

Westminster Pulpit- G Campbell Morgan-4

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069 - Matthew 1:21 - The Name Jesus

Thou shalt call His name Jesus; for it is He that shall save His people from their sins. Matthew 1:21

Even today the naming of a newborn child is an event full of interest. The principles of choice are varied in these complex and

somewhat superficial days. Children are given names because the names have been borne by their fathers before them. Sometimes names are still given to children as expressing a hope on the part of the parents, but as a rule they are simply given on the basis of preference.

The Hebrews meant far more by their names than we do. That will be discovered as the Old Testament history is read. They were often wrong in their naming of the children. The very first name, Cain, was a wrong name. Eve called her first-born Cain—Acquired. She was doomed to disappointment. She had hoped that the promised seed had already come. And the second name was also a mistake. She called her next boy Abel—Vanity. There was far more to satisfy the mother's heart in the coming years in Abel, even though he suffered death, than in Cain.

Sometimes the names were tragic names. Hosea, that prophet of the wounded spirit and the broken heart, as children were born into his home named them, and in their naming is seen the terrible conditions of the chosen people. He called the first Jezreel, judgment threatened! He called the second Lo-ruhamah, mercy not obtained! He called the third Lo-ammi, not My people!

When Mary's Child was born, Joseph named Him Jesus. And this was by special instruction conveyed to him by the angel. That angel was the messenger of heaven's thought, and of God's will. The Babe was registered Jesus in heaven. And that name, given by Joseph in obedience to the instruction of the angel who had received his command in heaven's own high court, was a name which expressed heaven's confidence in the Child now born. Earth's salvation will come as earth shares heaven's faith in Jesus; and the giving of the name at the first was expressive of this confidence of God in the newborn Child.

This story of the giving of the name is one of supreme interest. Do not be angry with me for bringing to you a text you have known from childhood, but let us come back to this name, which every child here who has begun to read at all, can spell, and try to understand some of the things signified by the giving of this name. A few moments first, then, with the name given; and, second, a consideration of the reason for giving this name to this Child.

I would have you, first of all, remember the humanness of this name. It was a very common Hebrew name. Doubtless many a boy living in Judea in the days when the Babe was born was called Jesus. And doubtless it had been for long years, for centuries, a popular name in Jewish families; for of course you remember that Jesus is but the Greek form of the Hebrew name "Joshua." There were many boys called Joshua, and in the Greek dialect obtaining at the moment, many boys doubtless bore this name of Jesus. There is nothing startling in the name. When the neighbors heard that Mary had called the newborn Boy Jesus, they did not stop to ask what she meant. Many another Jesus was running about in Nazareth and Judea, and all through the countryside it was one of the most common names, almost as common as John is today.

Thus God took hold of a name perfectly familiar, which set the newborn Child among the children of men, rather than separated Him from them. He took hold of a name that men were using everywhere, "Thou shalt call His name Jesus," the name that the boy next door has, the name that men have been calling their boys by for centuries. "Thou shalt call His name Jesus."

But how came it that this name was so familiar? What were the associations of the name in the Old Testament history? It was a name associated with two men pre-eminently—the one who first received it, a leader; and, then, another who made it conspicuous, a priest.

The first man who bore the name was the great soldier who succeeded to the leadership of the people after the passing of Moses, the man to whom there was committed the stern, hard, fierce fight that was necessary to establish the people in the land. This man was born in Egypt, in slavery, lived there about forty years, and then followed Moses as he led the people out of Egypt; then spent the next forty years in the wilderness, passing through all its experiences. Finally, he led the people with the sword and terrific conflict into possession of the land. That is the man who first received this name. So far as the Bible is concerned, and in all probability so far as Jewish history is concerned, the name had never been known before. It was made for him by Moses. His name was originally Hosea or Hoshea: but Moses changed it and called him Joshua.

The next man who bore the name conspicuously was a priest in the days of restoration under Haggai and Zechariah.

Now this Child is born, and heaven, taking a name familiar in the homes of Judea, a name conspicuous in Hebrew history because of its connection with the soldier leader and the restoring priest, commands, "Thou shalt call His name Jesus; for it is He that shall save His people from their sins."

Let us examine the matter more closely. We have seen that the name was common among Hebrew boys. We have seen that the name was thus popular because of the historic association. Now, what does the name mean?

In the story to which I have already made reference, in Numbers 13, it is told how men were sent to spy out the land: princes of the tribes. Among them was the prince of the tribe of Ephraim, Hoshea, which name means salvation, or deliverance. In the course of that story in Numbers we are told, as I think parenthetically, that Moses changed his name from Hoshea to Joshua, and the reason

for it will be found presently when the spies returned. You know the story well, how the majority report was against going up to Canaan; but the minority report—and it is a very interesting thing to notice in human history how minority reports are almost always right—the minority report was, We can possess the land. Joshua was the spokesman, and what did he say? He declared that Jehovah was able to bring His people into possession in spite of all the difficulties. I think it was because of that word, and because of that fact and of that confidence that Moses with insight and foresight, seeing what this man meant to the nation, changed his name. It was a good name before: Hoshea: salvation. Yes, but this man was not depending on his own right arm. He had no dream in his heart that he could bring salvation to his people. He declared that it must be the work of Jehovah; and, consequently, Moses weaving the two names together, Jehovah and Hoshea, called him Joshua, for Joshua is the combination of the two words, Jehovah and Yawshah, which is Hoshea, and which as we have said means salvation. The name Joshua signifies Jehovah saves, or Jehovah will save, or Jehovah's salvation. Jehovah and salvation are thus woven into one name. It was high honor conferred on the new leader to bear such a name as that, and a wonderful revelation of the insight of the man who gave it to him. The original name, Hoshea, salvation, is a fine one, but this man knew that he could not lead the people in, even though his report be a true one; but he also knew that God could, and Moses said, Your name is changed, and into it is brought the name of the God Who can save. So the name was made. And Joshua led them in, but he never gave them rest.

The high priest of a later day, who had the name, came very near fulfilment of some of its significance as he bore the iniquity of the people, the filthy garments signifying this fact. Presently he was crowned. It was all prophetic and symbolic, but he failed, as the subsequent history of the people proves. The centuries have gone, and the high and noble thinking of the name has never been realized in actual life. There is a hush in the outer court of the inn, and a little Child has come into the world, and the world is quite careless, but heaven is not. Stars are shining, angels are singing, wise men are feeling the touch of the upper spaces, and are journeying toward the manger. Who is it? "Thou shalt call His name Joshua; for it is He that shall save His people from their sins."

God took hold of a common name of the boys playing about, and called His Son by that name. God took hold of the great historic name of the past, the name of the great leader and the name of the priest of the past, and gave it to His Son new born. Yes, but what is the deepest thing? Call Him Jehovah, Yawshah; Joshua, Jesus. Call Him by His own Father's name, Jehovah, and so indicate the truth about His nature. Call Him by the supreme passion of His Father's heart, salvation, and so indicate the meaning of His work in the world.

We pass it on from age to age in printed page, and from mouth to mouth in spoken word: Jesus! But in that name is wrapped up essential truth concerning Him. Jehovah, Yawshah. Call Him that. He is my Son. He is My Servant Who shares My nature. He comes to do My work. Now I understand Him when in the coming years I hear Him say, "I and My Father are One." Call Him Jesus, and I understand Him when I hear Him say, upon another occasion, "My Father worketh even until now, and I work." Call Him salvation, and link your two names together into the infinite music; whether it be Hebrew, Greek, or Anglo-Saxon, matters nothing. You cannot rob it of its music. Carry it into all languages and dialects, and in sweet tones it breaks upon the listening ear of humanity.

Jesus, the name high over all,
In hell, or earth, or sky,
Angels and men before it fall
And devils fear and fly.

That is the tone of His triumphant march to victory. But there is another tone.

Jesus, name of sweetness,
Jesus, sound of love;
Cheering exiles onward
To their home above.
Jesus, oh, the magic
Of the soft love sound,
How it thrills and trembles
To creation's bound.

This name has appealed to every generation, and to all classes of men because it is a great name. It is the name of the boy who plays in the street. It touches you. It is Jehovah, Yawshah. Call Him that, said the Father to the angel, and the Boy's name was registered in heaven, God's name linked with the great word that declares His mission in the world.

Second, the reason for giving this name. "Thou shalt call His name Jesus; for it is He that shall save His people from their sins." You notice that slight variation in translation, certainly a great gain. The real thought is that of a contrast. "Thou shalt call His name Jesus; for it is He that shall save His people." I repeat, the form of the sentence really suggests a contrast. A contrast with what? With all the aspiration of the past, which had never become achievement. With all the strong and strenuous attempt that had ended in defeat.

Take the man who first bore the great name. Joshua is one of the greatest men upon the pages of the Old Testament in many ways. And yet in all full realization, he failed; and the writer of the letter to the Hebrews tells us, "For if Joshua had given them rest, he would not have spoken afterward of another day." So the great leader of the past failed. He led them in, he led them with great sternness and severity, and magnificent triumph against Jericho, and Ai, and on, but he certainly never gave them rest. And all the history of the coming years was the history of perpetual restlessness. Joshua never led them into rest. Well, call His name Joshua, for it is He that shall save His people from their sins.

And Joshua, the high priest in the days of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, not much is said of him, but there he appears, the representative of religion, urging the people under Zerubbabel to their building, helping the office of the prophet with his priestly intercession. There he is seen in symbolic language, clothed with the filthy garments, representing defiled Israel. But he could not take away sin, and the filthy garments remained upon Israel, and Israel failed to fulfil the great function for which she had been created a nation, that of speaking the message of God; and Joshua the priest failed, as did Joshua the leader.

Very well, then, call His name Joshua, for He shall save His people from their sins. And so, brethren, that emphasis of contrast leads us to see that this name indicated, or the declaration associated with the name indicated, not merely a mission, but a method. The angel did not say to Joseph, "Thou shalt call His name Joshua," for He shall lead the people in. He did not say to Joseph, "Thou shalt call His name Joshua," for He shall bear away the filthy garments, and enable the people to bear their testimony. He might have said these things, but what He said was deeper. "He shall save His people from their sins." My brethren, this is a revelation of the assured success. Joshua failed to lead the people into rest, why? Because of the people's sin, with which he could not deal. Joshua the priest failed to realize in Israel God's purpose, that which should be his message to the nations, why? Because of his people's sin, which he could not carry. So that instead of dealing merely with the surface of things, or speaking of issues, the angel's message goes down to the depths and says, "Thou shalt call His name Joshua," for He will lead His people into rest, and to the fulfilment of their vocation by saving them from the sins which prevent rest, and which give the adversary power.

Call this newborn Child Jesus, "for He shall save His people" from these things and from the consequent ruin. If His people are saved from sins, they will find rest; if His people are saved from sins, they will fulfil their vocation, and be and do all that God means they shall be and do.

"Thou shalt call His name Jesus; for it is He that shall save His people from their sins." I pray you remember that the phrase, "His people," is significant at this point. It marks limits, and indicates limitlessness. What are the limits it marks? His people. No, brethren, I will begin with the other word. How does it indicate limitlessness? It does not say, He shall save the people of His own nation. It does not say, as has often been pointed out, He shall save God's people, but His own people. "His people." He is coming to make a position, to create a people to be a Kingdom, and to set up the Kingdom; and the people who are His He will save from their sins. There is your limit, but there is your limitlessness. How may a man become one of His people? Simply by believing on Him and crowning Him. It is a statement that overlaps the boundary line of Judaism. It is a statement that includes the wise men who come from afar to Him, as well as shepherds singing on Bethlehem's plains. This is the story of the first naming of the Child.

But as you take the story you will find this Child grows up, and He stands amongst multitudes of men, and He comes out of the border line of Judea, and touches Tyre and Sidon, and Phoenicia. He goes to Samaritans finally, and at the last commissions His disciples to go everywhere. Standing amongst men, He says, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out." It is a universal invitation that He utters. Will you come? Are you coming? I am addressing in imagination the whole nation, and from here and there they come, they crowd. Who are those that come? His people. What will He do? Save them from their sins. Unless you make yourself His by birth, He cannot save you from your sins. Unless you yield to Him, you cannot be His. It is the call of Christ which constitutes human opportunity. That opportunity taken, and men yielding to it, what then? Then they become His, and He saves such from their sins. So that He brings men into rest, who come to Him, and that Joshua could never do. So that He enables a man to fulfil the Divine vocation who comes to Him, and that the high priest, Joshua, could not do. But our Jesus does it by saving us from our sins.

Brothers, when this name was given to Joseph by the angel it was, so far as man was concerned, a prophecy. So far as God was concerned it was an affirmation of faith, of absolute assurance and certainty. Thou, Joseph, shalt call His name Jehovah—Salvation, for He shall save His people from their sins. So spake heaven; and as men heard it, it was a prophecy, it was an indication, it was a hope. There is a sense in which it is true that He did not receive that name finally until He went back into heaven, and Paul tells us all the gracious story when he writes, "Who, being in the form of God, counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the Cross. Wherefore, also God highly exalted Him, and gave unto Him the name which is above every name." What name? "That in the name of Jesus every knee should bow."

The angel uttered it, heaven's confidence, a prophecy of hope to men; and the Babe bore it, and carried it through the simplicity of childhood, one Boy among the many who bore it in those Judean villages; and the Boy passed out into youth, and bore the same

name, Joshua, Jesus, in purity, and in resistance to all evil. And He bore it on through the years of public ministry, and He bore it on the Cross, and never so universally as there. Who is this upon the Cross? The Babe Whose name is Jesus. But Who is He? Joshua, Jehovah, Salvation.

Can He do it? Can He take sins away, and bring rest? Can He take sins away, and enable me to fulfil my vocation? I do not know. He is dead. They have buried Him. I do not know. I am one of the disciples, I am afraid. I do not know. I hoped, but I am not sure. What is this the women say? He is risen? He has appeared first to them, and then to the eleven, and then to Peter all alone, and then to others, and to five hundred at once. He gathered them about Him on Olivet, the risen One, and He went up, bearing with Him the same sweet human name that boys bore at their play in Judea, bearing up the name the leader of the past bore, who failed to bring into rest, bore it up triumphant into heaven itself; and He received it there anew, no longer a prophecy for men, but an evangel!

And there at the center of God's universe at this moment of human time is the Man Who bore the name, glorified, our Joshua, Hallelujah! He is able to lead us into rest. He is our High Priest, clothed no longer with the filthy garments, for He bore them away on the Cross; but with the miter on His head, and many diadems upon His brow, Jesus, the enthroned One. May God help us to hear the evangel of the name, and to know assuredly that what the name prophesied He has perfectly accomplished.

070 - Matthew 3:15 - The Way of Righteousness

The Way of Righteousness

... thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.

Matthew 3:15

These are the first recorded words of Jesus after He had come to man's estate. We have in the Gospel of Luke a record of what He said as a boy twelve years of age, "Wist ye not that I must be in the things of My Father (my Father's house)." That was a truly remarkable utterance characterized by all naturalness and simplicity, the naturalness and simplicity of a boy undefiled, artless, and sincere. They were words in which He revealed, even at that time, a sense of relationship that was mystic and peculiar, for there can be no doubt that His reference was to God as He said, "My Father's house" or "the things of My Father." Even then, also, there was a sense of responsibility resting upon Him, "... I must be in (My Father's house)." In that "must," moreover, there was revelation not of responsibility alone, but of response thereto. In that word the boy uttered the deepest thing of His heart, the central inspiration of the life that was opening full of beauty and full of promise, "Wist ye not that I must be in the things of My Father (My Father's house)."

Between that hour and this of His baptism, eighteen years had passed, during which once again, according to St. Luke, He had "... advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men." There had been definite growth and development; mentally, in wisdom, physically in stature, spiritually, in grace with God and men. The double favor "... with God and men" was the outcome of the double fellowship of those eighteen years. Through them all He had lived with God and with men; in a close, perpetual fellowship with His Father and naturally with the people of Nazareth, not aloof from them but mixing in all their life.

As He approached thirty years of age, a strange and wonderful thing happened in Judaea. A voice was heard which was unmistakably the voice of a prophet crying in the wilderness,

... Make ye ready the way of the Lord;

Make His paths straight.

It was a voice so prevailing that men crowded out to the wilderness to hear him, were swept by his fierce invective and his stern denunciation, and multitudes of them bent and bowed themselves in repentance. Among those who heard the voice was the Carpenter of Nazareth, and hearing it He answered it; "Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to the Jordan unto John...." At this point in the narrative we have a statement which is a very arresting one. When this man from Nazareth presented Himself to the stern, hard, ascetic, magnificent prophet of the desert for baptism, John hesitated, and said to Him, "... I have need to be baptised of Thee, and comest Thou to me?" There is nothing really arresting in that, nothing very startling in it if we read it with our knowledge of Jesus; but if we remember that at the moment when John said it, he did not know Who Jesus was, then it became arresting, startling, suggestive. John himself distinctly declared later that he only knew that this Jesus was indeed the One Whose coming he had been predicting when he saw the Holy Spirit descending upon Him. When Jesus presented Himself, John had not yet seen that sign and so did not know Him as the Messiah. It may be that in their earlier boyhood days they had met and played together, but there had been long years of separation. John had retired in early life to the desert and there in loneliness, in meditation, brooding over the sins of his people, he had prepared for the stern ministry to which he was being called. Jesus had remained in Nazareth. Looking into His eyes he said, "... I have need to be baptised of Thee, and comest Thou to me?" The explanation is not far to seek. John stands supreme in all the long and illustrious line of Hebrew prophets; brief, stern, and severe, he had so entered into fellowship with

the righteousness and holiness of God that when he looked into the eyes of the Galilean peasant that day, he saw light that he had seen in no other eyes, purity which he had seen nowhere else, and without at all knowing Who He was, he recognized that here was One separated from the multitude in His purity, and he said, "... I have need to be baptised of Thee, and comest Thou to me?"

