and touched and as they leave he says, in response to the apology for her excitement, "Yes, it is ridiculous. But don't change; especially if you get on in the world."

Then follows a conversation in which the old lawyer discovers that his trusted clerk, Surtees, has come from a specialist with the verdict that it is too late for an operation. "But you didn't have it long ago," protested the old lawyer. "Not to my knowledge, sir; but he says it was there all the same, always in me, a black spot, not so big as a pin's head, but waiting to spread and destroy me in the fulness of time. All the rest of me is sound as a bell." The old lawyer, "it seems damnablely unfair." "I don't know, sir. He says there's a spot of that kind in pretty nigh all of us, and if we don't look out it does for us in the end. * * * He called it the accursed thing. I think he meant we should know of it and be on the watch."

When Philip Ross appears in the lawyer's office the second time he is one of the

rising merchants of London and has accumulated an estate of 70,000 pounds. He comes alone, but his wife, now a woman of forty, sure of herself and not so much dressed suggests the author as "richly upholstered," comes in unexpectedly to see that her husband does nothing foolish. There are hot words over Philip's intention to leave her only a life-interest in the estate instead of outright possession. Each refers to the estate as "my" money. The tender solicitude which had been so much in evidence on their first visit was gone. "One would think you were afraid of my marrying again," she reproaches him. "One would think you were looking for my dying," he angrily retorts. The allowance to the elderly cousins in poverty is, at her insistence, reduced from one hundred to fifty pounds. She objects to his leaving a thousand pounds to the hospital, but he finally clings to a bequest of five hundred pounds, because he wants to "make a splash in hospitals." This second will is made by Robert, a son of the old lawyer who made the first one.

On the last visit, Sir Philip Ross, now knighted, comes alone. The old lawyer, long retired from active practice has come into the office and is asleep in a chair be-

fore the fire. Sir Philip's wife is dead, and he comes to cancel all previous wills, especially for the purpose of cutting off without a cent his two children, his son having proved a "rotter" and the daughter having married without his consent. Ignoring the protests of the young lawyer and in a fit of anger he starts to dictate, "I hereby revoke all former wills and testaments, and I leave everything of which I die possessed—I leave it—I leave it—My God, I don't know what to do with it. * * * The money I've won with my blood. God in heaven! Would that old man (referring to the old lawyer) like it to play with? If I bring it to you in sacks will you throw it out of the window for me? * * * (Taking a paper from his pocket) Here take this. It has the names and addresses of the half-dozen men I've fought with most for gold; and I've beaten them. Draw up a will leaving all my money to be divided between them, with my respectful curses, and bring it to my house and I'll sign it."

When the young lawyer starts to protest against such a will, the old man by the fire rouses up and asks, "What's that about a will?" His mind is wandering. When introduced to Sir Philip he recalls the making of the first will. "Poor souls,

it all ended unhappily you know," he muttered. "Yes I know," says Sir Philip. "Why did things go wrong, sir? I sit and wonder and I can't find the beginning." Then the old lawyer, his mind wandering again, repeats the words of his old clerk, now dead for many years, "That's the sad part of it. There was never a beginning. It was always there. He told me all about it. * * * It was always in them—a spot no bigger than a pin's head, but waiting to spread and destroy them in the fulness of time * * * if they had been on the watch. But they didn't know, so they weren't on the watch. Poor souls * * *. It's called the accursed thing. It gets nearly everybody in the end, if they don't look out." When the old man ceases speaking Sir Philip slowly tears up the paper he had given to the young lawyer and says, "A spot no bigger than a pin's head. I wish I could help some young things before that spot has time to spread and destroy them as it has destroyed me and mine." The young lawyer, "With such a large fortune—" Sir Philip (summing up his life) "It can't be done with money, sir."

In that hour when you unconsciously write the story of your life and reveal the character of your soul what will it be?

Have you planted the flower of unselfish love in your heart, and are you watering and nourishing it in the presence of the Master so that its fragrance may fill the earth when it is poured out in some great offering? Or is the "accursed thing," that small black spot of greed and selfishness being nursed in the bosom of your soul to spread and destroy you in the fulness of time? In the presence of the Master this night, may we search our hearts and answer these questions for our own souls.

AN EVENING WITH THE DIS-
CIPLES; BEFORE HIS
DEATH

On the first day of unleavened bread (the day when the paschal lamb was sacrificed) his disciples said to him, "Where do you want us to go and prepare for you to eat the passover?" So he despatched two of his disciples, telling them, "Go into the city and you will meet a man carrying a water-jar; follow him, and whatever house he goes into, tell the owner that the Teacher says, 'Where is my room that I may eat the passover there with my disciples?' He will show you a large room upstairs, with couches spread, all ready; prepare the passover for us there." The disciples went away into the city and found it was as he had told them. So they prepared the passover, and when evening fell he arrived along with the twelve.—Mark 14:12-17.

AN EVENING WITH THE DISCIPLES; BEFORE HIS DEATH

On Thursday morning of the last week of the earthly life of Jesus, he sent two of his disciples into the city to make preparations for the eating of the passover. And toward evening when the gathering night would prevent all needless observation he and his disciples walked from Bethany to the upper room in Jerusalem. There he spent the last evening before his death with his inner-circle of friends and followers.

This evening was full of meaning to the disciples. As they took their places around the table there was doubtless some trouble and discussion as to the order of their seats. Then, because there happened to be no servant in the room to wash their feet, this common act of hospitality had been neglected. Noticing their attitude in regard to the chief seats, and that their feet had not been washed, Jesus "rose from his place, and taking off his upper garments, tied a towel around his waist. He then poured some water into a basin, and began to wash his disciples' feet, and to wipe them

with the towel which was tied around him." Thus did Jesus exemplify his great mission of service to the world and impress his disciples with its supreme importance.

Then follows the institution of the Lord's Supper, and Jesus' promise, "And I tell you that I shall never, after this, drink of this juice of the grape until that day when I shall drink it new with you in the kingdom of my Father." The tragic touch of the evening comes in the pointing out of the betrayer and the heart-searching which Jesus' words bring to all of the disciples.

After Judas goes out, for perhaps two hours, Jesus speaks to the rest, of those things which were nearest his heart, and in this farewell conversation we have some of the gems of his matchless teaching. "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions. If it were not so I would have told you, for I go to prepare a place for you. * * * I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh to the Father except by me. * * * This is my command, love one another as I have loved you. No man can give greater proof of his love than by laying down his life for his friends—I have spoken to you

in this way so that in me you might have peace. In the world you will find trouble; yet, take courage, for I have conquered the world." At the close of this conversation, just before going out into the garden of agony and on to meet his enemies, Jesus breathed that beautiful intercessory prayer for his disciples which revealed his deep love for them. "O righteous Father, though the world did not know thee, I know thee; and these men know that thou hast sent me as thy messenger. I have made thee known to them, and I will do so still; that the love that thou hast had for me may be in their hearts, and that I may be in them also."

Jesus knew that the hearts of his disciples were troubled, and in this conversation he is seeking to steady them against the day of his death. As a remedy for their troubled hearts, and as this steadying power, he offers three of the great fundamentals of his religion—faith, hope and love. "Believe in God; believe also in me." "Take courage (or have hope) I have conquered the world." "This is my command, love one another as I have loved you." These three are the steadying and conquering elements in Christianity. Paul in summing up the elements of his religion

which he believed would last throughout the ages names these three, "Now abideth faith, hope, and love."

"Believe in God." This is one of Jesus' greatest demands. I think the world has been exceptionally brave in the past few years in the face of great difficulties. We have tried to say to one another, "let not your hearts be troubled, things will work out for the best." But in spite of victory things have not worked out for the best, and hearts which looked with such passionate longing for the close of the war are still troubled. We are coming to see that Jesus was right. Faith in God is the only thing that can cure troubled hearts. We need to believe that God is still in his heaven; that the God who has heard the cry of nations and who has made himself felt in all the great moral and social revolutions of history is still at work. If we believe that the God of Paul, of Savonarola, of Luther, of Knox, of Wesley, of Washington, and of Lincoln—the God who guided that little ship across the wild Atlantic and made possible the establishment of a great nation on this continent, has lost his power to guide men and nations and through them work out his purposes for the world, then well might

our hearts be troubled. But if we believe in a living God who is working today, and that there is not a problem before us which he does not understand nor an evil over which he is not master, our troubled hearts will be calmed and we will face the future with courage.

“Believe also in me.” A vital faith in Jesus Christ is also necessary if we would have untroubled hearts. The tremendous courage and poise of the men who did the fighting in the world war may be accounted for in various ways, but a careful reading of the testimonies which came from the front convince us that a simple faith in Jesus Christ was one of the great factors involved. He was known as the Comrade in White. Before men went over the top they often appealed to him. The picture of Donald Hankey kneeling with his company in prayer just before he went over the top for the last time, is a picture of faith which will never fade. In the hospitals, through long, weary days and nights of pain and weakness, thousands of New Testaments were read from cover to cover, and into thousands of hearts faith in Jesus Christ came as a reality and a great steady-
ing power.