In that connection Jesus uttered the first words of His ministry that have been recorded, and in the uttering of them He struck the keynote of the whole of that ministry, unveiling in a flash the whole truth concerning it. With gentleness to John He said persuadingly, "... Suffer it now,..." and then added, "... for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness."

These words were introductory to His mission. They came out of a quiet mind, full heart, and fixed will. They were the utterance of One Whose mind had grown in wisdom, Whose heart had grown in grace, Whose will had been constantly yielded to the will of His Father. He clearly saw His mission and understood its deepest meaning and in quiet simplicity in this act He dedicated Himself to it.

In the words He uttered, we have first a revelation of the ultimate toward which His face was set; that ultimate is in this connection expressed in the word "righteousness"; "... thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." Second, in the declaration we have a revelation of the work that was devolving upon Him and upon all those who were already in association with Him, John being among the number, as were the men of the past and those who ultimately come into association with Him, His disciples, and His church; "... to fulfil all righteousness." In the first suggestive word, "Thus," so pregnant with meaning yet so simple that we may hurry over it, He revealed the method by which His work was to be accomplished and the ultimate order of righteousness established.

Let us then follow these three lines of thought, considering first, the suggestion of these words of Jesus concerning the ultimate order, "righteousness"; considering second, the work which He revealed as His work and the work of all associated with Him, "... to fulfil all righteousness"; dwelling last upon the method revealed, "... thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness."

The keynote of our meditation is struck in the word "righteousness." Our difficulty is immediately created, as it is so constantly, by our familiarity with the word. It is one of the commonplace words of the Christian church, one of the great words which is no longer confined to the Christian church but has passed out and is perpetually being used by men of the world. What does it mean? We have sometimes said that by a shortening of the word we may gain access to the heart of the intention, rightness; and by still further shortening it we may come nearer to the simple statement of its profoundest meaning, right. Yet we are not finally helped by that. What is righteousness? Righteousness is found absolutely in God and in God alone. Turning back to the Old Testament Scriptures where the word so often occurs, we find one great illuminative passage in which the word itself does not occur but in which the whole fact is so poetically and forcefully set forth that nothing can be added to it. In the Book of Deuteronomy, we have the song which Moses wrote at the close of his life and taught to the people that they might sing it. It is found in the thirty-second chapter of the book;

For I will proclaim the name of the Lord:
Ascribe ye greatness unto our God.
The Rock, His work is perfect;
For all His ways are judgment:
A God of faithfulness and without iniquity,
Just and right is He.

An inclusive and final definition of righteousness lies within that stanza of the great song of Moses. This righteousness is absolute in God, and the measure in which man understands righteousness is the measure in which he knows God. All the Divine attributes are needed for the exposition of the righteousness of God. Righteousness is a greater word than holiness. Righteousness is the positive of which holiness is the negative. The babe in its mother's arms is righteous but not yet holy; righteous in that it is perfectly related to God until the touch of another shall spoil it; needing no priestly magic to make it a Christian. Holiness is the negative virtue which results from the exercise of the positive condition of rightness. In God both truth and grace are included in righteousness. In Him righteousness is not a hard, ethical condition, integrity alone. In Him righteousness has at its heart love and grace, tenderness and compassion. He "... will by no means clear the guilty,..." but He will die in the stead of the guilty, cancel sin and so render the guilty guiltless. Righteousness is absolute in God.

What then is righteousness in man? I want to answer the question individually, socially, and in regard to things. Righteousness in man individually is adjustment to God, thinking with God, feeling with God, willing with God. That means not merely what man is in himself, but all his attitudes and relationships to his fellowmen and to things. In man righteousness is adjustment to God. Righteousness is not the rendering of homage to God on a day, in a place, in an attitude. Righteousness is an adjustment of the whole life to God, every day, in every place, in all conditions, and in all attitudes. Whereas it is true that we cannot put God on the same list with our material possessions, it is also appallingly true, tragically true, that many people put their material possessions where God ought to be. Although it seems almost a frivolous thing to say, the frivolity is tragic, it is nevertheless true, there are men and women who are entirely adjusted to their houses, automobiles and bank accounts. They think in the realm of these things, they

feel under the impulse of these things, they will under the mastery of these things. The tragedy of the business! That is all background and negative to our meditation. The thing that stands in the foreground and is the positive end of our meditation is that righteousness in. a man is life adjusted in all things to God.

In social life, righteousness is the proper articulation of the lives so adjusted. Socially, righteousness is that relation between man and man which is the outcome of the adjustment of individual lives to God. The motive of relationship and the method of relationship result from the adjustment of life to God and its right relationship with Him. We imagine too often that we are in right relationship with God and then proceed in our relationships with our fellow men as though there were no connection between the two. Yet there is always connection between the two. A man whose relationship with his fellow man is wrong at any point is a man whose relationship with God is wrong in spite of his song, his creed, and his profession. To be adjusted to God in all truth is to be true, and the man who is true cannot lie to his fellow man. To be adjusted to God in grace is to be gracious, and the man who is gracious cannot be mastered by malice in his dealing with his fellow man.

Once again what is righteousness as to things? What do I mean by things? Just things! Houses, cars, bank accounts, trees, fields, birds, beasts, minerals, mountains, valleys, subtle and hidden forces not yet discovered, things already discovered such as electricity, anything, everything. What has righteousness to do with them? What does righteousness mean in regard to them? It means the discovery of things as to their being and as to their true purpose in the Divine economy. There is nothing inherently evil that God has created. What then, is the matter with the world? Men not adjusted to God, men not articulated as within that great adjustment have not discovered the forces that they need; or having discovered them, do not know their true purpose and are misusing them. The ultimate Kingdom of God in this world will not be a kingdom from which are banished all the things that we see and touch. It will be a kingdom in which man has discovered them and their true meaning, and one in which man will no longer lay hold upon some subtle potent thing that has its purpose in the universe and use it for a kingdom in which things we call poisons will be relegated to their proper place, made use of, since all are gifts of God. Righteousness with regard to things means also the development of the thing discovered. An imperfect flower in your garden is proof of the lack of righteousness somewhere. Arrested development is proof of lack of righteousness. The opposite is true. Righteousness means that the flower found for the first time in the forest, under the touch of man in right relationship with God and in cooperation with his brother man will become beautiful with a beauty of which we never dreamed but which was potential in the flower when first man found it. The discovery and development of all the great and gracious, sweet and wonderful secrets of old mother-earth.

Finally, righteousness as to things means that they are used and not abused, that they are made the servants of humanity and not the masters of men; like the very Sabbath of God, they are made for man and not man for them.

In the presence of the great word we dream wondrous dreams, and no dream we dream approaches the glory of the reality of righteousness. Do you wonder that the New Testament writer upon one occasion made use of the words "... the fruits of righteousness..." Righteousness blossoms into beauty and produces fruits. Righteousness is a word full of beauty, and we, alas too often, have made it merely hard, mechanical, ethical. It is bursting with life. It describes man coming to the fulfilment of his manhood because his face is lifted to the throne of God. It describes humanity finding the true social order because human life is articulated as the result of the adjustment of the individual to God. It describes the earth, blushing with beauty, laughing with flowers, becoming more glorious in its light and more full of ease and delight in its being. It is God's great word, a word in which He sings out to men if they but have ears to hear it, the exceeding beauty of His own being, the exceeding joy of His own heart, the characteristic grace of His purpose for the people whom He has made.

If righteousness is absolute in God, and relatively in man is man's adjustment and articulation, what is righteousness resultantly? "For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost," righteousness first, then resultantly peace, and finally, joy. What then according to the suggestion of that declaration are the results of righteousness? First peace. "... thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness" said Jesus, in a world which at the moment was hushed and subdued by an appalling peace. Jesus was born when war had ceased and ceased by the agony of the surfeit of itself. The pax Romanum was upon the world for the world was worn out with struggle. The temple of Janus had been closed for a generation and there was peace, appalling peace. Jesus said: "... it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." Out of the righteousness which He saw and toward which He set His face, there springs peace, not the pax Romanum but the pax Dei. The peace of God is not weariness, tiredness, inability to fight. It is rather full activity of life in rhythmic power without friction, without weariness. "... the Lord... fainteth not neither is weary." The peace of God grows out of righteousness. Humanity will never find that peace save by the way of righteousness. Out of that peace will come joy and joy is satisfaction, delight, rapture! That is God's ultimate for humanity.

We seem to have wandered very far, but we have come nearer than ever perhaps to the Man Who stood on the banks of the Jordan as He said, "... thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." These were the visions of His eyes, these the ideals of His mind, this the golden goal toward which He set His face. Now note His description of His work; "... to fulfil all righteousness." There is in that phrase the recognition of righteousness as possible. Righteousness in the thinking of Jesus was not a counsel of perfection, a forlorn hope. It was possible, first, because man can be adjusted to God. There is that in God and in man which makes such

adjustment possible. The deepest truth of man's nature is that he is created for that adjustment. As Augustine put it long ago, "God has so fashioned the human heart that it never can find rest until it rest in Him." To take the great statement and put it in another form is to declare that it is possible for man to be adjusted to God. He is made for that, not for houses, cars, and credit at the bank, but for God. God has that in Himself which is kith and kin of humanity; He made humanity in His own likeness and image. Having made humanity, it is not merely true that humanity can only rest in Him, it is equally true that He can never rest save as humanity finds rest in Him. If you challenge that, I remind you of the words of Jesus when they criticized Him for breaking Sabbath, "... My Father worketh hitherto and I work." God and Christ can never rest until humanity is at rest. Jesus realized, moreover, that man can be articulated, that it is not impossible. I will borrow a figure of speech from an old prophet: it is not impossible for the lion to dwell with the lamb; it is not impossible that men of differing and diverse temperaments and races should come into realization of that unity which does not destroy their distinction. Under the illumination of the teaching of Christ and in the light of His principles and purpose, man discovers—mark the paradox but follow me—the value of difference necessary to total agreement; differences in form and fashion, in thought and outlook. Thank God there are differences! Yet differences is an ugly word; there are diversities, that is a little better. But let us borrow a literary word, *diereses*, that is differences which merge and mix with each other and make harmony. That is God's ultimate for humanity. That means differences not only as to types, temperaments, and races, but as to thought, and that within the Christian church first of all. As the years run on, a man comes to respect with profounder respect than he did, the opinion from which he radically differs. He comes to see that a man who stands for a doctrine of the church which is sacerdotal may himself be as true as the man who stands against him. Perchance in some sweet morning, when life's fitful fever is over, we shall laugh together as sons of God over the things in the presence of which today we quarrel and rend the body of Christ. It is for this larger outlook that Christ came, this harmony which is not monotony. The word of Jesus recognized, moreover, that righteousness is already operative. To fulfil is not to create, but to cooperate, and set free, and enable it to complete itself. I believe with John that "... the whole world lieth in the evil one"; but I also believe that that which lieth in the evil one is potential with righteousness. As the evil one holds the world in his embrace, he holds that in his embrace which he cannot forever hold. I believe with all my heart

That cannot end worst which begun best
Though a wide compass first be fetched.

Of course there was also recognition of righteousness as hindered, held back. That is the supreme thought and therefore it needs no argument.

So we come to our last thought. The word "thus" suggested the method. What did He mean by "thus"? He meant that from which John shrank. From what, then, did John shrink that day when he looked at Jesus? I believe John had welcomed eagerly all who really came in repentance for baptism, but when Jesus came he said, "... I have need to be baptised of Thee, and comest Thou to me?" He shrank from the idea that the sinless should confess sin. Jesus confessed sin when He went to that baptism. He shrank from the idea that the righteous should repent. When Jesus went to that baptism, He repented. He shrank from the idea that the free with the freedom of purity should seek remission of sins. When Jesus stooped to baptism, He sought remission of sin within His own soul. John looking into the eyes of Jesus said, It is wrong, this cannot be! Thou art sinless, "I have need to be baptised of Thee, and comest Thou to me?" How can the sinless confess sin? How can the righteous repent for sin? How can the free ask for remission? Jesus said, "... thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." By the very things from which thou art shrinking, righteousness will be fulfilled. Righteousness will be fulfilled by the Sinless bearing sin, by the Righteous repenting for sin on behalf of others, by the Free seeking to be bound in order to break the bonds and set at liberty those that are bound. Never let us read this story and forget those meanings of the baptism of John; it was baptism unto the remission of sins by way of repentance. John, or his disciples, plunged beneath the waters of the Jordan all that came owning their sin, declaring their repentance, and seeking remission. When Jesus was baptized, He confessed sin, He repented for sin, He sought remission.

Whose sin? Not His own, but yours and mine. When John saw Him again, it was after the quietness of the night, after he had seen the descending Spirit, and there had come to him the overwhelming conviction that his hands had plunged beneath the waters of symbolic baptism the Christ of God, the Messiah. On the day after, John looked at Him and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world."

Now carefully observe our Lord's use of the plural pronoun: "... it becometh us." The word was spoken to John, "It becometh us," it becometh Me, as well as thee; it becometh thee as well as Me; it becometh us. It is as though He had said: "John, I will show thee the way. Thy mission has been a Divine mission. Thou hast been the herald of My coming, thou hast proclaimed Me as coming with a fire and a fan! Lo, I come; but '... thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.' "Righteousness will never be fulfilled by the voice that denounces sin; righteousness will never be fulfilled by the voice that thunders against it! All of which is necessary but such ministry will never fulfil it. There is only one way, it is the way of the Cross, it is the way of fellowship with humanity in its sin, repentance for its sin, and the bearing away of its sin.

He gathered into this "us" all the men of the past who had trodden the sorrowful way. There was a day when Moses said something that revealed the deepest in him more wonderfully than anything he said before or after. It was the day when in the presence of God,

he said of the sinning people: "... this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold; Yet, now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book!" That is the way by which the people were lifted and saved. There was a later day when another man wrote: "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience bearing witness with me in the Holy Ghost... I could wish that I myself were anathema from Christ for my brethren's sake, my kinsmen according to the flesh." That is the way the Kingdom is coming. Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness; by standing with the sinner, and confessing the sinner's sin; by sharing the burden of it, repenting for it, going down to death if need be for the saving of the sinner. "... thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness."

For us the wondrous facts and forces are centralized in Him. He is the Righteousness of God, the Revealer of the beauty of righteousness, adjusted to the will of God. He in the articulation of Himself with others will set up the Kingdom of God. He is the One Who fulfils all righteousness.

At last John in mystic vision heard Him speak and this is what He said, "I am the Alpha and the Omega,... the beginning and the end" of the new heaven and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. He is the strength of our fellowship in the method. I cannot take up that Cross and share the burden of sin and repent and suffer with the sinner save as it is true of me that the love of Christ constraineth me and that the life of Christ masters me. Where these things are so, we shall enter into fellowship with the suffering by which, and by which alone, the Kingdom is to come.

071 - Matthew 3:17 - God's Thought of the King

God's Thought of the King

This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased.

Matthew 3:17

These words constitute the inscription stamped around the Image imprinted on this gospel according to Matthew. The Image is that of the King. We have the book of His genealogy, the story of His birth, the record of the ministry of His herald. Then we see Him as lawgiver, Administrator of the affairs of a disorganized and chaotic Kingdom, a Warrior proceeding against the foes of the Kingdom and entering into conflict with them. Finally, He appears as the Conqueror of all His enemies, and we listen to words of sublime dignity as standing in the midst of a handful of men He says, "All authority hath been given unto Me in heaven and on earth."

This King impresses us with a sense of mystery. No man can take up this gospel of Matthew and read it naturally as human document, free from all prejudice, without being compelled to say that it presents a Person Who baffles all attempts to understand Him on the human plane. His words are of the simplest and of the sublimest. His deeds touch human life in all its departments, and yet to such effect that human life is seen with a glow of glory on it which we do not detect when others approach it. Who, then, is the King Whose image is stamped on the page? The inscription round about the mystic majestic head of the King is that of my text, "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased." The voice that uttered the words was a voice out of the heavens, the voice of God Himself.

These words therefore constitute both introduction and conclusion to the study of this gospel according to Matthew. In them we hear the voice of God introducing us to the King, challenging our attention; we are invited by this introductory declaration to follow Him in the light of the claim, and to discover whether it is probable that the claim is justified by the life He lived, by the words He uttered, by the work He accomplished. Those who follow the story through will find how fitting is this inscription around the image of the King.

Even if it be a work of imagination then he who wrote wrought well, beating his music out in perfect harmony with the chord of the dominant; for apart from this inscription and revelation there is no explanation of the One Who is revealed in the story.

In this declaration therefore we have the secrets of the Kingly authority of Christ laid bare, and in that sense we approach it. On the declaration flash the lights of the anticipations of the people who stood round about Him on this occasion, of the immediate circumstances in which the words are recorded to have been uttered, and of those subsequent demonstrations to which I have already made reference.

All Old Testament hopes had centered in the coming of One of Whom the prophets, psalmists and seers alike spoke as Messiah, the Servant of God, the Messenger of God. These aspirations of the past are explicit in the Second Psalm, and implicit in all the prophetic writings. In that psalm emerge into clear and definite statement the underlying hope and aspiration of all the singers and seers of the Hebrew economy. There are different opinions about the psalm. It is said that the reference is to David as the anointed King of Israel. It is suggested that the reference is to Hezekiah. While there may be elements of truth in these contentions, it is impossible to read the psalm and imagine that all its values were fulfilled in the case of David or of Hezekiah. If the psalm is of David, it is of David as God's messenger, His Messiah in a limited sense. If the psalm concerns Hezekiah, it concerns Hezekiah as

God's messenger, God's servant, God's Messiah in a limited sense. But there are values beyond these. In the case of either of these men, there were local, immediate, incidental applications of value, but shining through are larger meanings than the man understood who wrote the psalm, and fuller harmonies than the singers detected who sang the songs. This psalm has its fulfillment in Christ and in Him alone, so that when we hear this word spoken in the listening ear of the Hebrews, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," we recognize at once that they would understand it to mean that all the hopes implicit in their ancient prophecies, and focused in this declaration,

I have set my king
Upon my holy hill of Zion.
I will tell of the decree:
The Lord said unto me, Thou art my son;
This day have I begotten thee.

were fulfilled in the One of Whom this word was spoken.

The light of the immediate circumstances is, in some senses, more wonderful. I pray you look at the scene. John has been baptizing with the baptism of repentance, calling men back from their wanderings toward the reign of God. He has been pre-eminently the prophet of righteousness, stern, hard, ascetic, tremendous in his denunciation of sin and his insistence on righteousness. Suddenly he, a man of fine moral character and of intense spiritual insight, is confronted by another Man, Who asks his baptism. The Man Who asks his baptism is a Man of such apparent moral perfection to the man of spiritual insight as to make this very prophet of righteousness immediately feel convinced that he needs to be baptized of Him. While I listen to this word of John, and understand it and yet am amazed at it, I see a yet more strange and wonderful thing. This Man Jesus, of the high and awful purity, which so impressed the prophet of righteousness that he felt his need of cleansing in His presence, identifies Himself with the baptism of repentance, numbers Himself with sinning men; the One Whose purity had appalled the prophet of purity demands that He snail be plunged beneath the waters of the river with men impure and sinning. It is a strange and arresting picture. Immediately following thereupon that Man emerging from those waters of baptism is anointed by the Spirit of God, and with a visible symbol, for His own eyes and perchance for the eyes of the prophet, such as had never before been employed and never since has been employed for the Spirit of God—the symbol of a dove. It was a symbol that suggested harmless-ness and sacrifice.

It was thus, in the midst of such circumstances, that heaven's silence was broken after long centuries, and the voice of God was heard saying, "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased."

On this inscription flashes also the light of subsequent demonstration. The ministry of three years, compelling loyalty in certain form and fashion, a ministry in which teaching was uttered, the authority of which men were compelled to acknowledge, even though they did not obey it; a ministry in which His ability to deal with all the limitations and sorrows of humanity was demonstrated so that men at least never questioned His power to work the wonders of His will; a ministry which wrought in the lives of all who dared to follow Him such experience of His supremacy that they yielded themselves to Him, and counted it the highest, holiest honor of life that they were reckoned worthy to suffer shame for His name.

In the terms of this inscription blend the accents of the eternal and the temporal. While they are separated from each other, they nevertheless merge. In separation we have, first, the eternal word concerning this King, "This is My beloved Son"; and second, the temporal word concerning Him, having immediate and local value, "in Whom I am well pleased."

But the temporal and eternal merge in each of these separated parts. This Man was visible to the eyes of the prophet, visible to the eyes of the multitude, a Man of our humanity, a Man of our own flesh, a Man so like the rest of men that none noticed Him save the one man whose purity of soul quickened his spiritual intelligence and enabled him to discover Him. Did not John say to the multitudes, "In the midst of you standeth One Whom ye know not"? They had not seen Him, He was so much one of them. Yet the Divine voice drawing attention to this Man of our common humanity said, "This is My Son"; and in that word, as we shall see, declared the eternal and abiding relation, uttered suggestively the mystery of the Person of Christ in His relation to the undying ages.

Or if you take the other part of the declaration, you will find the same merging of the eternal and the temporal. "In Whom I am well pleased," and the reference was to the One on Whom our attention has been fixed in such a way that we are impressed with the majesty of His Person. The Son of God, "in Whom I am well pleased"; and there was an immediate and temporal meaning in the word, having application and value for that hour, and for the things of our present temporary and present life.

Thus are we introduced by the inscription around the Image, by the first word of God recorded concerning our Master, to the King Who will pass before us as we take our way through this gospel according to Matthew.

Let us, then, consider the inscription in its two parts. First, the eternal, "This is My Son"; second, the temporal, "In Whom I am well

pleased."

As we approach this strangely difficult theme, which cannot be exhausted, about which no final word can be spoken, we must bear in mind that the one fact of relationship here declared is that of the Sonship of Jesus.

If we place this word in Matthew against the word in the Second Psalm, we find a distinction and a difference. The word of the psalm says:

I will tell of the decree:

The Lord said unto me, Thou art my son;

This day have I begotten thee.

I listen for the sound of the voice of God on the banks of the River Jordan, and this is what I hear:

This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased.

There is not a word in this declaration by the Father about begetting or beginning. We must have that distinction in mind if we are to approach the subject reverently and intelligently. The two facts are not the same; the first is that of sonship, the second is that of a begetting, which indicates beginning. That begetting of the psalm has no reference to beginning of being, but to the initiation of a work. If the psalm be Messianic and its first fulfilment was in the case of David, then the begetting had no reference to the day of David's natural birth, but to the day when he was anointed king. If the psalm is Messianic and its first reference was to Hezekiah, then that which the expositors suggest may be true, that the reference was to that day when, rising from sickness and death, he started on a new life which God had granted to him. Of these things I have no certainty. If I take that psalm and find it in my New Testament I immediately discover what the word means in relation to Jesus. It is four times cited, two of them certainly by Paul, two of them in the letter to the Hebrews, probably by Paul. When Paul was delivering his first great message in Antioch in Pisidia he quoted that psalm and placed it in relation to the resurrection of Jesus, and declared that it was in that resurrection hour that He was begotten. You will find in his letter to the Romans when referring to Jesus as being, according to the flesh of the seed of David, but according to the spirit, Son of God, he declared that He was declared, determined—or as I have ventured to say if we dare to anglicize the Greek word, horizoned—Son of God by the resurrection from the dead. In the letter to the Hebrews it is declared that He was begotten Son of God, brought into the realm of manifested Sonship by the resurrection, and it is certain that the disciples of Jesus never perfectly understood His relationship to God until the morning of the resurrection. The morning of the resurrection was the day of birth for the disciples, because it was to them the day on which He was begotten Son of God to their understanding and to their comprehension. It was Peter himself who declared in his first letter, "We were begotten again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

We may dismiss for the purpose of this meditation all reference to that word in the psalm, "This day have I begotten thee," and take only the declaration of the psalm, "Thou art my Son," and that of God in the hour of the baptism of Jesus concerning His Person, "This is My beloved Son."

In that word we have, first of all, a revelation as to the nature of the King. He was of the very nature of God. All figurative terms must be used with a recognition of limitation. If we speak of a son we implicate a beginning, but that is because we are using our term in the realm of the finite. Finite sonship results from finite fatherhood; but we must cancel our limitations when we reach the heights of the Divine. A word which will again defy our finite analysis is the word "eternal," yet it must be remembered that this word cancels the limitations of time. Eternal fatherhood, eternal sonship, not the beginning of the sonship of this Son of His love. As the proceeding of the Spirit of God from the Father through the Son is eternal so also Sonship is eternal. That which is of supreme importance is the revelation of the fact that the King is of the Divine nature. He shares the very nature of His Father, is of the Divine essence. That is the deepest and profoundest truth about the King. He is not merely bone of our bones, flesh of our flesh, humanity of our humanity. He is all that, but infinitely more.

In speaking at Antioch in Pisidia Paul argued from the Sonship of Jesus which was demonstrated by His resurrection the impossibility of death holding Him ultimately. He passed into death, but He emerged therefrom as none other emerged therefrom or ever will. Death laid no corrupting touch on Him. He did not see corruption. Peter in Pentecostal power declared, "It was not possible that He should be holden of it." The first fact in this identity of nature is that of eternal being. He will bow and bend to death and enter into its profound darkness and know its mystery, but He cannot be held of it. It is not correct to say merely that He triumphed over death by the way of the resurrection. Resurrection was necessary because of His nature. He was not deified by resurrection. He was raised because He was of the nature of God, and could not, holy One as He was, ever ultimately see corruption.

In the passage in Romans the Apostle teaches that His Sonship connotes His absolute holiness; according to the flesh, He was of the seed of David; according to the spirit of holiness, He is Son of God, and the resurrection did but demonstrate that holiness of character which was part of His essential Deity.

In the opening words of the letter to the Hebrews it is shown that His identity in nature with God by reason of His Sonship proves His absolute sovereignty. "Unto which of the angels said He at any time,

Thou art My Son;
This day have I begotten thee?
But of the Son He saith,

Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever."

In the fifth chapter of Hebrews the writer declares that because Jesus was Son of God He was moved with compassion and became a great High Priest, bearing our infirmities, providing eternal salvation for the sons of men.

The Son of God is of the very nature of God, therefore eternal, therefore holy, therefore sovereign in authority, therefore saving, even at the cost of sacrifice and of death. All the things of Deity were realized in the Kingship of the One manifested in time in such form and fashion that human nature might gaze on Him and be led to understanding of the hidden and profound secrets of God.

The eternal value also reveals the fact that the King has right to the inheritance of God. Again I go back to this Hebrew psalm, and I notice that in the seventh verse I have these words:

Thou art my son;
This day have I begotten thee.
And in the twelfth verse,

Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish in the way.

Those who may be familiar with these psalms in the original language will at once recognize that we have two different words here. The word translated "son" in the seventh verse is not the word translated "son" in the twelfth verse. There is the same value in both words, the suggestiveness, with which we have attempted to deal, of identity of nature. In our reading of the Bible we have been made familiar with both these words in proper names, as for instance in the names Benjamin, and Bar-timæus. If I may take these prefixes as being the simplest way of illustrating what I am attempting to say, this is it,

Thou art My son—Ben.
Kiss the son—Bar.

There is the same underlying value of identity of nature in each, but there are two applications, two thoughts.

In the first you have the great Hebrew word, peculiarly Eastern, so difficult for us Westerners to understand, the word that speaks of sonship as being that which builds the house and continues it. We know so little of house building in that sense. Ask the man from the East how old he is, and do not be startled if he tells you two thousand years. He is counting all the family, feeling the solidarity of the race, recognizing his responsibility for that which lies behind him; he glories in being Benjamin, son of the right hand, builder of the house, continuer of the history.

The second word simply means heir. The first word indicates responsibility, contribution; the second indicates blessing, the thing a man receives.

In that psalm we have the suggestion that Messiah should be the Heir of God,

Ask of me, and I will give thee the nations for thine inheritance,
And the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.

The anointed King is the House Builder, the One who will accomplish the will of the Father, and therefore He will obtain the inheritance which is His right. The Son Who shares His Father's nature being of that nature and therefore being eternal, holy, sovereign, saving, is Heir of all the wealth of God in this world, all the nations, and all the earth.

This eternal Son of the eternal God not only shares His nature, and has a right to His inheritance, He co-operates in His purpose, He is the House Builder. Moses was servant in the house of God, but the Son is Sovereign over the house, for He is the Builder of the House. So the King is seen as co-operative with God, building His House, realizing His purpose, moving toward the goal on which the heart of God is set.

Read the psalm to the end and discover His method—the rule of justice, the rod of iron, the exercise of mercy:

Kiss the son, lest he be angry, and ye perish in the way,
For his wrath will soon be kindled.

Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him.

We turn, in the second place, and very briefly to the next word, that of the temporal relation: "In Whom I am well pleased." I do not believe that is temporal alone. I think it is the crystallization of all the infinite music of the eighth chapter of Proverbs. The ancient Hebrew wisdom, the Greek Logos, merge and are fulfilled in Jesus, in the Son of God, in that One in Whom God had forever delighted.

Yet the first application was local and temporal. We have no record of the life of Jesus for at least eighteen years. How has He been living, what has He been doing in those strange, mysterious years? That Voice broke the silence. "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased." Being now about thirty years of age He had come to baptism, and these words were uttered. It was a declaration of earthly conformity to a heavenly pattern, of temporal harmony with eternal order. It was the word of God setting His seal on the perfection of the human life of Jesus. It was the confirmation of the personal perfection of the human Christ, of His holiness of character, of the fact that He had reigned in life, suffering nothing to have dominion over Him other than the will of His Father, of the fact that He had exercised a saving, beneficent relationship as He had come into contact with men. These are the things of God, this is the Son of God, and for a generation He had lived in human conditions; now it was over, and God sealed the perfection of His Son as He said, "I am well pleased."

But there is another value and a profounder one in that statement. John had said, "I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me?" and the answer of the Son of God to the Hebrew prophet had been, "Suffer it now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." In that baptism He was numbered with the transgressors. The Pure stood side by side with the impure, consented to a whelming that indicated the need for cleansing, entered into personal comradeship with sinning men; and that which bent Him toward that lowliness was His passion for righteousness. "Suffer it now: for thus" by this baptism which is the symbol of death and which is the symbol of another baptism which awaits Me in the days to come, "thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness," not to observe a rite, but to deal with sin at its fountain head, to master it that so righteousness may be established. A passion for righteousness filled His heart as He consented to John's baptism. It was His consent to a method of identification with sinners that must end in awful death. It was as He emerged from these waters which were the symbol of His identification with sinning men that God said, "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased."

Is there not yet another note here, another value? Is there not in this declaration the note of His power for dominion. "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased." Man can have only one King, and that is God. No man conscious of his own manhood has ever found, or ever can find in man merely, a king to whom he can and will submit the whole mastery of his being without question. If Jesus of Nazareth be none other than a pure and upright man, I cannot crown Him my king, for I also am a man. There can be no King for a man other than God. There can be no final authority for the dignity of human life other than the authority of God Himself. "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased," satisfied, at rest, because in Him man will find Me as King, and through coming to this Man, the revelation of Myself, man will be enabled to crown God King of the life and thus realize the territory of his own being.

Thus "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself." Thus at the opening of this great gospel of the King I find the Divinely graven inscription around the image.

Do we agree with God about Jesus? Yonder is a man at prayer beneath the shade of his own fig tree. Disturbed, he follows the disturber, until he stands face to face with this selfsame Man just after this baptism. Nathanael and Jesus are confronting each other. "Behold an Israelite indeed in whom is no guile," said Jesus. This Hebrew looked into the eyes of Jesus and said, "Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel." In that word he agreed with God.

Christ is the test and touchstone of our relation to God. King in very deed is He. Put not upon this King the measurements of earthly kings. That was the mistake of the early disciples until the Spirit illuminated them, and they beheld Him as Son of God. He was the Man of the seamless robe, a homeless Man; but that is God's King. There He is, God's Son, of His very nature, having the right to His inheritance, in Himself having all power and eternal dominion. Then be it ours to hasten to "kiss the Son, lest He be angry.... Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him."

072 - Matthew 4:4 - The King's Thought of Man

The King's Thought of Man

Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

Matthew 4:4

The story of the temptation of our Lord appeals to men irresistibly by reason of its essential naturalness. In all its central values it is true to our common human experience. As we read it, far removed as we feel ourselves to be from the Eastern conditions, and

puzzled intellectually as we sometimes may be, by some of the methods which are described, we nevertheless are conscious of very close and intimate fellowship with the Man Who is being tempted. Those familiar with the New Testament can hardly read the story without other passages from the apostolic writings coming back to their minds: "One that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin"; "In that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted."

There are certain arresting facts in the story to which I shall make brief and passing reference by way of introduction. You will observe that the devil is introduced without any explanation, and that God is admitted without any argument. We stand in the presence of a Man Who is most evidently of our nature; all the elemental forces of our manhood are discoverable as we observe Him: intellect, emotion, volition, the physical, the spiritual, the vocational; everything which is essentially human is seen in the Man Whom we watch in that strange hour of temptation.

The particular text which I have chosen from the story consists of the answer of Jesus to the first temptation. Its first application was that of reply to the suggestion that life is dependent on the material. The first attack of the foe was in the realm of the physical—bread. In that connection our text was the affirmation of the fact that while the material is necessary it is not sufficient for the sustenance of life. It is well that we should observe that our Lord did not speak disrespectfully of bread, did not even declare it to be in any sense or in any circumstances unnecessary to the maintenance of life. "Man shall not live by bread alone." Do not omit that word "alone" in your thinking. Christ did not say, "Man shall not live by bread." Man does live by bread; but "man shall not live by bread alone." While the material is necessary it is not sufficient. Such was the force of the answer to the attack of the first temptation.

But the statement has a much wider application. Every subsequent answer of Jesus was a deduction from the first. When in answer to the next temptation He said, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God," He was not telling Satan that he was not to tempt God, but that man was not to tempt God. So in His third answer, when for the third time He quoted the words of ancient Scripture, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." He was not telling Satan what he was to do, but was declaring man must worship his God and serve Him alone. The "Thou" in the second answer, "Thou shalt not tempt," and the "Thou" of the third answer, "Thou shalt worship," is the "Man" of the first answer, "Man shall not live by bread alone." Therefore in this first answer we have a central declaration giving us the key to the true significance of the whole story.

I am not so much occupied now with the story of the temptation as with that central and first word that passed the lips of our Lord in the hour of darkness, which revealed His conception of humanity and the secrets of life, a conception which constituted the reason for His attitude under temptation and the secret of His victory over temptation.

Two of the words in the text apprehend us; they are perhaps the simplest, "man" and "live." Of these two elemental words, the supreme word is "live"; the limiting, distinguishing word is "man."

The supreme word is "live." It brings us into the realm of the infinite and abiding mystery of life. We are, however, immediately limited by the earlier word "man."

In order that we may pass to the distinguishing, discriminating word "man" we will pause for a few moments with the second word and with the suggestions which it makes. "Man shall not live." It is life with which our Master was dealing. His own life was being attacked. It was His own life of which He was holding the stronghold, as He repulsed the attacks. I go back, then, to the supreme thought for a moment or two, the thought of life. Life is an interesting word. It is a word that you cannot define because you cannot define that for which it stands. There are some words which we have attached to ideas which exactly represent those ideas. We can grope our way through the processes by which they came into existence, or feel our way down to the roots, until we see how exactly the word fits the idea. When we begin that process with this word "life" we are immediately introduced into the realm of mystery. Philologists feeling their way back tell us that this word "life" came from the Gothic word *liban*, simply meaning, to be left, from the same root as the word "leave." Immediately we are face to face with mystery and a sense of indefiniteness. What do you mean by being left? Then the philologists employ another word to explain what is meant by being left: to survive. I find now I have a Latin word and I must translate it, and I do so, to live on; but I am back to my original word "live," and so I am working in a circle and there is no definition, save the idea that to live is to be left: life is the negation of death. Death carries away, life is that which is not carried away. That is all. That is mysterious, nebulous, insufficient. We turn back to the philologist and ask him to tell us what the word means. I quote from one alone: "that state in which the organs are capable of performing their functions." Can there be anything more gloriously indefinite? That state in which organs continue their functions. What is the secret, mystic, mighty force which makes for continuity, and what happens when it ceases? We are in the presence of the mystery of all mysteries. The mystery of life is indeed a mystery. It is in the flower, in the glowworm at eventide, in the bee passing from flower to flower and fulfilling a great mission in the world of flowers; in the bird, in the beast; and it is in man, a common quantity or quality, a mystery.