One of the men who heard Jesus speak on this last night says towards the close of a long and active life in his service, "Our faith, that is the conquest which conquers the world. Who is the world's conqueror but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God." The world needs a vital faith in this living Christ who has been marching across the earth, breaking empires and kingdoms founded upon selfishness and greed into pieces, and in the blood of freedom-loving peoples laying broad and deep the foundations of his everlasting kingdom. In his latest book, "The Religious Basis of a Better World Order," Joseph Fort Newton says, "If there is one thing that our troubled age needs today it is a heart-shaking and world-changing conviction, such as that which grasped the crumbling classic world and reshaped it. Speaking of that long-vanished world Mommsen said on the closing page of his History, 'The world was growing old, and not even Caesar could make it young again.' Yet what Caesar was unable to do, Christ did. Into an age spiritually sad, morally decaying and utterly weary—an age, if not hopeless, at least unhopeful—he made his advent, bringing new life, new ideas, new influences, new expectations,

and quickening the human soul in a new fashion. It was like the coming of spring after a long winter, like the dawn after a dark night * * * Surely here is a creative force of faith, and 'a deep power of joy,' which we need in a world shattered by war and threatened by chaos."

"Take courage, for I have conquered the world." These words had very little meaning for the disciples on that night when the Master told them he was going away. But in the light of what happened within the next few days they became full of meaning. Filled with this hope, after the resurrection they went forth to conquer their world for Christ. Paul in one of his letters speaks of those "having no hope and without God in the world." But he continues, "now in Christ Jesus * * *". When Christ came forth from the tomb he brought new and everlasting hope to the human race. In one of his fine sermons Dr. J. H. Jowett speaks of the three-fold hope which Jesus brought into the life and experience of men. "Hope in the perfectibility of self; hope in the instrumentality of all things for good to those who love God; and hope in personal immortality."

When the fires of the soul have burned very low, and we feel hopelessly lost in our

own sins, Christ comes to tell us that it is possible for us to become new creations in him. He comes to the soul that is torn or distracted by trouble or calamity, the soul that is lonely for "the touch of a vanished hand and the sound of a voice that is still," and he makes that soul see that all God's plans and purposes are for the best. He comes to his disciples in an hour when they are fighting with their backs to the wall in the midst of a "sinful and perverse generation" which is completely enamoured with the things of the world, and he says "Fight on, for the Conqueror of the world is on your side." Then, Christ comes in a day of wide-spread death to kindle the hope of personal immortality in hearts where it has almost ceased to exist. "He hath begotten us again unto a living hope. * * * Because I live ye shall live also. * * * He that believeth on me shall never die." What a hope! They are sleeping yonder in France, the boys of our hearts, our homes, our churches and our busy ways. But they are not dead! Their lives are not lost! Oh, the blessed hope of immortality today! Christ comes, the Comrade in White to walk by us in the sad way and speak this glad message to our troubled hearts.

“This is my command, love one another as I have loved you.” The philosophy back of these words upset the ancient world, and they offer the only solution for the most complex problems of our modern society. For long months men looked almost in vain for some manifestation of the spirit of love in human relationships. Brute force has had a chance to demonstrate his wares before the world on a new and larger scale than ever before. It has been said that the man of our western civilization is a fighting pagan, and out of the wars with which he has devastated the earth have come ill-will and hatred which have made life a hell for so many people. Always, and everywhere, these two arch-enemies of humanity have followed in the trail of brute force, standing at the gateway of happiness and peace and challenging man’s right to enter in. Every day some new and terrible fact is helping to tear off the mask from the face of war and we are beginning to see at its true value, this hideous monster which we have been worshiping. What can heal the hurts of a world that has been under the sway of brute force for so long? Nothing short of that love which was born in the heart of the Father, and which was revealed in the

life and death of his Son. The solution of every problem that confronts the race to-day waits upon the enthronement of Christian love in the hearts of men and nations.

Love is the only hope of salvation, both personal and racial. The final basis of any personal fellowship of the soul with God is a personal love "which becomes a creative and co-operative power and motive in the work of incarnating Christlike qualities of character * * * He who loves is one with God." This Christian love, which is the regenerating factor in the individual life, finds its highest expression in a desire to see the spirit of love enthroned in all the relationships of life. Thus, Christian love, and the type of life which it creates is the essential and primary condition of all permanent moral and social reform. The acid test of Christian love is in its social relationships. "If any man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, cannot love God whom he hath not seen."

There are many evidences that the better day, the day of love, is dawning. The editor of a great trade journal says, "Human management of the affairs of the universe is failing. Without divine interven-

tion, the world and its people will plunge into chaos. America is rent asunder by the spirit of defiance of law and order. There appears to be no man big enough in this land to stay the rising tide of disaster. God alone can save." The most ardent exponents of materialistic philosophy and brute force are revising their creeds. Men who have ushered God to the edge of the universe and dismissed Him from their thinking are coming back to a theistic interpretation of life. Slowly but surely the world is turning to love as the mightiest reconstructive force known to man. The professor of Sociology in a great university is forced to the conclusion in a recent book, that the naturalistic principles and methods which have been tried are wholly inadequate to meet the present social situation.

"These principles and methods," he asserts "existed prior to Christ's coming and have operated from the earliest times, and yet they have been helpless to remedy the blemishes of civilization. The moral motive power essential to achieve the highest and best forms of civilized life is not a product of mechanical laws, but it has a divine origin * * * . A humanitarian altruism cannot be substituted for the divine

motive in social service * * * . Christianity is the only power that can restore the broken altars of human life and bring back the world to its true constitution and change it into the Kingdom of God on earth wherein the human instinct for God and the passion for brotherhood will become the inward spiritual power to realize self-attainments and to refashion social life in harmony with the divine ideal."

Christian love is the most universal, persistent and vital force in human society. It is the only leaven that is working in the lives of nations to turn them from the worship of brute force toward a better civilization. It is the only salt that is applying itself to the rotting places of earth with a saving effect, and it is the only light that is shining in the darkness of our present night of confusion guiding men and nations toward the dawn of the perfect day.

"Now abideth faith, hope and love, but the greatest of these is love." Nowhere in literature is the struggle between brute force and love given a more vivid setting than in the "Musician's Tale" in Longfellow's "Tales of a Wayside Inn." The Challenge of Thor, the War God, sounds strangely like a certain philosophy which was very popular a few years ago.

Force rules the world still,
Has ruled it, shall rule it;
Meekness is weakness,
Strength is triumphant,
Over the whole earth
Still it is Thor's day!

Thou art a God too,
O Galilean!
And thus single-handed
Unto the combat,
Gauntlet or gospel,
Here I defy thee.

And the voice which the Nun of Nidaros
hears toward the end of the long conflict
between King Olaf and Thor,

The voice of a stranger
It seemed as she listened,
Of one who answered,
Beseeching, imploring,
A cry from a-far off
She could not distinguish.

resembles the voice which the church of
Jesus Christ is hearing today. It was

The voice of Saint John,
The beloved disciple,
Who wandered and waited
The Master's appearance.
Alone in the darkness,
Unsheltered and friendless—

speaking the deathless challenge of Christianity to brute force:

It is accepted
The angry defiance,
The challenge of battle!
It is accepted,
But not with the weapons
Of war that thou wieldest!

Cross against corselet,
Love against hatred,
Peace-cry for war-cry!
Patience is powerful;
He that o'ercometh
Hath power o'er the nations!

* * *

Stronger than steel
Is the sword of the Spirit;
Swifter than arrows
The light of the truth is,
Greater than anger
Is love that subdueth!

Thou art a phantom,
A shape of the sea-mist,
A shape of the brumal
Rain, and the darkness
Fearful and formless;
Day dawns and thou art not!

The dawn is not distant,
Nor is the night starless ;
Love is eternal!
God is still God, and
His faith shall not fail us ;
Christ is eternal!

In the interlude as a "strain of music closes the tale" the voice of the Theologian is heard,

Thank God * * *
The reign of violence is dead,
Or dying surely from the world ;
While love triumphant reigns instead,
And in a brighter sky o'erhead
His blessed banners are unfurled.

These are the things which abide. These the fundamental values, the great conquering forces of Christianity. The faith that steadies men in time of trial; the hope that lights the way through darkest nights; the love that makes men kin to God. In this evening hour may I commend to you that faith which can save your soul, that hope which can inspire you to noblest living, and that love which can bind your heart to the heart of the Father?



AN EVENING WITH THE DISCI-
PLES; AFTER HIS
DEATH

He pretended to be going further on, but they pressed him, saying, "Stay with us for it is getting towards evening and the day has now declined." So he went in to stay with them.—Luke 24:28-30.

On the evening of that same day—the first day of the week—though the disciples had gathered within closed doors for fear of the Jews, Jesus entered and stood among them, saying, "Peace be with you!"—John 20:19-20.