What is life? There is no answer; and the nearest we can get to definition is by declaration of what this mystic, mysterious force does. It does exactly the same thing in flower, glowworm, bee, bird, beast, and man. Let every scientist here remember that I am not a scientist, and I am not a poet. I am a plain, blunt man who speaks the things that I do know, not of life, for that I have never seen,

but of the operation of life, which I can observe. Life is that which appropriates, assimilates, and ultimately gives back to the whole from which it takes. These are the three functions of life: appropriation, assimilation, giving. That is common to every realm.

I will tell you in one brief statement from the Old Testament all the story about it: "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but the things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law." The secret of life God holds in His own knowledge and His own power, and He has never unveiled it to the sons of men.

Passing from that word to the word which I have ventured to describe as the distinguishing, discriminating word of my text, "man," we immediately leave the flowers and the glowworm; the bee, the bird, and the beast; and we look at life in man. Jesus uttered the essential truth concerning human life in the words, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Man must, if he would live, appropriate more than the material, and assimilate other than bread, in order that out of the mystery of his being he may give larger things than material things. That is our theme.

We turn to this story of the temptation because there we have such a wonderful setting and such a wonderful surrounding enabling us to understand the profoundest truths concerning human life. In this story we have a revelation of the elemental facts of human life, a picture of a common experience of human life, that of struggle and of conflict; and a revelation of the secret whereby a man may live in the full sense of the word, and come to the ultimate realization of the meaning of his manhood.

In the first place, in this story we have a revelation of the fundamental facts of human life. I ask you to observe this Man in the wilderness facing the tempter, and let your eyes rest on Him rather than on the enemy. As you do so you will see that in human life there is a threefold demand, to which threefold demand the enemy makes appeal.

There is, first, the demand for the material, hunger for bread. There is, second, the demand for the spiritual, the craving for an actual spiritual grasp on God. There is, finally, the demand made on self, the passion for a kingdom. Man of the material needs the material; the hunger is the evidence. Man of the spiritual craves the spiritual, to which craving the enemy made his appeal when he said, "If Thou art the Son of God cast Thyself down." Man of the regnant faculty—for man is king in the economy of God, as the psalmist saw and sang so long ago—demands a kingdom over which he can reign. Thus I see the Man in the wilderness and discover the threefold demand of his life by observing the method of the tempter; and I have discovered the elemental facts of human life.

There is, first, the demand on the material. Man of the material needs the material. Life must appropriate, assimilate, the material. Man is not a spirit without a body any more than man is a body without a spirit. It is not for us to reason why; we deal with man as he is, as we know him, as God has made him; and we assert that life demands that we should appropriate the material and assimilate it and recognize our relation to the very earth in which for a while we live. It is absolutely necessary that every human being must have of the earth in order to live. Hunger is a sign of health, it is a sign of strong manhood. It is the man who lacks hunger that you become anxious about, not the man who is hungry. God has made man on one side of his individuality of the earth, and of the earth he must have. This Man in the wilderness, forty days fasting, by the health of His perfect manhood, by the splendor of His perfect physical being, was hungry; and that is one side of human nature that we must recognize and reckon with. In this Bible story everything is resolved in this simplest formula, bread. Bread is but an emblem of things material and physical. Man is of the earth the ultimate glory and the ultimate crown, and nothing lies beneath him in all the mysterious scale of uprising life to which he is not related. Consequently, there is demand in every man's life for that which shall feed the material side of his nature as it is represented in everything that lies beneath him. The healthy man loves a dog and demands a dog. The healthy man loves flowers and demands them. The flowers lie within his own material nature. He must have colors, sounds, beauty. When you find a man who turns his back on music and flowers in the name of saintship, understand he is no saint; he does not understand his own humanity, in his own thinking of it he will degrade that which God has made, and I will not trust him out of my sight. Bread is the simple formula of the whole material order, which is not inherently evil, which is a Divine creation, which finds its ultimate glory in man; and man in health hungers for everything that lies beneath him.

Then as to the next revelation, the demand on God. Man is of the spiritual and he needs the spiritual. In the elemental man, that is, in the man who is nearest to that which is natural to humanity, that demand for the spiritual will inevitably make itself heard and known. It may be that the man who feels the hunger for the spiritual will not understand the hunger. It may be that he will not be able to express in correct words the true deep meaning of this hunger. It may take curious methods of expression; but not merely for bread does man hunger, but for space, vision, for something beyond the near, the immediate, the dust; for some demonstration of spirituality that is independent of the near, the immediate, the dust. Get back to the wilderness and listen to the subtle voice of the tempter, "If Thou art the Son of God, cast Thyself down," cut thyself off from all the ordinary laws of physical being and find out whether there is any reality in this spiritual relationship; make a venture on the spiritual in order to find out. Have you never felt that temptation come to you. Remember, the very temptation is directed toward a perfectly right attitude of the soul. In every man there is the possibility of the realization of the spiritual. A man may affirm that he does not believe in the spiritual, yet within his soul there is a crying out after God; it may be mere speculation, it may be some adventure, it may be that which man will designate, in what he is

pleased to call his sober moments, fanaticism; but, thank God, humanity cannot get away from this fanaticism, the passion for some consciousness and grasp of some larger thing that cannot be cabined and confined within the tabernacle of this flesh. That is why men climb mountains and travel. That is why men venture forth on great enterprises. It is a sign of health.

I come at last to that which is the ultimate thing in all human life. According to this revelation, not the demand on the material of which every man is conscious, not this demand on the spiritual and on God which every man feels, though he may not understand, but the demand on self is final. Man is regnant in his very being. He needs a kingdom; he asks some territory over which he can reign, having captured it, having mastered it, that he may administer it. Every man is asking for that; every healthy man, every elemental man, every man who approximates in any degree toward the original Divine intention, asks a kingdom. That is the secret impulse of all production, of all commerce, of all healing ministries, of all art, and—forgive me—ultimately, of all true preaching. It is the passion for a kingdom. A man does not ask a kingdom that he inherits from his father. Man asks a garden of Eden, not an Italian garden, but one in which he can walk and touch mother earth brimming with potentialities, and which he can smite and make beautiful with flowers and golden with harvest. That is elemental manhood. You say you have never felt that? That is the sign of your sin. Sin paralyzes the passion for a kingdom, and a man is content to say, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." That is the language of a false humanity. Man in the economy of God asks a kingdom that he can win, master, administer, and over which in the allied forces of his material and spiritual being he can reign in life.

In the wilderness I not only have this revelation of elemental humanity, I have also the revelation of that which is common to man, the experience of struggle. Of course this is the central value of this particular story, and again I ask you to observe there is no explanation of it here, no vindication of it. It is a story that accepts facts and reveals the forces.

I pray you also to remember that this is the picture of human life. I wonder whether this fact of struggle obtains through all the universe of God. I cannot say, I do not know. I know only man and something of the angels through the revelation of Scripture, and something of all that life on this earth that lies beneath man in the great creation scale; and, so far as I am able to observe, I find the same principle everywhere. I do not know the history of the angels. It is not perfectly revealed in Holy Scripture. There are gleams in the revelation, and I read, among other things, of angels who left their first estate, and kept not their proper habitation. I cannot read a sentence like that without discovering that behind that event in which angels left their first estate and wandered from their true orbit there was struggle. There was in the mystery of the angelic world some kind of temptation, and the victory over it was the keeping of a first estate, of abiding in an orbit, the ensuring of eternity, and the yielding to it was the loss of estate, absence from the true orbit.

I turn from that imperfect vision, for the revelation is not perfect, and I look at all the life below man. I would rather speak of the life below man in the language of one whose understanding of God and Christ was far beyond mine, who lived in closer relationship with his Lord and through whom the Spirit of God could write things for our profit, "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain."

I leave these regions and return to man, and here in Matthew I have a picture not of a sinful man. If He were a sinful man, then everything breaks down, there is no meaning in this story; it has no revealing value; it is merely a record. But this is a sinless Man, and into clear light for my eyes emerge the facts of struggle, of the force that creates it, and of the way of victory over it. The first thing that I notice in the story is that according to this story the struggle is caused by a personality who is named the devil. Remember, this is Biblical. We do not hear much today about the devil; modern views fail to see him—I think that is the kindest way to put it.

I hear today about the angel and the beast in man. I am told that there is in every man an angel and a beast. What I object to in that description is that it is rude alike to the angel and to the beast. I am told that in every man the angel is in process of struggling through, and that the beast is being sloughed off. That is a doctrine of original sin far more terrible than the doctrine of the theologians, because it makes sin more original than man, and suggests that man is emerging out of that which is vulgar and low. That is not the Bible doctrine. The Bible doctrine says Satan, the devil, is the beast and that the temptations which come to man come by suggestion from without.

This story also reveals the process. Let me attempt to put that whole process as I see it into one brief sentence. This story reveals the fact that the enemy of mankind approaches man through what man is. He appeals to the things which are essential in human life, he appeals to elemental things, proper things, God-made things. He appeals to material hunger, he appeals to that which asks for spiritual realization, he appeals to that passion for a kingdom, that passion that demands a territory.

Wherein then lies the temptation in every case? In the suggestion that man shall fulfil the elemental demands of his nature on the basis of anarchy or lawlessness, that he shall cease to obey any law in the realm of the material, that he shall cease to realize that there is a law that governs in the spiritual realm, that he shall cease to recognize that there is a law that governs in the vocational realm.

I look at the story again, and I see not merely the personality and the process, I discover also the pain, the agony, the travail. "He Himself hath suffered being tempted." There is always suffering in temptation, and when suffering ceases temptation ceases. If

solicitation toward evil causes you no pain, then it is no temptation, and you are in the grip of the evil thing; spiritual mortification has set in, and God help you, for none other can! Watch temptation at work and mark this: the pain of temptation is felt in proportion to the perfection of the person who is tempted.

I begin with the child. When temptation is first presented to a child, when a child is first conscious of temptation to do wrong, that child suffers. Oh, but you say, that is only a qualm of conscience. Only a qualm of conscience! Hell is a qualm of conscience intensified, prolonged, incurable! What more would you have? The little child suffers. It may be that you will offer it false advantages, and deceive it, until it will forget its suffering and yield to the sin. The child, who is nearer the heart of God than any other, save those who are brought back to childhood by grace, suffers in the hour of temptation.

Or take any seeker after the high and holy, that young man who listens to the preacher tonight who has not yielded himself to this Christ but who has seen the vision and who is aspiring after God, who is desiring to climb the heights—he yielded to temptation yesterday, but, ah, me, the agony of it when it first gripped him. He yielded, and in the sin for the moment was a damnable opiate that killed the pain; but the opiate will pass and remorse will be the return of pain. That is hopeful; but, oh, if the day shall come when there is no remorse, when there is no agony in the presence of temptation! That will be demonstration of the most unutterable ruin possible. Temptation coming to the seeker means pain.

Temptation means pain to the saint—I use the word in its true sense, not of those who are already perfected but of those pressing toward the goal. When temptation assails the saint there is agony in it. There may be yielding, there may be sin; but there is agony in it. Let there be no yielding, there is nevertheless an increasing consciousness of pain whenever temptation assails the soul. It is the experience of struggle.

Finally, I have in this story, and this is the supreme thing, the secret of victory over temptation and of the realization of humanity. If life be a mystery what is the supreme necessity? If life judged by its operations is that mystic force that appropriates, assimilates, gives, and yet cannot be truly and perfectly known, what is the supreme necessity for life? A law. Government in appropriation, that life may know what to appropriate. Government in assimilation, that life may fling out the poison and keep only that which shall nourish. Government in giving. This is a sequence, for if there be true appropriation and assimilation the giving will be true. What life needs is government. Flowers need governing, that they may appropriate and assimilate the right things, and so give the right things. That law must be formulated by someone who knows the mystery. I cannot formulate any law for the cultivation of flowers; no horticulturist is able to formulate the law. He discovers the law and by recognizing it is able to make the chrysanthemum infinitely beautiful which but two generations ago was but the homeliest of garden flowers. What is true of the flower, is equally true of the bee, the bird, the beast, and of man.

I am now face to face again with my text, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Man must live within the law of God, who knows the mystery of his being. Man must live by obedience to commands coming directly, immediately, to him for the government of his life. Those commands have been given to us in the Scriptures of Truth; those commands have been given to us in the Son Who is the Logos, the Word incarnate; those commands are being given to us every day if we will listen; only the commands of today must be tested by the commands of the oracles, and all spiritual illumination must be tested by the Son of His love, the ultimate, final speech of Deity.

What, then, is man's responsibility? I should be inclined to say to my own soul, as the result of this meditation, Man, thy first responsibility is that of recognition of the mystery of thy life. The last word of Greek philosophy was, Man, know thyself, a great word because it brought man face to face with himself. When a man recognizes the mystery of his own life, then the second responsibility is that he consent to the government of Him to Whom his life is no mystery.

O Lord, Thou hast searched me, and known me,
Thou knowest my downsitting and my uprising,
Thou understandest my thought afar off.

So begins the psalm. How does it end?

Search me, O God, and know my heart:
Try me, and know my thoughts:
And see if there be any way of wickedness in me,
And lead me in the way everlasting.

"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Recognize that. Make it the first, supreme, essential business of thy life to acquaint thyself with Him, and so be at peace.

The First Message of Jesus

From that time began Jesus to preach, and to say, Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.

Matthew 4:17

That is the way in which Jesus always begins. His first message to men is always, Repent! He does not end there. He has much more to say to men than this; and even after He had said much more to His disciples, He finally confronted them, and said, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when He, the Spirit of truth is come, He shall guide you into all the truth." But there is nothing Jesus can ever say until this first thing is said, and until this first thing is done. He began to preach, and said, "Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."

It is not only true that this is always the first message of Jesus to men. It is equally true that it is perpetually the first note of the Divine message to men. Through all the messages of history, utterances of prophets, visions of seers, and songs of psalmists, the almost monotonous burden of the Divine call is, Repent, repent. The herald, the forerunner of Jesus, came preaching, and saying, "Repent ye; for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." Jesus Himself began to preach, and to say, "Repent ye; for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." Presently He gathered round Him twelve men, and sent them out on their mission, and they went and preached that men should repent. Presently the new era dawned, the new order came, and Pentecost flooded the world with new light and new life, and in the first message delivered in the power of the indwelling Spirit, Peter said, "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins." When Paul stood in the heart of Gentile culture in Athens, he said, "The times of ignorance, therefore, God overlooked; but now He commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent." It is the perpetual keynote of the Divine message to men.

If I seek illustrations outside the Book of Revelation, and come down through the ages, I find that every subsequent visitation of power has had the necessity for repentance as its keynote. The Reformation under Martin Luther was a reformation based on the great and glorious doctrine of justification by faith. But the Reformation, based on the doctrine of justification by faith, was a revolt against the pernicious teaching that by indulgence men might continue in sin. The great revival under Wesley and Whitefield had this as the very keynote. The whole missionary movement of the last hundred years to the far-distant places of the earth has had this as its message to all men, Repent. That also was the keynote of the visitation that came to this country a generation ago under the preaching of Dwight Lyman Moody. Whereas the tone of his preaching was that of a great winsomeness, a definite call to repent sounded in every message. Wherever God has come to men in restoration, renewal, and regeneration, the first word has always been Repent. That is the keynote of all true ministry. It is the message that we are called on to deliver to all those who are outside the covenant of promise, outside the Church, and apart from Jesus Christ. There the chief emphasis must be laid, because on the repentant and regenerated individual we may build society, cleanse municipal affairs, and create the national outlook. "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand," is the message to the individual. It is the message to society both in the proper use of that great word and its popular and improper use. It is the message to the nation in its home and foreign policy. It is always the first message of Christ, the one in which He arrests men on the threshold, coming to the individual, the society, the nation, always with the same monotonous burden, Repent, Repent, Repent.

It is well, then, to consider this initial note in the form in which it is stated here at the commencement of our Lord's own public ministry; and, therefore, I shall ask you to think with me, first, of the great need declared, "Repent ye"; second, of the direction indicated, "the Kingdom of Heaven"; and, finally, of the possibility affirmed, "the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."

The need is declared in the words, "Repent ye." Our very familiarity with this message, because it is the message of Christ, is in danger of making us mistake its point and misunderstand its meaning. We have been affected in our thinking on this word by the teaching of differing schools of theology, in each of which I believe there is some note of truth. Let us attempt to dismiss from our mind all the messages uttered concerning repentance by inspired writers before Jesus; let us turn from every attempt to explain the message of Christ in the terms of accepted theologies, and let us endeavor to listen to what Jesus said, praying that God will help us to understand this initial message. Not that they of the past were false, or that the messages were unimportant, but because this word of Christ is absolutely all-inclusive; moreover, because His message is not the property of one age, but is for all time, and this message is complete.

Let us, therefore, first of all attempt to look at the Speaker, and consider the occasion on which He uttered these words.