AN EVENING WITH THE DISCIPLES; AFTER HIS DEATH

The crucifixion was over. The body of Jesus had been placed in the costly tomb of Joseph in a beautiful garden. It was toward evening of the first day of the week when all Jerusalem was astir with the reports of the women that they had seen the risen Christ. Two of the disciples, who had evidently discredited the story of the women, were walking along a road to the little village of Emmaus. "They were conversing about all the events, and during their conversation and discussion, Jesus himself approached and walked beside them, though they were prevented from recognizing him."

Then follows the conversation in which the disciples express their surprise that the stranger does not know what has been going on in the city, and in which Jesus tries to show them from their own scriptures that these things were to take place. When they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus "pretended to be going further on, but they pressed him,

saying, 'Stay with us, for it is getting toward evening and the day has now declined.' So he went in to stay with them. And as he lay at the table with them he took the loaf, blessed it, brake it and handed it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he vanished from their sight." "On the evening of that same day—the first day of the week—though the disciples had gathered within closed doors for fear of the Jews, Jesus entered and stood among them, saying, 'Peace be with you!'"

The first evening after the resurrection was spent in bringing peace to the troubled hearts and minds of the disciples. It must have been a wonderful experience after all they had just passed through, to see the risen Lord and to have visible proof that he had conquered death. The ways in which Jesus appeared to his discouraged disciples on the first evening of his risen life, are suggestive of two lessons which are greatly needed in this age. To those who walked alone with their disappointment, he came as the "unrecognized Christ" to open their eyes to the truth. To those who had locked and barred the doors of the room because of sorrow and

fear, he came as the invisible, unavoidable Christ to speak peace to their souls.

In the beginning of his career when he stood in that vast throng which came to hear John the Baptist preach, Jesus was unrecognized. "In the midst of you" said John to the crowd, "there standeth one whom ye know not." Jesus must have been an interested hearer and spectator, and yet only the keen insight of John recognized in him the future leader and Saviour of the people. A great preacher has called Jesus the "Unobserved Observer." As an unobserved observer he discovered many of his disciples. In answer to Nathanael's question, "How do you know me?" Jesus said, "When you were under the fig tree, before even Philip called you, I saw you." He saw Peter and John while they were yet fishers of fish and he called them to become fishers of men. And in a lonely taxgatherer in whom no one had ever discovered any characteristic of greatness, the unobserved observer saw the making of one of the most useful disciples.

Wearied and tired from a long journey Jesus sat one day about the sixth hour by a well to rest while his disciples went into the city to buy food. And as he sat there he saw a woman from the city coming to

draw water from the well. He saw the marks of sin upon her face. But he saw something more. This unobserved observer saw deep into her soul and discovered something which he knew would respond to a great appeal. Drawing her into a conversation he drew from her soul a confession of her sins and a desire to lead a better life. After a busy day Jesus sent his disciples away across the lake, while he went into the mountain to pray. But after dark the winds swept across the little lake and churned it into a raging sea. In an hour when the disciples were almost lost, the unobserved observer had seen their peril and was not unmindful of their welfare. And this same unobserved observer, knowing the sadness which must have filled the hearts of his disciples after his death, came to them to quell their fears and bring courage and hope to their souls.

In the vast multitudes that throng the earth today Jesus is still the unobserved observer. He stands in our midst, for the most part unrecognized. But he is always near to help. The eyes of the Master may be resting upon some one here tonight whom he expects to call into a great service in his kingdom. He is sitting by the waysides of earth, and in ways unknown to

most of us, is calling men and women to a confession of their sins and a desire for a new life. Many times when we are almost lost in the midst of a terrific storm of doubt, or temptation, or passion, this same Master is not unmindful of our condition and he comes to save. And then, when we have seen our hopes broken and shattered at our feet; when we have given up and have turned to walk in the same old paths; at the close of the day of hope when darkness and gloom have settled down upon our lonely souls, he comes to walk by us in the way, to abide with us and open our eyes that we may get a new vision and a new grip on life.

“Though the disciples had gathered within closed doors for fear of the Jews, Jesus entered and stood among them * * *” Speaking of this passage W. J. Dawson says, “Henceforth he was to fill all things. He was to take possession of the world. He was to glide with the softness and potency of light into the darkest huts where poor men lay, into the secret chambers of the rich man’s palace, and into the sealed shrines of pagan temples. He was to be the ever-living, ever-present, unavoidable Christ, the Christ whom we meet everywhere today fulfilling his last great prom-

ise—'Lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.' " Around the thought of the "Unavoidable Christ" Dr. Dawson built one of the most powerful evangelistic sermons ever preached in America. It is one of the most commanding and challenging thoughts in the whole range of gospel preaching.