Those familiar with the Gospel of Matthew will remember that it falls naturally into three great parts, and this is one of the great dividing points. In the first part you have the story of the preparation of Jesus for His work; and here it says, "From that time," when the preparation was complete, "He began to preach." Now it was here, at the parting of the ways, between His private and His public life, that our Lord uttered this first note. Jesus of Nazareth, the One who most perfectly fulfilled the human ideal, after a life of thirty years of observation, began to preach, and He said: "Repent." He had observed individual life in a small township, where individual life is always best seen and best known. We cannot study individual life carefully if we live in London. Men are hidden there by each

other, and we never get to know the real force of individual life in a great city. But there in little Nazareth up on the hillside, far enough removed from the great centers and the great movements to be isolated from them, and yet near enough to know them, this pure Man lived and listened and watched, and came to know men by careful observation; and in preaching to the men and women He knew individually He said to them, "Repent." That is the connection. It was the first note of His preaching, born of His consciousness of the need of the people, first as the outcome of this personal and individual observation of them. Yet living there in Nazareth, remember, He had lived close to the place where the great forces of worldly ideals and methods passed and repassed. Professor Ramsay in his little book on the boyhood of Jesus, a fascinating and interesting book, reveals how the great world powers passed along the road at the foot of the hill—the Hebrew priest, the Roman soldier, the Greek merchant and traveler. Jesus had watched, and perceived, and measured. And now He came to preach to Hebrew, the religionist; to Roman, the man of power and government; to Greek, the man of culture and merchandise; and He had one word for each of them, the word "Repent."

But this is to say very little. It was not merely the message of the Man of Nazareth, due to His observation of individual life in Nazareth, and of the great currents of the world thought and action. This was the Son of God, and this was the message of the infinite and mysterious One, who was familiar with all human history and all human life; this was the message of One who presently would say, "Before Abraham was, I am." This was the message of One who did not need to ask what was in man, "for He Himself knew what was in man." This was the message not merely of the Man of Nazareth, who had lived and observed, but it was the message of the ordained Messenger, who was none other than the Son of God, clothed in human garb, that He might utter in the words of human speech the fundamental truths of Deity. Standing at the parting of the ways, and beginning to utter the great message for which men had been waiting, the infinite music, for which the world had been sighing, the great prophetic message toward which every prophetic message had moved, He said, "Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."

Having thus noticed the occasion and the Speaker, let us consider the need. I want to speak about the simplest meaning of the word "repent," for as we know what this word really means, we shall understand the message of our Lord.

In the New Testament there are two Greek words translated "repent." They have quite different meanings. One of these words means to sorrow for or regret a deed. The other word means very simply and very literally to change the mind.

Around these two words a great conflict was waged between the Reformers and the Roman Catholic theologians. The Reformers maintained that the second word, which means a change of mind, was used of the change which is necessary to salvation; while the former word, which indicates sorrow after an event, was in some cases indicative of a change of mind, and in other cases it was not so. Such was the contention, in brief, of the Reformers. On the other hand, the Roman theologians maintained that the words were used interchangeably, that the elements of each were present in both, and they taught that the prevailing value was that of sorrow. The whole battle was waged around two Latin words, poenitentia, which means the sense of sorrow, and recipiscentia, which means the recovery of the senses. The Reformers maintained that the essential repentance demanded by Christ and His Apostles, as well as by prophets, was a change of the senses, or a change of mind. The Roman theologians, on the other hand, maintained that the prime element indicated by the word "repent" was sorrow, and from that Roman theology we have gained our word "repent" and the associated idea that sorrow is the prime element in repentance.

I have the profoundest conviction that the Reformers were right, and that the Roman theologians were wrong. A careful examination of the New Testament use of these two words will show that the essential quality that Christ called for was not sorrow, but a change of mind. Now do not understand me to say that the change of mind will not be followed by sorrow. My experience is that the sorrow grows with the Christian life, and is not part of its initiation. I do not say there is no sorrow; I am sure there is. What I do say is that a man may be sorry, and at last be damned. We may be sorry for sin with the meanness of motive, which means that we are afraid of punishment, and no fear of punishment ever had in it the evangelical value of repentance. The repentance that Christ preached, and His Apostles preached, the repentance which is demanded of every man is always indicated by the use of the word that means a change of mind.

When Christ used that word, and when, as I have no doubt in the hearing of the men who listened to Him, it had exactly that meaning of change of mind, He had passed beyond the outer circumference of things into the inner center of a man's life. He began by declaring to men that their thought was wrong, that their conception of life was wrong. Now we say to a man, alas, too often, Change your conduct. Jesus never begins by telling a man to change his conduct. That is to begin in the externalities of human life. He comes to a man, and says, Change your mind, and by that word He means that men hold wrong views at the very center of their being. The word "repent" passes into the fundamental realm, the thought of a man's life. We are not accustomed to think about this deepest fact, and even in preaching we are too often more occupied with conduct than with creed. I use the word "creed" very carefully; I am not referring to the creed prepared for us to recite, I am referring to the creed of our life, to the deepest conception of it, to the underlying and overmastering thing that we absolutely believe.

We all believe something, and it is the something which a man believes that makes his conduct and finally makes his character. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he," and when Jesus came and began His preaching, instead of starting a society to correct the

conduct of men, He faced men, and He said: Change your mind, repent, get right at the center of things.

But the word that demands a change in the thought or mind, or conception, does not tarry there. For the moment a man has really changed his mind or his belief his conduct will be changed. Let me take a concrete, very simple, and familiar illustration. A man declares, "I believe in God the Father Almighty." I do not know whether he believes that; I may have heard him say it, but I do not know whether it is true. How shall I find out? I shall be able to find out on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. A man's creed is not to be measured by the occasion when he recites it, but by the life that follows its recitation. When Jesus takes hold of a man, and says, Change your mind, He changes the conduct of the man, and then the character. That is the order of procedure. If a man's conception of life is wrong his conduct will be wrong, and, finally, his character. Jesus does not begin by changing conduct, for He cannot do it from the outside of things; but passing behind the character, and beneath the conduct, He says, Change your mind, get right in the deepest and profoundest fact of your life.

This call of Christ is revolutionary. It calls for upheaval, change, and the alteration of all things. It is radical, passing through the external to the internal. But it is also regenerative, declaring the only way in which it is possible for man to live a new life. This is always the call of Jesus: Repent. For human life, social life, national life, Jesus Christ is the most revolutionary teacher the world has ever had. Looking into the face of the priest, He said Repent; you have a conception of life which is false, change it. He looked into the faces of the pleasure-seekers, and said: Repent, change your mind. Jesus Christ confronts you. You are interested in Him, and speculative about Him; perchance you are even daring to patronize Him. There is no blasphemy greater than the patronage of Jesus Christ. He says: Repent; your conduct and character are wrong. They are wrong because your thought is wrong; your conception is wrong, change it. That is revolutionary. It is radical.

Let us pass to the second point. Jesus in this great word did not merely say, Repent. To leave the word at that point would be to reveal all I have attempted to say as to its revolutionary and radical nature, and to leave unsaid the thing of chief importance. He indicated a direction. "Repent... the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." Repentance there may be, and yet the life be hopelessly wrong, for repentance means a change of mind; and a man may change his mind, and his new conception be as false as was the old conception. There was a time when that brilliant and gifted woman, Annie Besant, changed her mind and announced that she was no longer a secularist and a materialist. She repented, she changed her mind, and she became a theosophist, believing in Mahatmas among Himalayan heights. She repented, but the direction of her repentance was wrong, the nature of the change was wrong, a false conception gave place to another false conception. Jesus does not come to men and say, You are wrong, get a new idea of life. Said He: "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." Herein is direction. Herein is the indication of what the change is to be.

The phrase is suggestive. There occur in the Scriptures of truth certain terms, which we need to consider; the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of Heaven, the Kingdom, the Church. Now these terms of Scripture are quite distinct in their application. I absolutely differ from the teacher who tells me they are synonymous terms. They mean different things in different relationships and different applications. But they are related by a common principle, and it is by that common principle that the direction of repentance is indicated.

The Kingdom of God means the universal sovereignty of the Almighty. Everything is in it, and never gets outside it. Hell, as well as Heaven, is in that Kingdom. In Scripture the phrase, the Kingdom of Heaven, is always used in relation to the establishment on the earth of a heavenly order; and it is used wholly in connection with the redemptive work of God through His Son Jesus. The Hebrew theocracy culminated in Christ, the King; and in the coming of Christ the Kingdom came, and that is what He meant when He said, "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." But men said, "We will not have this Man to reign over us," and they flung the King out, and they have never admitted Him since, save to individual hearts and lives. But there were a few souls who said: "We will have Him for King"; and He said, "You shall be Mine"; and there began the Church in which the principles of the Kingdom are revealed, even though the King is absent from His world as to manifestation. That is the period in which we live. But the King cast out is coming back, or else this is all untrue! That Kingdom is being prepared for and is to be set up here, under the direct reign of Jesus of Nazareth.

Now, without following these lines, what is the common principle in all these? The rule of God, the authority of the Most High over the affairs of men. The permanent principle in all these phrases is the direct right of God to govern individual life in its entirety, social life in all its relationships, and national life in its purposes and its policies. Do Christian people realize and believe this? The permanent principle, that for which Jesus came, and for which He stood, is that of the absolute right of God to govern every man's life in every part and detail of it. That is the Kingdom of Heaven. The absolute right of God to govern social life in all its interrelationships, husband and wife, father and children, master and servant, capital and labor. The absolute right of God to govern in national life, in its purposes and in its policies. We must believe this. Dr. Frank W. Gunsaulus has said in one of his books, "True statesmanship consists in finding out which way God is going, and getting things out of the way for Him." That is the whole truth. That is the principle. Now, Jesus did not say merely, Change your mind, but Change your mind toward that, and in the phrase that indicates the direction there flashes the light that reveals the failure. We can put the whole call into very simple phrases and words.

Change your mind about God, and Change your mind toward God. God is exiled, enthrone Him! That is all, and that is everything. It is a call from godlessness to Godliness. I leave the national outlook, I leave the social application, and I listen while Jesus says to us, and God help us to hear Him: "Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." We have lived under other lords. We have obeyed the impulses of sin, of self, of passion, of pride; we are wrong. We have wakened in the morning, and we have said: "What will please us today?" We are wrong. Change your mind, learn to understand that you never can live, till with the break of day we say: "Teach me to do Thy will, O my God." "Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." It had its local application, but I take out the eternal principle, the right of God to govern human lives, to direct, immediate, positive, drastic, interference with every man. This is the keynote of the preaching of Jesus.

Some have dared to suggest what they would do if they were God. Oh, the blasphemy of it, whether it comes from brilliant novelist or neurotic essay writer! Jesus Christ has no dealing with a man who takes up this attitude. He says to him, "Repent." The first thing is that we enthrone God, and kiss the scepter, and bow the knee, and learn that we have no right at all except the right of being where God would have us be and doing what God would have us do. Jesus comes to enthrone God in human life, in human society, in national affairs, and in the world; and the line of repentance is indicated when He says: "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." When men repent in that direction what will happen? Their conceptions will be Godly, their conduct will be Godly, and their character will be Godly.

And, finally, let us consider the possibility affirmed, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." The prophets had all testified to the abiding fact of the Divine Sovereignty, and yet had looked forward to a centralized manifestation of that sovereignty in a person. Read them all; what is this they sing of, what is this they thunder about, what is this that makes the wail of their agony, and creates the passion of their hopefulness? The Sovereignty of God. But, Isaiah, what is your hope? Has the King come? No, harlotry and evil, abounding wickedness, are about us. What, then, is your hope? The coming Deliverer, and wistful eyes from mountain tops strained eagerly for the break of day and the coming of the Person in Whom and through Whom this Kingdom should be set up.

At last, the final prophet came, rough John the Baptist, and he said: "I indeed baptize you with water, but He that cometh after me shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and fire." The great cry of the Baptist rang over the plains about Jordan, and then another voice was heard, meek and low, gentle and sweet, and yet uttering the same drastic word, but now whispered with wooing winsomeness, "Repent." Who is this? He does not speak of another, He utters no prophecy of someone yet to come. He says "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." The Kingdom came when He came. "At hand" as to manifestation, the Kingdom was realized by this Teacher, this Man. "At hand" as to administration, the Kingdom was executed by Him in the affairs of men in proportion as they yielded to Him. "At hand" as to discrimination, He opens and closes the doors of the Kingdom, and by Him alone men enter it, and by refusing so to enter, He will exclude them from personal realization of blessing. Said He one day, "the Kingdom of God is"—not within you, a mistranslation absolutely, and yet a whole system of teaching has been based on it—"the Kingdom of God is among you." He meant literally, I am here, and where the King is, there is the Kingdom. Obey Me, and you have entered the Kingdom; trust Me, and I will unlock the doors of the Kingdom to you. It is by the way of the King that men come into the Kingdom. And, oh, let me discuss it no longer as a theory, but let me announce it as the evangel. Dear man, dear woman, dear heart, "Repent"—the word is stern and fiery—"for the Kingdom of Heaven"—and the word indicates the need of your repentance. But, ah, me, it merges and melts into an infinite music—"the Kingdom is at hand." Just where you are. The King is there. Turn to Him, and that shall be repentance. Believe on Him, and that shall be thy passing into the Kingdom. Trust Him, and that shall be the dawn of the veritable day of God in thy soul.

We have attempted to consider this great initial word of the Lord. Wide-reaching circles have stretched out around us. God grant that their infinite significance may have impressed us. And yet now here is the difficulty of it, here is the point at which the preacher becomes utterly helpless, save as the Spirit of God will use the human word to deliver the Divine message. Oh that I could so constrain you that you should forget the messenger and your neighbor and let these far-reaching circles of the Divine Government contract until you find yourself alone, standing face to face with Jesus Christ in solemn isolation before God His King.

Oh, man, for a moment shut out the nation, for a moment shut out society, shut out this congregation, and now hear this voice as it says to you, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." Oh, the good news! The Kingdom is at hand. Repent; change your mind and so your conduct, and so your character, and so your destiny, for the King who calls you bears in hands and feet and side the wounds that tell of how He opened the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers. Trust Him utterly, and enter into His Kingdom even now!

074 - Matthew 5:20 - The Righteousness Which Exceeds

The Righteousness Which Exceeds

Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom

of heaven.

Matthew 5:20

These are the closing words of the first section of the Manifesto of the King. As to their first value, they reveal the personal responsibility of all those who are to teach the ethic of Jesus. The arresting notes are two: first, Kingly authority; and, second, ethical severity. Let us take them in their wider meaning and application as revealing the ethical demand which the King makes on His subjects.

A matter of supreme importance—if a man is to speak out of the consciousness of his own age, and I think he must so speak if he teach the word of God to his age—a matter demanding far more attention than has been given to it lately, is the fact that the moral standard of Jesus is an infinitely more severe one than that of any other teacher. No one will imagine that I undervalue the gospel of His Grace. I shall have to return to it ere I have done; I cannot preach in the atmosphere of this Manifesto without ending under the shadow of the Cross. Nevertheless, I fear that sometimes we have preached the gospel of His grace at the expense of the demand of His ethic. To dwell on the severity of His ethical demand and His interpretation of morality is our present purpose. Yet let us immediately recognize that to which we shall return by way of conclusion, that these words of Jesus must be heard in the consciousness of the whole of the mission of the King, in which mission He acted as Saviour as well as Sovereign, as Lover of the souls of men as well as Lawgiver.

The statement as a statement is perfectly clear, even if it is startling. Speaking to His own disciples, men who had already crowned Him, so far as they had received light; men who had already yielded themselves to His Kingship, so far as they were able to comprehend His meaning, He said, "Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of heaven."

When thus set in their true context, these words of Christ become the more startling: they were words spoken, not to the multitudes, although the multitudes listened, but to men who had already crowned Him in the measure of the light which they had received, to men who were to go out and teach His ethic.

Let us attempt to understand this word of Jesus by considering, first, righteousness as the central idea of the declaration; second, the insufficiency of the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees; and, third, the righteousness which exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees.

The clear implication of the passage is the importance of righteousness. That is the perpetual Biblical atmosphere. Among the fundamental things of the Bible, so far as human conduct is concerned, is the supreme message, that righteousness is of paramount importance. That, of course, is the Christian conception, or, to come at once to the very heart of the thought, the master passion of Jesus was righteousness. The inspiration of that passion, if we may dare to press so deeply into the mind of Christ, was that of love. The master passion of all His doing was righteousness, not mercy but righteousness, not pity but purity. Mercy, yes, and pity surely; He was infinite in His compassion and in His tenderness, but never at the expense of right, never by making peace with wrong, never by lowering the standard of Divine holiness, or explaining away the awfulness of Divine purity. The master passion of all His teaching, of all the wonders He wrought, of the life He lived, of the very Cross of His dying, was the establishment of righteousness, and the bringing of all things into harmony with the holiness and purity of God. Those who do not agree with these assumptions of the text will be entirely outside the line of argument as we proceed. Only as we realize that, in the last analysis, the supreme matter of all life and conduct is that it should be righteous, shall we really be prepared to listen to these words of Christ, or be able to grasp their meaning and see how searching and wonderful they are.

What, then, is righteousness? If it be possible for me so to do, I want to escape from theological definitions. I want us to get at the simplest idea, at the abstract idea, at that which is true and commonly known as true in the consciousness of thinking men. In its ancient form, as you will remember, our word read right-wise-ness. That is to say, it came from a word "right-wise," which had as its main value the word "right." That is the fundamental word. Instead of righteousness, say righteous; and instead of righteous, say right; and you are touching the very central thought. Yet immediately you discover that this is not definition. So we press the question further. What is right? If we take this actual word of ours we find that its simplest meaning is No crookedness. Do not stay yet to read into that the moral value, but take it in its simplicity. The root word is a word which means to stretch, so that if you will take in your hand a piece of string, looped and twisted, and stretch it, that is righteousness, that which is perfectly straight. The straightest course is the right course. Go back to your school days and remind yourselves of this phrase, a right line, a straight line. What is a straight line? The one that goes most directly from point to point. Right is that in which there is no loop, no crookedness, no doubling, no deviation from the truly straight. Such is the idea in the word.

We immediately see why in that wonderful process of the formation of our language, the building up of words by which to express ideas, that word was made to stand for the supreme idea in the moral realm: no duplicity, no double dealing, nothing in the nature of a lie either in word or in thought, but straightness, truth, the shortest course.

Twice I have said that righteousness means the shortest course, and I am perfectly sure that in the minds of some there has been protest against the declaration. I sympathize with the protest. One of the devil's suggestions was that the King should take the short cut to the Kingdom—I will give thee all the kingdoms of the world for one moment's homage, a short cut to the kingdom, the shortest way! Would it have been the shortest way? Would He ever have gained the kingdoms so? Was not the lie of evil insidious in that it suggested as the shortest way the way that never reached the goal at all? That is the method of evil. It confronts the soul with a lie. I go back to my definition; right is the shortest way. To take an illustration from the life of our Lord makes one pause, and I do it reverently—Christ's shortest way to the kingdoms of this world was the way of the Cross, and the long travail of the millenniums. One brief, short moment of homage to the devil, and He the Son of God could never have gained the kingdoms! It seemed so easy to take the short cut. I pray that God may write the inner value of that on the heart and soul of every one of us. Some of you were thinking of actually yielding to the suggestion made to you, that you should take the short cut of iniquity toward the goal that you ought to reach by tramping and travail. In God's name refuse. The lie lies in the temptation that it is a short cut. Right is the nearest way to every honorable goal. I repeat, the stretched out, straight line, the right line, goes most quickly from point to point.

If that be our word, great as it is in its suggestiveness and its root values, I take up my Bible and ask, What is righteousness as herein revealed? I am still dealing, not with the word in all its great evangelical values as they appear in the New Testament, but with the word itself, as to its abstract idea. I find the old Hebrew word translated "right" has exactly the same significance, "straight." I find the Greek word has another meaning which will help us. The Greek word comes from one which means to show a thing, that is, to be self-evident. The Greek, former of words, the builder up of language, formed a word for moral rectitude from a root which means self-evident. There is wonderful illumination in that fact also.

The Bible idea of righteousness may thus be expressed: God is the absolute and eternal standard of right. Consequently, human conduct is righteous as it conforms to His will and approximates His character. These Bible writers and Bible teachers, of the old dispensation and the new, never stayed to argue whether God is righteous. That is their fundamental assumption. On that all Biblical teaching proceeds. The Bible position is that God is holy, and therefore His doings are righteous. He is the one eternal, final standard of what is right; consequently, righteousness in human life is conformity to His will and approximation to His character.

Those who do not accept this standard are totally unable to follow the argument of Jesus in my text, for the man who does not admit that God is the ultimate, eternal standard of right, whatever his own view of right may be, stands on a lower level than the Pharisees, for the Pharisees started there, as I shall try to show you. That was their fundamental conception. Those who believe that God is the absolute, eternal standard of right, and that man is right in the measure in which he lives in conformity with the will of God and approximates His character, may go forward in this meditation.

All this is fundamental; but there are differences in the apprehension of what the will of God is, and in these distinctions we shall discover what our Lord meant when He said to the men who were entering into His Kingdom that their righteousness must exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees.

I think we shall be very unfair to the meaning of our Master if we begin in the twenty-third chapter of Matthew, that chapter from which I read one extract in connection with our lesson, that chapter vibrant with the thunder of His awful woes against these very men. I think we must not begin there. I think we very often miss the keen edge of what Jesus said by beginning at the wrong place.

Where, then, shall we begin? Let us ask who these Pharisees were. The answer to the inquiry may thus be stated. The Pharisees were the Puritans of Maccabean period in Jewish history. Their very name means separated ones, and I do no violence to the name "Pharisee" when I say it means Separatist. That is precisely what they were. We have no history of the actual period in our Bible, but we have the history of its beginning in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, and we have revelations of the conditions in the books of Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. God's ancient people, or a remnant of them, were established at Jerusalem, without any king or prophet. There originated the order of the Scribes, for Ezra was the first. As time proceeded these people were threatened with complete absorption by the Greek power that swept over that whole region, and in that period, of which we have no Biblical history, but of which we have a good deal of authentic history, Judas Maccabeus became the deliverer of the people. There was a period of victories, and these Hebrew people suffered as a result, for they were in danger of forming alliances with the surrounding peoples and of being corrupted by that Greek influence which stood in direct opposition to their own conception of God and religion. It was then, when, humanly speaking, the Hebrew people were threatened with that most terrible form of extinction, absorption, that the Pharisees arose. The passion which actuated those who founded the order was one of loyalty to Jehovah. They constituted themselves into a definite order. I think when we read the New Testament we sometimes forget that the Pharisees were members of a very definite order. There were not more than six or seven thousand of them. The order was a close religious corporation. They banded themselves together as men who would be entirely separated from the Gentiles, from those whom they described as the common people, that is, those who did not take those special religious vows, and especially from the Sadducees, who were the rationalists in religion. The movement was born of the highest, holiest, passion. The order of the Pharisees was an order of men who stood for purity in religion in an hour when Hebraism was threatened by contamination by Greek influence, which would have cut the nerve of the religion of Jehovah. There can be no question, and those who are most familiar with the history of those times will

agree with me, that they were the saviours of the nation, the men who enabled that remnant to stand against the encroachment of the forces of worldliness that were sweeping down on the people. These were the Pharisees, and these were the men with whom Jesus Christ was brought into immediate contact, when He began His public teaching.

From the commencement of His public ministry to the close we see Him flinging Himself with all the force of His personality against them and against their teaching. How are we to account for this? Let us look at them again. Let us see what had happened to them in the course of the years, not tracing the movement but seeing the result as it is revealed to us in the New Testament. What had their righteousness become? Let us inquire what was the base of it and examine the structure of it in order that we may understand the failure and insufficiency of it.

What was the base of the righteousness which the Pharisees taught? Conformity to the will of God. When you speak of the Pharisees, remember that they were the most religious people of that period, they were the most orthodox, the men who stood by the old theology. No one will imagine I am condemning orthodoxy, or sneering at old theology.

When we come into the Acts of the Apostles we find that the opposition was not Pharisaic, but Sadducean. So long as Jesus was teaching morality, the Sadducees had no quarrel with Him; they were indifferent; it was the resurrection doctrine that put the Sadducees into opposition with Christ. The Pharisees were religious, orthodox, and the base of their morality was their belief that man must conform to the will of God. Wherein, then, lay their failure? In order to answer that question, let us observe the structure which they had built on that base. Three things characterized their righteousness: it was, first, external; second, it was exclusive; finally, therefore, it was evasive of essential righteousness.

It was, first, external. It consisted in a most complex and elaborate system of regulations of life by habits. As every man entered the order he took two vows of initiation. The first was to tithe everything eaten, bought, or sold. The second was not to be the guest of the Gentiles, and to observe all ceremonial purifications. These were the fundamental vows of initiation to the order of the Pharisees. Now observe what had happened in the process of the years. In their desire to interpret the law of God and to make it binding they had added tradition to tradition. A little careful study of the Pharisees reveals things that are almost too absurd to be mentioned. Here is one simple illustration of their traditions. If a man should walk through the cornfields on the Sabbath day he must wear the lightest sandals, as if he wore heavy ones and trod on the corn and thus forced it from its husk, he was threshing on the Sabbath! You smile at that, but I know Puritanism today which is quite as foolish! They attempted to explain the meaning of the thought of God by their own foolish tradition until they had heaped tradition upon tradition, and the Lord said to them, "They bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with their fingers."

Moreover, their righteousness was exclusive. They held in supreme contempt all who were outside their own order. In the New Testament we become quite familiar with their attitude toward the publican. That phrase, the "common people," in itself full of beauty because it describes, not the people of one class or caste, but all sorts of people, when used by the Pharisee included all those who were not Pharisees, learned and illiterate, rich and poor, bond and free, the common herd outside the Pharisaic order, on all of whom the Pharisee looked with profound contempt. Notice another revelation of the exclusiveness of the Pharisee, and I shall reveal what is in my mind by again quoting from the words of Jesus, "Ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte: and when he is become so, ye make him twofold more a son of hell than yourselves." There is no stronger proof of exclusivism than the passionate desire to proselytize someone else and bring that other person to your view. You reveal your exclusivism in no surer way than when you attempt to take hold of the man you hold in contempt because he is not with you, and compel him to your way of thinking.

Finally, their righteousness was evasive. Accentuation of the letter had destroyed the spirit. The Sabbath was held so sacred that in the observance of it its hallowed sanctions were denied, so that when His disciples passed through the cornfields and plucked the ears of corn the Pharisees complained that they were breaking the Sabbath, and Jesus said, "If ye had known what this meaneth, I desire mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless." Have you ever really examined that answer of Jesus? These men were insisting on the sanctity of the Sabbath in such a way as to harm humanity, and Christ swept their traditions away, declaring that even the sanctity of the Sabbath must give way to the sanction of caring for humanity. They would not work on the Sabbath, but they would hold their feasts on the Sabbath, provided Gentiles prepared them. Consequently, I repeat, the very accentuation of the value of the letter had destroyed the spirit.

Wherein, then, lay the failure of these men? What was wrong? If the base of their righteousness was the conviction that righteousness is conformity to the will of God, wherein were they wrong? In that they did not know God. Consequently, they were unequal to the interpretation of the will of God. They did not understand the nature of His holiness. They did not understand the nature of His love. Out of that ignorance of God they proceeded to attempt to bring men into conformity to the will of the God Whom they did not know, and Whose will therefore they did not know, with the result that they libeled the God Whom they professed to extol, and degraded the national conception of God by misrepresentations, enforcing a righteousness which was external, exclusive, and evasive.

The result was the degradation of all life; the degradation of their own spirit to the hard, harsh, critical, cynical, self-satisfied temper

which they manifested, the degradation of all their disciples, on whom they laid burdens that they themselves would not lift.

As Jesus moved among these men, the most religious and the most orthodox of men, He flung Himself with holy passion and fervor, and strangely biting words of sarcastic denunciation against their righteousness, against their conception of righteousness, against their attempt to establish righteousness. I will defy you to find me a single unkind or harsh word Jesus ever spoke to sinning man or woman; harsh words were all reserved for false religious teachers, men who misinterpreted God to other men, and who cut the nerve of essential righteousness by attempting to substitute for it the righteousness of triviality and tradition, men who did not know God. Against these He hurled the final anathemas, the awful, appalling woes, of the twenty-third chapter of Matthew.

What, then, are the bases of the righteousness that Christ calls for? Knowledge of God. That is first. According to Christ, all righteousness is conformity to the will of God, Who is love, and Who therefore is a God of holiness. As we read the Manifesto and follow its teaching concerning life and its value, marriage and its sanctity, truth and its expression, justice and its manifestation, until we come to the last expression of love, love of enemies, we are driven to say, Who is sufficient for these things? And the answer is: None other than the child of God, for he alone knows God and is able to obey Him.

The manifestations of the righteousness which exceeds are suggested by the words, "Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." The word "therefore" tells us that we cannot read that command alone, we must go back. What is there before? "Your Father which is in heaven... maketh His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust." God-likeness is righteousness according to Jesus Christ. Love active, love so active that the sun shines on the evil as well as on the good, love so active that God does not withhold His rain from the fields of the unjust man. That is righteousness in the economy of heaven. I am perfectly well aware that we have left some of you far behind. We have left the mere moralist out of sight! This is more than mere morality. The manifestation of righteousness according to this ethic is God-likeness, active love, positive purity, fellowship with God. Presently, the King continued: "Take heed that ye do not your righteousness before men, to be seen of them," and He gave three illustrations, the giving of alms, the offering of prayer, and fasting, all things that are unnecessary! The merely moral man who has no conception of spiritual things, and no knowledge of Jesus Christ, puts all this out as unnecessary. Christ takes these things and says they are to be observed but not to be announced; they are to be secret things. "Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth" in your giving. When you want to pray, do not announce to the crowd that you are going to pray. Some of these things ought to sift us. I think there are some people who never pray unless there is a special convocation and everyone knows they are going to pray. If you want to fast, fast in loneliness, and do not go out wearing the solemn face which plainly says, I have been fasting; but wear a joyful countenance while your hunger is helping you to do things for God.

The victories of the righteousness which exceeds are those of personal tone and relative influence. The supremest proof of righteousness for the other man is your tone, your temper, your spirit; "Love rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth with the truth; heareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Love never faileth." I know people who are very careful never to smoke, and never to go to the theater, never to play cards; and I listen to them when they suppose they are talking religiously, and they are saying hard and bitter things against Christian brethren with whom they do not agree. That is the Pharisaism that Christ hates!

Pharisaism became the chief force against Christ because it lifted the incidental things to the level of essential things, and degraded the essential until ultimately it destroyed them. Said Christ, "Ye tithe mint and anise and cummin," to the neglect of judgment and mercy and faith. Christ does not undervalue the observances which express life. He did not say your righteousness is to supersede the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, but it is to exceed it. He went on, and said: "These ye ought to have done," judgment, mercy and faith, "and not to have left the other undone." He is not careless about the expressions of life, but demands that the details of habit shall be expressions of life, and not substitutes for life. Righteousness in the economy of Christ is an inspiration and not a prison. The Pharisees made it a prison and shut men inside it. What did Christ say of the men they shut in? "Ye make him twofold more a son of hell than yourselves." Righteousness must be the inspiration that touches the secret springs of action, purifying everything at the source.

Behold the King Who uttered the words, Himself realizing righteousness in all the fact of His life, Himself manifesting righteousness in all the glory and beauty of His tender compassion and His tremendous loyalty to truth and holiness.

Finally, behold the King enabling men to be righteous according to His pattern as they put their trust in Him.

I never can have the righteousness that exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees save only as He will take me, dwell in me, and make me love with His love, and see with His eyes, and be compassionate with His compassion, and angry with His anger, compassionate toward the sinner, but angry with his sin. May we know that righteousness through the Lord Himself.

The Way to the Altar

If, therefore, thou art offering thy gift at the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.

Matthew 5:23-24

These words are found in the Manifesto of the King, and constitute part of the section safeguarding the sacredness of human life. After the enunciation of fundamental principles of character and influence, and the value of law in itself, that Manifesto contains the new laws of the Kingdom conditioning earthly and heavenly relationships. The laws of earthly relationships deal first with the foundations of society, forbidding murder and adultery; then with the pillars of society, insisting on truth and justice.

The sacredness of human life is recognized, and murder is forbidden. The method of the King in the enunciation of His ethic was to put His own commandment into contrast with that of the old economy, not abrogating it, but fulfilling it. In the old economy the word of the law, definitely, sternly, simply, forbade the act of taking life: "Thou shalt do no murder." The new prevents the act by dealing with the mental attitudes which precede it. The King warned the subjects of the Kingdom against anger, for in that there is peril. Anger in the sense of intense displeasure may not meditate revenge at the moment, but it would rejoice if the one against whom it proceeds were to suffer. Yet sterner words fell from the King's lips in condemning contempt: "Whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca," the supreme term of contempt, "shall be in danger of the council," that is, citation before the whole Sanhedrin. But if a man shall say to his brother, "Thou fool," the language of malice, of insult with intention to wound, then the only fit punishment for such as he is that he be taken outside the city walls and cast into Gehenna, the place of refuse and of burning in order to destroy it. The severity of the ethic is apparent. Yet the tenderness of the ethic is equally apparent. Under the old law the sinner is arrested red-handed. Under the new law he is arrested because of those attitudes of the soul which, unless they be held in check, canceled, made not to be, may eventuate in the act of murder. All this is tremendously searching, but the matter is not done with. Our Lord did not end at that point. This preliminary survey has been necessary in order that we may find the atmosphere of our text.

Let me ask you now carefully to observe in this text the word "therefore." "If, therefore, thou art offering thy gift at the altar..." It would be manifestly unfair to take this text without recognizing its relationship to all that has gone before. It is impossible to read any text which is ushered in by the word "therefore" without inquiring, Wherefore? What, then, is the simple meaning of the text in its first application? Because these mental moods of anger and contempt and malice are forbidden, therefore, if any man has given his brother occasion for such moods he is to act at once so as to remove them. If thou art angry with thy brother, thou art in danger of judgment; if thou shalt say to him, Raca, in contempt, thou art in danger of judgment before a higher tribunal; if thou shalt say to him, Thou fool, thou art refuse socially, fit only for destruction. Then turning to the brother man, Jesus said: Therefore, if when thou art coming to the altar thou rememberest thy brother has something against thee which may inspire a feeling of anger, contempt, or malice in his breast, go and be reconciled to him, not for thy sake only, but for his sake, lest he become guilty of sin. That is the first application of the text. We shall return to it in the course of our meditation.

Realizing this to be the first application, we may consider its wider reaches as they include the subject of restitution and reparation in their relation to our acceptance with God.

We shall observe three things in these words of Jesus: first, a supposition, "If, therefore, thou art offering thy gift at the altar and there rememberest..." Second, the clear, definite, imperative command of the Lord: "Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother." Thirdly, and finally, the gracious, ultimate welcome: "Then come and offer thy gift."

In dealing, first of all, with the supposition I desire to remark that this was not a doubtful hypothesis; it was the recognition by our Lord of a fact not only generally experienced, but always experienced. Approach to the altar of God always quickens the activity of conscience: "If, therefore, thou art offering thy gift at the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee..."