People as a rule are not opposed to the religion of Jesus Christ; most of them wish it well. But they are indifferent, terribly indifferent; and many of them have decided to ignore it. It has been months, perhaps years, since many good and respectable people in this city have attended church. They do not object if others go to church, but they want to be let alone to live their own selfish lives without having their conscience bothered by the demands of the messenger of the Living Christ. Others may live by the Golden Rule if they desire, but these people who do not go to church want to be left alone to treat their neighbors as they like. Others may think of Christ's law of love and try to practice it in their business, but these folks who are ignoring the church want to be free to drive just as hard and unscrupulous business bargains as they please. Others may recognize the Christian principles

of brotherhood and the value of the individual in dealing with their help in the store, the home or in the factory if they wish, but those who do not want to be bothered with the message of the church will deal with their help in any way they please. Now this class in modern society which has decided to ignore the church, has failed to reckon with one fact of tremendous importance. When men ignore the church and its message they are ignoring the Living Christ, and he will not be ignored! He is the unavoidable Christ. When all these relationships of life have been declared outside the power and influence of his message, "the doors being shut and locked," then comes Jesus and stands in the midst. And he must be reckoned with. No man, however much he may ignore the church, can avoid this invisible Presence in the life of the world, and his influence upon every relationship of life.

There is one question which can never be avoided by men or nations, "What then, shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" He is the most compelling and unique personality in history, and no man can be a fundamental thinker who tries to avoid giving him a definite place in his own life and the life of society. No man

can be in true sympathy with his fellow-men who at heart evades the classification of underlying influences which swerve human life toward good or ill. No man can leave this grand challenge untouched and retain the full measure of his self respect. Through periods of inquiry and doubt, if he is an honest thinker, he may hold fundamentals in the background and seek more light. But his thought and his life can never be positive and constructive until he has established right relations to such questions as this. "Time inexorably gathers like to like, urges final issues, eliminates middle ground, and arranges all forces on one side or the other. And so moves the cosmic vortex which draws all human thoughts to final issue, and challenges all mankind to place or displace the divine man who is called Jesus Christ."

The question of placing Jesus Christ was uppermost in the minds of a good many people during the closing days of his ministry. He had caused considerable disturbance among those in authority because of his popularity with the crowds. The events of the last week center around three groups who were trying to get rid of him. They did not want to place him in their systems, so they sought to displace him.

He was disturbing the comfortable hypocrisy of the Pharisees; he had destroyed some of the vested interests of the Sadducees, and he was breeding discontent among the people in such a way as to threaten the power of the political representatives of Rome. The first party to definitely decide upon the death of Jesus was the Sadducees. They controlled the temple, and when Jesus broke up the trade from which the priests derived their income, he sealed his doom in the eyes of Caiaphas. This leader knew what he wanted to do. In the presence of those who hesitated he said, "Ye know nothing at all! The one point of view for us to have is our own interests. Let us have that clearly understood * * *. This man must die! Never mind about his miracles, or his teaching, or his beautiful character. His life is a perpetual danger to our vested interests, our incomes. I vote for death!" At the hands of the political representatives Jesus fared no better. Because he desired the favor of the crowd Pilate released him into the hands of the angry mob. This throws Jesus into the hands of the Pharisees, who were the real leaders of the mob, and at their hands he received no mercy. All the wrath and vengeance which

had been brewing in their wicked hearts, was allowed to burst forth in its fury and vent itself upon his innocent and helpless head. All the insults they could think of were heaped upon him, and finally as a result of their hellish desires and in the midst of their fiendish joy they saw him hanging upon the cross.

They thought it was the end of this troublesome character known as Jesus of Nazareth. But it was only the beginning of the end of these groups of men who had conspired together to murder the Son of God. In a few years all of those vested interests in the Temple which the priests were so anxious to guard went up in the smoke and flames of the burning walls. Of those men who were led on by the maddened Pharisees to murder, and who cried out, "Let his blood be upon our heads and the heads of our children," some lived to be pierced to death by the Roman spear, and the children of others had their brains dashed out against the walls of the city when Titus and his conquering hosts swept all before them and left the streets running red with the blood of the Chosen People. And the mighty empire for whose power Pilate and Herod were so jealous is now but a memory, and lies buried in the majes-

tic ruins of its once mighty cities. These men faced the problem of placing Jesus Christ. They killed him and thought they were done with him. But he came forth from the tomb to be the conqueror of them all.