Let us think of this a little carefully. First, it is interesting to note our Lord's references to the altar. He never referred to the altar except here and on one other occasion, so far as the records reveal. The other occasion is found, interestingly enough, in the twenty-third chapter of Matthew, wherein is chronicled that last terrific address of His in Jerusalem. Here we have the Manifesto introduced by beatitudes, "Blessed..."; there, in the last address, we have denunciation, with ringing, thrilling thunder, "Woe... Woe... Woe..." In that first Manifesto, and in that last denunciation, our Lord referred to the altar. It is quite evident that He was making reference to an existing order and that the men who heard Him knew exactly what He meant. The whole religious symbolism of Hebraism was present to their minds. The picture suggested is the common one of a Hebrew man coming to the altar of God, bringing a gift. It will readily be admitted further that if our Lord made reference to the existing order He did so in harmony with the highest, deepest, spiritual intention of that order. It was not a mere passing reference to that which was external, spiritual, formal; it was a reference to that which was internal, spiritual, dynamic, to that true coming of man to the act and attitude of worship which was symbolized by the altar. The reason for reading as part of our lesson the passage from the Old Testament in which we find the first instructions ever

given to the Hebrew people concerning the altar will immediately be seen. It is important to remember that those first instructions concerning the altar were given immediately after the enunciation of the decalogue containing the inclusive words of the law. After they had been pronounced, the people besought Moses that they should hear the voice of God no more, but that he alone should speak to them, so filled were they with fear. In answer to that request Moses declared that there was no cause for fear, that the purpose of God was good and gracious. Immediately following that, these simple instructions concerning the making of the altar were given. If an altar was made it must be of earth; or if of stone, of unhewn stone. It was to have no steps. All this was primitive and simple, but suggestive of tremendous spiritual necessities and principles. By the altar men were to be for ever reminded that their approach to God was not on the basis of their own ability or righteousness or cleverness. The altar must be of earth, the commonest material, or of unhewn stone, so that man should not glory in that by which he approached God which was of his own creation. There were to be no steps for the ascent to the altar of God—and mark the word—"that thy nakedness be not discovered thereon," a word unveiling the spiritual fact that if a man climb to an altar for his approach to God he reveals his nakedness and unpreparedness for approach. The altar suggested approach to God by man, and more, approach to man by God, for "in every place where I record My name I will come unto thee and I will bless thee."

The altar, moreover, was the place of sacrifice. Man approaching the altar was coming to God always recognizing, even though he might not be able to explain, the mystery of the whole fact, the necessity for approach by the way of sacrifice. We know how far these people wandered from spiritual comprehension, and remember how in the day of Christ they were almost blind to spiritual values; but when our Lord referred to the altar He was not a ritualist, He was not a formalist, He was referring to all that the altar stood for; man drawing near to God by the way of sacrifice. When He uttered the great word of the Manifesto, He already knew that the time would come when under the constraint of the Spirit, an inspired writer would write, "We have an altar"; that in Himself the way of fellowship was being provided, all the foreshadowed values were being fulfilled; that in Him man would find his way to God, as in Him God had found His way to man. In His Person and through His mission,

Grace comes down our souls to greet,
While glory crowns the Mercy-Seat!

With all this in mind, we listen to the supposition of the Lord. Coming to the altar is approach to God. Coming to the altar is coming to the hour and place of worship. Coming to the altar is finding our way into fellowship with God by means of mediation and sacrifice. Coming to the altar is the recognition of the sovereignty of God, of the supremacy of His will. Without any further argument, it is perfectly evident that coming to the altar produces recollection of any violation of that will. No man ever seriously draws near to the altar without remembering.

This is invariable, and it is inevitable. Let it be borne in mind that the wrong done, to whomsoever it was done, whensoever it was done, is fixed in the mind of the man who did it. There are forgotten things that are not forgotten. They are forgotten, I am not conscious of them now; but they are not forgotten, they are hidden away in my mind, covered over by other things. Some of you remember how Scott in Guy Mannering, in a very quaint way, refers to the disorderliness of some minds. He says that Dominie Sampson's mind was like "the magazine of a pawnbroker, stowed with goods of every description, but so cumbrously piled together, and in such total disorganization, that the owner can never lay his hands on any article at the moment he has occasion for it." There are minds like that. However orderly our minds may be, there are things buried away in it of which we are not conscious at the moment; but they are there. There is a little expression we often use in conversation and public speech: "Call to mind"; we all know the possibility of calling to mind. No wrong we have committed have we really forgotten; it is there, covered over, much to our own ease, guilty ease, perilous ease, dangerous ease; but it is there. When we approach the altar we remember. There is no need to go far for illustration. Thank God, we do not know each other's secrets, and thank God we need not unveil them to any human being; but in this very hour we have been remembering. One of Watts' greatest pictures is called "The Dweller in the Innermost." It is a representation of conscience, with a star on her forehead, with a trumpet and arrows lying on her knees. The outstanding wonder of the picture is the green, fiery eyes. Yes, but we forget her. We are unconscious of her eyes, and we do not hear her voice, and the trumpet and the arrows seem forevermore to lie on her lap. But when we approach the altar, she looks, and her glance searches us; she speaks, and with trumpet tongue; she acts, and those "arrows are sharp... in the heart of the King's enemies." The dweller in the innermost is awakened when we draw near to the altar. This word of Jesus was not a rhetorical allusion, it was the recognition of a psychological activity of which everyone who really knows what it is to draw near to the altar of God is conscious. When men first come to the altar of God they remember sins of the past; and in every subsequent approach, if wrongs have been done, they are remembered. It is so whether we will or not. "O Lord, Thou hast searched me, and known me." It is desirable that it should be so, and if we really know our own hearts, the mystery of them, and the meaning of sin in its vileness and poison and power, then we shall cry out as did the psalmist:

Search me, O God, and know my heart;
Try me, and know my thoughts;
And see if there be any way of wickedness in me.

The supposition being considered, let us hear what the Lord says to a man in that moment when approaching the altar of God he remembers. "Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother." That is the command. We may express all that the command means by saying that the activity of conscience which results from the approach to the altar must be the inspiration of immediate action. Observe with great care what is meant by these words. By them our Lord has revealed the fact that the altar never condones or cloaks sin. The altar is the way to purity, not an excuse for impurity. The intention of the altar is to loose from sin, not to hide it. If for a single moment we imagine that in our coming to Christ we come that sin may be hidden, we do not understand the meaning of Christ's mission.

The altar calls on man to co-operate with God to the utmost of his ability in this moral restoration. The very first value of the altar is that it reminds a man of his sin. The very first value of Christian worship is that it starts the activity of conscience, and compels men to think of the actuality of sin. The first value of Christ's presence in the world is not forgiveness, but conviction. In His presence men know sin. When men come toward God through Him they discover sin. One of the last things of religious and social significance that W. E. Gladstone said was that our age was suffering from a lowered sense of sin. I do not know what he would have said had he lived today! We often mourn that men seem to have no consciousness of sin. We are under the spell of certain pseudo-scientific attempts to deal with religion. When a modern scientist tells us that the intelligent man does not think about sin it is a most unintelligent statement. The intelligent man faces every fact of life, and sin is a fact from which there can be no escape. I say that the first value of man's presence before Christ is that he will know himself a sinner. Coming to the altar—for "we have an altar"—we remember the things of wrong, the things of evil.

A consequent value of the altar is that it absolutely refuses to harbor the man who is not prepared to co-operate to the utmost of his ability with God for his own moral restoration. "Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother."

What, then, we inquire carefully and with solemnity, is man's utmost? What can a man do in this hour when conscience is awakened, when his whole life is suddenly arraigned before the penetrating awfulness of the eyes of his own conscience? He can do the thing he knows. That of which conscience has just spoken to him indicates his immediate and only responsibility. That one thing demands immediate action. Go to thy brother directly, immediately, without hesitation, crucifying pride; and, looking into his eyes, be reconciled to him. The one thing that conscience speaks of must be dealt with.

Look, I pray you, at the spiritual significance of all this. The man is seen leaving his gift, and leaving the altar. Geographically, he is traveling from it; but the near way to all the values of the altar is that journey on which he goes to find his brother. He is leaving the altar only geographically; all the while the altar holds him to its own spirit and intention, brings him near to the God Whom he is seeking, and leads him along the pathway that eventuates in purity. The journey away is the near way to the altar.

The limits of responsibility are set further out than we generally think. That which man seeks as he seeks his brother is not his own peace of mind, but saving his brother from those attitudes of mind, anger, contempt, malice, which may make his brother sin. No deeper social note is found in all the teaching of Jesus than this. Why am I to co-operate with God for my own moral restoration? Not alone for my own heart's ease and quietness, but because I am involving the man I have wronged, not by the wrong I have done him, but by the wrong he may do himself if he become angry, contemptuous, malicious toward me. Every journey from the altar that leads back to the altar is a journey to serve someone else and save him. So has God bound us up in the bundle of life. "None of us liveth unto himself"; each one lives unto his brother. Therefore, because the law in the Kingdom is stern, forbidding anger, contempt, malice, therefore take this journey and find thy brother.

The limitations are entirely reasonable. We are to deal with that which is remembered between ourselves and the man we have wronged. I am to go straight away to him; there is to be a meeting between two; I am to make my confession to him, and such restitution as I am able to make, such reparation as lies within my power. Somehow, I am to find my way into his heart.

There are other teachings of our Lord which would warrant us in saying that if that man will not receive me I am not to blame; the Lord will deal with him. But have you ever thought how remarkably rare a thing it is for any human being to refuse to forgive? Sometimes we hear of such refusal, most often in novels, but sometimes also in actual life. Alas and alas! I have known such cases, but they are rare. I have often been amazed to find how a bad man, to whom another confesses sin and asks pardon, is ready to forgive and blot it out. In any case our responsibility ends at that point, and in that direction lies easement from morbid and unworthy regrets.

If I am speaking to some individual soul, and I pray and believe that I am—perhaps to many such—I pray you do not interfere with the Lord's quite clear command. Do not say, I remember that one thing, but then there have been other things; I will try to remember them all. Perhaps I may as well say that the sermon this evening is in answer to the letter of a troubled soul that has reached me from the other side of the world, telling me of agony, of desire to make restoration. The writer said, I beseech you preach on the subject and send me the sermon. That I propose to do. Therefore let me say that the letter is a revelation of false attitudes towards this question of restoration and restitution; perfectly sincere, to be pitied, to be loved into the light, but wrong. The one responsibility

concerning restoration in order to be reconciled to God is that we definitely go and deal with the one thing conscience names. Tomorrow it may name another thing; then we are to deal with that. Do not let us trouble ourselves with things that in the last analysis are very doubtful, or force ourselves to deal with things in the past with which it is quite impossible that we should deal.

Finally, listen to the welcome. "Then come and offer thy gift." Here we may summarize the teaching by declaring that such immediate action in response to conscience whose activity has been aroused by approach to the altar prepares for the appropriation of the advantages which the altar offers. Let that man come back who has taken his journey, who has, so far as he is able, accomplished its purpose, and let him take up his gift and offer it. The altar is for putting away sin. This man has co-operated with God to the utmost of his ability; his approach is now sincere, open and worthy; let him come.

Now the altar is of value. There is an activity of grace which that man still needs, and of which he never felt the need so profoundly as in the hour when he has done his utmost to co-operate with God toward moral restoration. Never so perfectly before did he know his need of absolution, cleansing of the soul, restoration to fellowship with God. Then, said Jesus, Let him come. He will come now, not as a formalist, but in reality. He will come sincerely, and coming sincerely will be received.

The grace of which the altar is the symbol is now to be received. Grace to deal with the wrong which has been righted, for its stain is still on the conscience of the man; its desolation abides. Grace will now deal with that. As between this man and his brother the wrong has been righted; but only God can right it as between man and Himself. This God does, and that is grace in its meaning and value, in its mystery and its mercy.

Let the man remember that he may now come to the altar not alone for the wrong which he has righted so far as he is able, but also for the wrongs which he cannot right. In the moment when conscience has awakened are some to whom it is too late to go. Thank God for the altar! Without it I could have no hope. There are some to whom we cannot go without involving others, and therefore we must not go. We can make restoration only when it may be between ourselves and those whom we have wronged. The confessions that we sometimes hear in inquiry rooms when dealing with souls about sin, made flippantly, involving another, are never sincere. So far as I am concerned, I have no pity for such, and no dealings with them. The confession of sin is lonely, singular, peculiar. There are confessions I can never make, speaking impersonally and as a representative man, for I have no right to involve others. I can go to the altar. I shall carry with me the shame and the wrong and the suffering of some things to the end; but I can trust God's grace for both myself and all the influence of the wrong I did to others, knowing this, that He will not hold them responsible for that for which I alone was responsible. So we must rest in the grace of God. All the strange involutions and intricacies of wrongdoing we must leave at last at the altar.

Those who in the presence of the altar have no questionings of this kind, no remembrances, need very seriously to consider their religious life. Let us be practical, let us be immediate, let us exclude all the world but this congregation, this sanctuary, this hour, this service. Then let us inquire; This coming to God, is it vanity, or is it reality? If it be reality it rebukes us; we remember! If it be vanity we remember nothing, and pass flippantly through the service—the singing of the hymns, pleasant; the sermon, endured!

To the sensitive soul to whom coming to the altar is reality let me say that continuous approach in sincerity enables us to keep short accounts with our own conscience. The thing rebuked in this service can be set right if we will have it so.

The dire peril of carelessness in such matters as these is that conscience becomes hardened. The dweller in the innermost becomes blind. The altar brings nothing to our remembrance. We never blanch with fear or blush with shame. It is an appalling thing that a man may come to that condition.

There is, however, another peril, the peril of unbelief in the mercy of God. The conscience becomes morbid and sees things that are not there, multiplies transgressions that have never occurred, and turns certain things in life into sins which are not sins at all in the economy of God. Spirituality is diseased, anemic, weak, trembling, often simply because man will not trust in the incredible mercy of God. Do you remember that supreme line in F. W. H. Myers' poem, one of those lines of poetry of which there are few in our language that come out of the essence of eternal things?

God shall forgive thee all but thy despair.

The only thing God cannot forgive is refusal to trust in His love. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem... how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings..." Was ever figure so vibrant with the infinite passion of God? "And ye would not." Ye would not trust My love! Ye would not respond to My love! "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate."

I pray you, do not doubt the mercy of God. If you have heard Him calling you to some hard task, some rough pathway, some difficult business between thyself and thy brother, know this; that if thou wilt tramp that pathway, and "lay in dust life's glory dead," then from the ground there shall blossom red, "life that shall endless be." The hard journey leads at last to the altar, and the way of the altar is the way of peace.

Ethical Perfection

Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Matthew 5:48

Perhaps no words in the teaching of our Lord have given more pause to honest hearts than these. With a due sense therefore of their solemnity, combined with a conviction of the reasonableness of our Master, we approach their consideration. In doing so it is of great importance that we should guard ourselves against two perils which threaten us.

First, we must be most careful not to exclude from these words any of the Lord's meaning. We must not say that our Lord did not quite intend what He said. We must not indulge in that most pernicious form of Biblical criticism, the attempt to accommodate some high word of Jesus to the low living of our own experience.

Second, we must not include any more than He intended. It will be healthy for us if we can escape entirely from all merely technical theological ideas as we approach these verses. We have heard much of Christian perfection, a fine and beautiful phrase. I have occasionally been startled by Christian people who have said to me, Do you believe in Christian perfection? My reply to such an inquiry has been to ask, Do you believe in Christian imperfection? or, Do you believe in imperfect Christianity? Every man who is a Christian believes in Christian perfection. That such an answer to the inquiry may be an evasion of the intention of the questioner I know right well. There may be involved in the question certain conceptions, interpretations, doctrines, theological opinions. Now, it is from these that I desire to escape. Let us hear these words of our Lord just as He uttered them, with the simplicity of children.

With regard to the second of these perils, that of including nothing which our Lord did not intend, let us at once recognize that the change which we find in our Revised Version is most important and most accurate. The mood of the verb is future indicative, and not imperative. Our Lord did not say, "Be ye therefore perfect." He said "Ye therefore shall be perfect."

Yet immediately, in the interest of the first warning, let us recognize with equal care that the sense of the indication is imperative in its bearing on our responsibility, for all His declarations involve responsibility, just as all His commands implicate resource.

Comprehensively, this word of Christ is a summarized declaration of what He expects of those who are in His Kingdom, and therefore it is a summarized declaration of what is made possible to them by Himself.

He came unto His own Kingdom, and found it disorganized, degraded; He came to organize, to restore, to uplift, to supply all the forces that were necessary for the remaking of men and the re-establishment of the Kingdom of God in the experience of the race. Confronting His own disciples, and speaking in the hearing of the multitude that had gathered about Him, He said, This is the sum total of My ethic, "Ye shall therefore be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." Speaking to His disciples in the hearing of that larger multitude, He said, You shall be perfect, for I am here to make you perfect; that is the meaning of My mission.

Let us, then, consider, first, the central idea of the text, perfection; second, the perfection of the Father to which our Lord referred when He said "as your heavenly Father is perfect," and, third, the perfection of the sons which He declared to be necessary.

First, then, the general idea of perfection. The arresting word of the text is undoubtedly the word twice repeated, "perfect." This is the word which gives us pause, surprises us, the word which we have been so anxious to undervalue, the word which has made us declare that our Lord did not really mean what He said, but that we were to be as good as we could. It is impossible to consider or apply this statement of our Lord without carefully considering this word, both as to its actual meaning, and as to its use.

What, then, does the word mean? I am referring, of course, in the first place, to the actual word of the Greek New Testament. Let us get behind the actual word to that from which it came. A third remove from the word here translated perfect is a simple word, meaning to set out for a given point, not to go promiscuously, but to go toward a definite place. The suggestion of the word is that of traveling toward a goal. That is the root idea. From that word another was derived, meaning a limit, the conclusion of the journey, the destination of the traveler, the place toward which the journey was taken; and so the word came to mean a termination, a result, and ultimately, a purpose. From that word was derived the word which is translated "perfect" in this passage. The word therefore means realization, arrival at a destination, the state of being at the limit toward which the start was made.

In classic Greek this word was used of adults, as distinguished from infants, or children undergoing discipline. It was also used in the religion of Greece of those who were initiated into the mysteries; those who had passed beyond the novitiate were perfected, that is, they had arrived, they had reached the goal, the limit toward which they set out when they became novices.

In the New Testament this word occurs only in my text, and in one other place in the gospels, where our Lord said to the rich young

ruler, "If thou wouldest be perfect, go, sell that thou hast and give to the poor"; if thou wouldest arrive at thy goal, come to fulfilment of that toward which thou hast been moving, crown everything that has preceded; then yield thyself to My control by sweeping out all that hinders, "sell that thou hast... and come, follow Me." In the epistles it is found over and over again. It is there used constantly of those who are ethically adult, not complete in the sense of including everything that is intended by the being, and excluding everything that is not of the being; but grown-up, adult, having arrived at a definite goal. Such is the word, "Ye therefore shall be perfect," not babes ethically, not youths and maidens, but full-grown men.