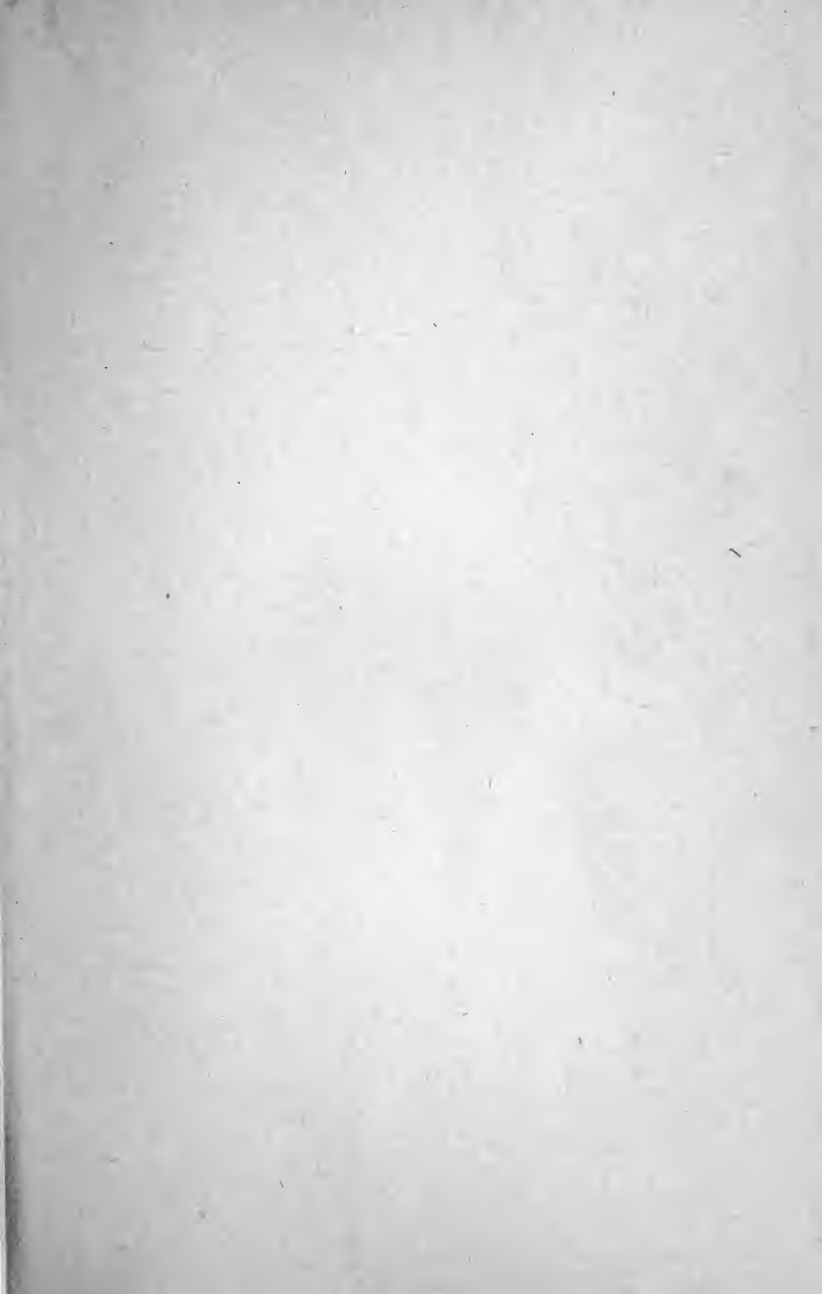
The sins which crucified Jesus are the sins which keep him from holding the largest place in the life of modern society. There has never been such a cry for the death of the living Christ as there is today from certain quarters, because there is a feeling abroad in the world that he holds the only key that can unlock the problems of the nations. But in the unlocking of these doors the same interests which conspired to kill the Jesus of history, know that their doom is sealed. The vested interests would crucify Jesus today because they see in his teaching the approaching doom of selfishness, greed, and industrial and commercial despotism. The Pharisees, leaders of the established order of things in the church, would crucify Jesus because they see in his popularity with the masses outside the church where his social teachings have been discovered, the beginning of a movement which will dethrone some of them, and make the church a great democratic organization. Politicians des-

pise the Living Christ and would crucify him, because the people are beginning to discern through his clear moral teachings, that a great deal of what has passed in the world as statesmanship, is only the selfish schemes of selfish men. Jesus Christ is the most disturbing factor in modern society. He cannot be avoided. He must either be placed or displaced, and those who would displace him by killing him, will meet the same fate as his early enemies.

“What will you do with Jesus?” is a personal question. We are intensely interested in the place which the vested interests of our day will give to Jesus. We are also interested in the place he is given in the plans of the politicians of the earth. But for us just now the supreme question is a personal one. What are we as individuals to do with Jesus; what place shall we give him in our lives? In the answer to this question is wrapped up the answer to these others. For what the various interests of society do with Jesus is decided by what the individual units which compose those interests have done with him. Jesus is on trial in your soul and the final judgment of his case rests with you. This is the greatest question you will ever face.

It is the question which is heard in every modern question of importance. You cannot enter into any phase of life without encountering it. It is the question, which, when answered right will answer every other important question in your life. It is the question I bring to you tonight from the heart of God. And most important, it is a question you must decide tonight whether you want to or not. If you are not for Jesus you are against him. We have his words for that. There is no neutral ground. You cannot avoid an answer. "The doors being shut" he stands in your midst, and this living, invisible, all-conquering Presence, will not depart until you have definitely accepted him or rejected him as your Lord: At this evening hour he comes to be your Friend and Saviour. Will you not bid him tarry with you, to become the great Companion of your soul?



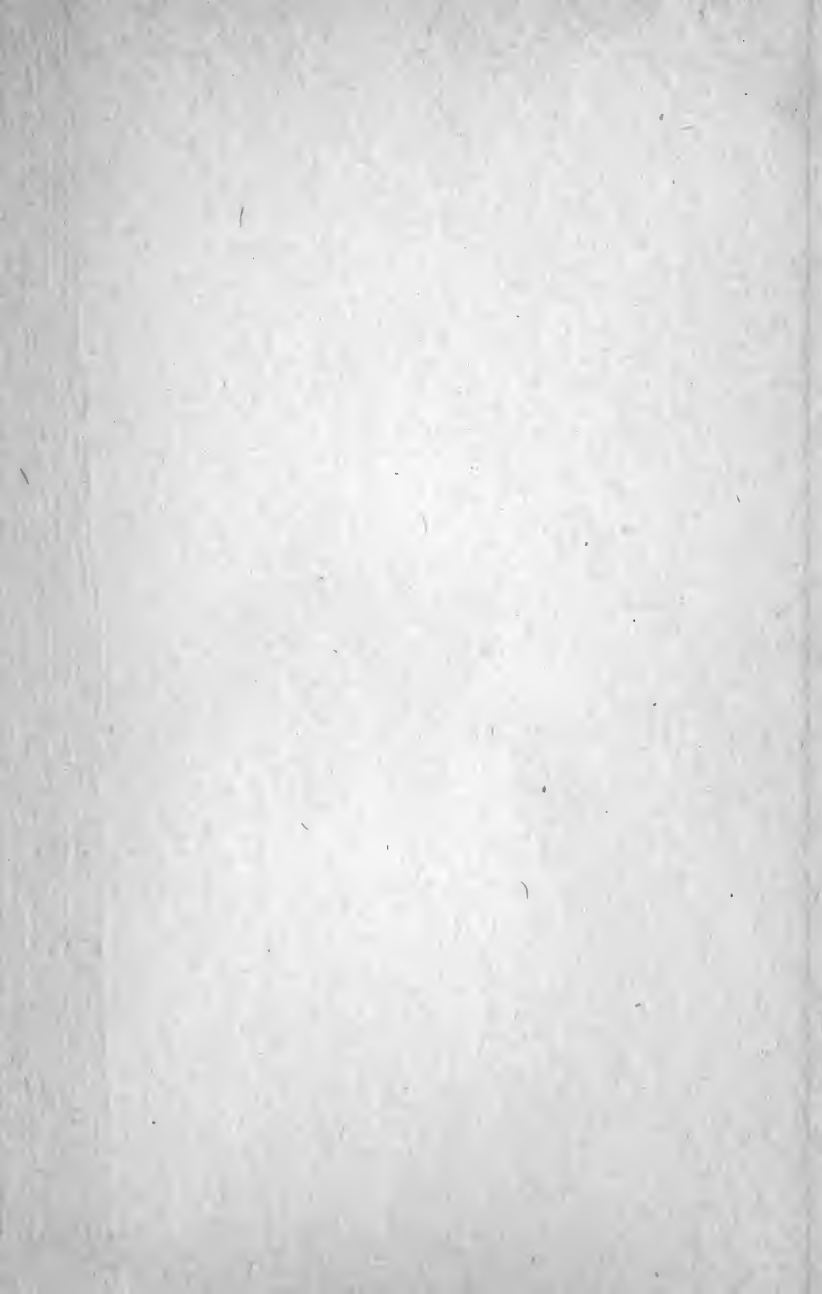


Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process.
Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide
Treatment Date: July 2005

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