The varying value of the word is illustrated by our word "perfect." We are conscious of the natural ambiguity of that word. We always need to interpret it by the subject of which it is used. It is not a word that always means exactly the same thing; it cannot. Here is a baby in its mother's arms. Is it perfect? Ask the mother. Meet the baby seventeen years hence, a youth. Is he perfect? Ask the youth. Add another four, five, half a dozen years, he is a man. Is he perfect? Ask the woman he considers perfect. Perfect as babe, perfect as boy, perfect as man; but always room for growth, advancement, development.

Perfect, then, means arrival at one particular stage of completeness, not the impossibility of procedure from that stage to another. Perfection is the reaching of a given limit. When that given limit is reached, there may be a new enterprise, a new vision luring to new heights, and so consequently a new process toward a larger perfection.

We are by this consideration brought fact to face with the supreme difficulty, in the presence of which men have halted, have indulged in criticism, and have attempted to escape the force of the word of Christ, that of the consciousness of the necessary difference between the perfection of God and our perfection. All that we need for the moment is a recognition of the fact that in each case we must interpret by the subject of which we use the defining term. There are certain senses in which it would be absurd to imagine we can ever be perfect with the perfection of God. Therefore, all such senses are necessarily and properly excluded from our consideration. Our Lord, in infinite condescension, used this particular word "perfect" of God in order to accommodate to human understanding a great principle of human life and conduct. So much then for the abstract idea.

Before we consider in separation the perfection of the Father and the perfection of the sons, it is of the utmost importance that we remember that the statement of Jesus has as its central value the suggestion of likeness, and that most definitely. As your heavenly Father, that is just as your Father, exactly like your Father is perfect. That is not unwarranted emphasis. Whereas there are things we shall necessarily have to eliminate from our consideration, in the matter to which Christ was drawing attention He used the strongest word possible as He demanded on the part of His subjects perfection like the perfection of God.

The consideration of the two perfections will emphasize the difference. The perfection of the Father, the perfection of the sons, these terms marking distinction which must be multiplied by the difference between the Divine and the human.

Admitting that fact of difference, it is ours to look for the likeness which our Lord intended, for in the discovery of that likeness is the supreme value of our meditation.

What, then, is the perfection of the Father to which our Lord referred? This word "perfect" is never elsewhere used of God in the whole of the New Testament. It was manifestly an accommodation on the part of Christ. A great subject is suggested at this point, which is quite aside from our theme. I am more and more impressed, however, as I study these gospel narratives, with our Lord's choice of words. I suppose we are all undergoing a very interesting and profitable revolution in regard to the language of the New Testament as the result of the work of Deissman and others. This, however, is helping us to see more clearly with what accuracy and delicacy our Lord made use of words. He never spoke of His Father by this word on any other occasion. No New Testament writer ever dared to use this word of God. It was, I repeat, a manifest accommodation in order to teach some central lesson.

If the word means reaching a goal toward which a man has traveled, then immediately it cannot have any application to God, for essentially God has no goal toward which He travels. In the fact of His essential being God knows nothing of infancy in His own being, nothing of youth, nothing of age. The vision of Daniel, while poetic, is at the same time strangely illuminative, expressed in the figure that always arrests us, "the Ancient of Days." God, if I may use such poor human words, is always adult in the mystery of His own being. He is taking no journey toward a larger perfection. His perfection is absolute and final and eternal. Yet our Lord spoke of Him here by a word which is entirely on the human level, accommodating His word to the necessity of His teaching. Therefore it is evident that the word "perfect," when used of the Father must be interpreted by the limitations of the context. Moreover, Christ's use of the word is so closely associated with something He had said a moment before that we are compelled so to interpret it.

To diligent students of the whole teaching of our Lord—those who today are standing in a place of far greater privilege than these men occupied who were listening to Him—the interpretation of Fatherhood may be, for certain purposes, much wider. We have all that He said about the Father, we have all that He revealed concerning the Father, and we may, nay we must, take all into account when we desire to know God.

For the present purpose I confine myself to the Manifesto. In this Manifesto, of which our text is, as we have said, the crystallized declaration of requirement and resource, these are the things He taught about the Father. First, that He is in the heavens. I cannot

help feeling that we lose a great deal sometimes by not being more literal in our translation. Our Lord said, Your Father which is in the heavens; He taught us to pray, "Our Father which art in the heavens" always in the plural. I should not like to base any very definite doctrine on that, but it is at least suggestive of the omnipresence of God and the immanence of God, that He is as high as the very heavens of the atmosphere in which we live, and as far as the ultimate reach of the final heaven. In this Manifesto He also made these simple declarations concerning God: Your Father seeth, Your Father knoweth, Your Father feedeth. Yet all this is but the atmosphere, not finally revealing the perfection of God to which our Lord referred at this point, but helping us toward an understanding thereof.

Let us look back to some earlier words in this paragraph: "That ye may be sons of your Father which is in heaven: for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust." Now connect these words with our text, "Ye therefore shall be perfect, as, just as, your Father in the heavens is perfect." Do not quarrel with that illustration. I did not choose it. It is the Lord's illustration. The particular words of my text rise straight out of it, and must be interpreted by it. It is of the essence and reality of the teaching of this particular passage. "Ye therefore," not "ye shall be perfect," but "Ye therefore." Wherefore? On what does the "therefore" depend, and from whence does it derive its strength and urgency? "Your Father... maketh His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust." That is a revelation of God. First, it is a revelation of beneficence. Make the word "beneficence" as great as it is; do not degrade it by the low level of our common use of it. When we use great words let us think great thoughts. Beneficence is well-doing, doing well to, doing good to. Your Father is beneficent toward man as man, whether he be evil or good, toward the unjust or the just. Behind the beneficence is benevolence, well-wishing.

That is the Divine perfection to which our Lord referred, love desiring the good of all men, love doing good to all men, love set on men irrespective of what they are in themselves, love for the evil as well as for the good, for the unjust as well as for the just. There comes to my mind a story from the earliest days of my preaching. I have often told it. I will tell it again. A boy in a Sunday-school class one day said to his teacher, Does God love naughty boys? Certainly not, said the teacher. What blasphemy! Yes, God does love naughty boys. God loves wicked men, in their wickedness, and out of the arch of His blue heaven makes His glorious sun to shine on them, and out of the secret chambers where the rain is generated sends it forth in beneficent floods on the unjust as well as on the just. Do not quarrel with the illustration, it is not mine. You might criticize this if I were imagining it, but it is Christ's definition of the Divine perfection. "Your Father... maketh His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust." That is our Lord's description of the perfection of God. It is the ultimate distinction of God, that He makes His sun to shine on the evil as well as on the good. In the Colossian letter we have a great word of Paul's applied to human conduct which is equally applicable here, "Love is the bond of perfectness." What does that word "bond" mean? Ask your medical man to explain it to you; he can do it better than I can, sundesmos, the ligaments of perfectness, holding all other things in unity and making them act harmoniously. The love of God is the bond of His perfections. Deny His love, and what, then, of His justice? How hard it will be, like the justice of man! What, then, of His holiness? How impossible for a man as man ever to find His way into it, to climb toward the light of it. Love is the bond of perfectness in God, and our blessed Master and King caught this one song out of the infinite music, and sang it to the ages. This is the Divine perfection, that He "maketh His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust."

What, then, is the perfection of the sons to which our Lord is calling us? "Ye shall be perfect" exactly as your Father is perfect. Mark the idea of perfection thus interpreted. Again I pray you remember the necessary distinction between a father and sons multiplied by the difference between God and man. While remembering that, let us emphasize the thought of likeness. Christ said to His subjects, You must be ethically full-grown. To be ethically full-grown is to be men of whom it is true that thoughts and words are mastered by love, men of whom it is true that action is always love-inspired. In our previous meditation we considered the fundamental word of Jesus, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven." The ultimate expression of that righteousness is love-mastered thinking, benevolence; and love-mastered activity, beneficence.

Take this whole Manifesto and see how the Lord interprets His own ideal. This word about love is the climax of our Lord's enunciation of laws as to earthly relationships. I glance back, and I find, first, the law of life as to murder and hatred; second, the law of purity as to the marriage relationship; third, the law of truth, that no man shall take any oath, but say yea, yea; the law of justice, that the man in His Kingdom shall overtake the demand of justice by such living as will make it forevermore unnecessary. The attitude toward human life as He describes it, the sacredness of the family, the preservation of the purity of the state; the attitude toward truth, the simple statement; the attitude toward justice. How are we going to fulfil these ideals? Only in love. Only out of life love-mastered can these things proceed.

This, then, is not a low standard. It is the ultimate, the highest of all ethical conceptions. Love is the secret of all righteousness, personal, social, national. That does not need arguing; it does need thinking about and remembering. Could war last for a single four-and-twenty hours if love mastered the peoples? That never will be until the King of love shall come and establish His Kingdom; but when He comes, that will be the issue. Every social problem that confronts us today would be solved if only we could make men live a life love-mastered. No sentinel is half so severe as love. If love stands sentinel in our lives, watching over our actions, we

cannot lie, we cannot hate, we cannot slander. The measure of high and noble life is the measure of love-mastered life. How we admire that man who in company will not allow another man to be ill spoken of.

Who steals my purse steals trash...
But he that filches from me my good name,
Robs me of that which not enriches him,
And makes me poor indeed.

Such a man is of all men most despicable, and the man who will not allow it to be done in his company is the man who is love-mastered.

Do not imagine that love is sentimental, sickly, mawkish, anaemic. If it were, then God deliver the world from it! Love is strong, virile, tremendous in its demands. Love makes demands on self. Love thinketh no evil, "rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth with the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."

That is the God-like perfection which Christ demands, the love-mastered life which expresses itself in gifts bestowed on men without respect to what they are in themselves.

As I ponder these words, as I have pondered them in trying to understand our Lord's meaning, everything has at last gathered itself up for my own soul and my own heart into one question. I am not now so much speaking as a preacher, an expositor; I am telling you the things that have been happening in my own soul while I have been preparing for this service. As the light has shone on me, and I have caught His revelation of God in the perfection of His love, and have then heard Him say, You therefore shall be perfect exactly as your Father is perfect, the effect has been that I have been driven to the asking of one plain question: How?

For in the name of God, if that be the ideal it mocks my impotence. I grant its beauty and glory; I grant that if men live love-mastered lives all the problems are solved and righteousness is established. But how am I going to be perfect with that perfection, how am I to arrive at that ethically adult condition of life when I shall be mastered by love in my thinkings, in my wishings, in my judgments, in my actions? How?

The answer is in the text and in the context. I venture to suggest that our Lord might have used other figures of speech here. In some senses other figures of speech would have been as illuminative as this is, but they would have lacked exactly that thing which I am now feeling after. He might have said, "Ye shall therefore be perfect, as your King is perfect." Would not that have done? Yes, as the revelation of an ethic, but it would have lacked dynamic, it would have lacked the essential Christian secret. Your King makes His sun to shine on the evil and the good, and His rain to fall on the just and the unjust. Would not that have done? Quite perfectly for the revelation of an ethic, for the King is a King of love, but a King cannot give life to His subjects.

But our Lord did not use that figure, He used the figure of the Father, "that ye may be sons of your Father. Now the arresting word is not the word "perfect" but the word "Father." That is a word of hope, a word that woos me, a word that suggests dynamic as well as ethic! I go back to the beginning of the Manifesto and I find that the word first appears when our Lord was telling these very men the purpose for which they are called to high character, "Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." He never used that figure of speech again till He came to the climax, the love-mastered life, "That ye may be sons of your Father... ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." Then everything that followed thrilled with it. Take the sixth chapter at your leisure, and do what I did when I was reading just before coming to this service, put a red line under the word "Father." Life is to be lived before "your Father" and not before men to be seen of them. Your alms are to be given so that "your Father" may see them. When you pray, get alone and pray to your Father, and your Father will reward you. When you pray, say, "Our Father." When you forgive men, remember your Father will forgive you if you forgive them. When you fast do it alone with your Father. Do not be anxious about the necessities of this life. Your Father feedeth the birds, and your "Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things."

So the music runs. The King is Father; the subjects are sons. And therein is suggested the central verity of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, that He comes to give men not an ethic alone, but dynamic; not light on a pathway merely, but life enabling them to walk therein.

Such love of our fellow men must proceed out of life, and the Manifesto is not all the mission of the King. There was not merely the Mount of Light, whereon He enunciated the ethic that burns us:

There is a green hill far away,
Outside a city wall,
Where the dear Lord was crucified,
Who died to save us all.
We may not know, we cannot tell

What pains He had to bear,
But we believe it was for us
He hung and suffered there.
He died that we might be forgiven,
He died to make us good,
That we might go at last to heaven,
Saved by His precious blood.
Oh dearly, dearly has He loved,
And we must love Him too,
And trust in His redeeming blood,
And try His works to do.

077 - Matthew 5:48; Luke 19:10 - The Ethic and Evangel of Jesus [[@bible:mt Lk 19:10]]

The Ethic and Evangel of Jesus

Ye, therefore, shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.
Matthew 5:48

The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost.
Luke 19:10

Here we have two superlative utterances of Jesus, which, at first glance to the thoughtful man, seem contradictory, yet, as a matter of fact are most closely related. They condense into the briefest declaration the sum total of Christ's teaching. On the one hand, we have a word of superlative truth; on the other, a word of ineffable grace. One is a word of light, searching, revealing, shaming, filling the heart with fear; the other is a word of love, caressing, healing, lifting, filling the heart with hope. The apostle John declared of Jesus, "We beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth." Here the two things find expression from His lips. If we take a larger outlook than that of the text in each case, we shall immediately see that there is no contradiction. While the first word is a word that demands perfection, it is set in relationship to declarations of love. The definition of the Divine perfection in the context is this: "He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust." In the atmosphere of the demand for love flashes the great word of light. On the other hand, the story from which the second text is taken is purely an ethical story. Jesus entered the house of Zacchæus, a notorious wrong-doer, and within a short period of His entry the most marvelous moral reformation had taken place. In the presence of that mighty ethical change Jesus said, "The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost." So that when I set each text in its context I find the value of the other constituting that context. The first text is a text of light set in an atmosphere of love; the second text is a text of love set in the shining of light.

For these two things Jesus stood in all the days of His public ministry. For these two things the Lord Jesus Christ stands at this hour. His demand is for perfection, and if He says no more than that to me He leaves me on the highway of life having discovered my failure and unable to realize the high ideal; but His gospel is that He finds the man whom His ethic condemns, and enables him to fulfil that ethic—"The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost." These two things must never be separated from each other. The proclamation of the evangel which even suggests that the mission of Jesus in the world was to persuade God to excuse sin is a blasphemy. The proclamation of the ethic which declares that God has set a high standard to which He demands that a man shall climb ere He receive him is equally a blasphemy. When, on the one hand, we realize that Jesus Christ, in the days of His flesh, through every successive century, and at this hour, calls for absolute perfection, and then see Him holding out to the condemned soul hands in which are the arguments which declare His power to realize in the life of the failing man the very thing He demands, then we have begun to understand the real message and mission of Christ.

A generation ago there was a phrase which was largely the phrase of the schoolman, the phrase of the scientist. It has become the phrase of that ubiquitous and remarkable individual we describe as "the man in the street," whom no one has ever seen but everybody knows: the survival of the fittest. With strange, intuitive accuracy, humanity has fastened on that phrase, and now applies it everywhere. Whatever it meant when it was first used a generation ago by the physical scientists, today it stands for the conception that only fit things ought to survive. Men have been applying it physically and mentally, and the Church has, or ought to have, been applying it spiritually. It embodies an essential truth. It reveals a profound necessity. It reveals a principle apart from which our life is not worth living. Only fit things must survive; the unfit must go to the wall. I go further and declare that it is a law of God, and that the chief exponent in human history of that particular law and that particular principle is Jesus Christ. There never passed the lips of Jesus a single plea for the excuse of incapacity. Through the centuries He is not leading into some heaven that

lies beyond an army of mental, moral, and spiritual cripples. He demands perfection. In the presence of such a word as this we must not indulge in any of that kind of criticism which is far more destructive than the higher or the lower criticism—the profane criticism which says that Jesus did not mean exactly what He said when he uttered the words, "Ye shall be perfect." If we want to know the severity of the demand we must remember the location of the text. There never was a day when the context will search us more than today. "Ye shall love your enemies." "Ye, therefore, shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." This is Christ's demand for the ultimate fitness, the fitness of the soul, love baptized, love inspired; the fitness of the soul that cannot stoop to untruth or to meanness, cruelty or devilry, because it is mastered by love. The last spiritual, mental, physical, fitness of humanity is created by the mastery of love. Christ stands with that great word forever sounding in the listening ears of astonished, ashamed, confounded humanity, "Ye shall therefore be perfect"; and, lest there should be some lowering of the ideal, He interpreted His meaning, "as your heavenly Father is perfect."

What does all that mean? It means that I stand in the presence of Christ and say: "If that be the standard, then, verily, I am guilty and a failure! Oh, it may be, my masters, that by the ordinary standards of respectable society you will pass; it may be that even by the standards of the Christian Church you will pass; but if you come to that solemn loneliness of spirit which is the self-consciousness of a man in the presence of Jesus Christ, you also will say: If that be the standard, God help me, I am not that. Yet that is Christ's demand. I declare that if that is all Jesus Christ has to say to me, it is a word of condemnation, and there is no help in it for me.

Now I listen to Him again, the same Christ; and with no lowering of the standard, I hear Him say, "The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost." He bends over me, the man whom He has condemned; He bows over me, the soul whose unutterable failure is revealed; and as I lose all heart and hope, and feel that if that be the standard, not only have I not attained it, but I cannot attain it, He whispers to my heart this word of hope. Forgive me if I change His wording that I may express His meaning—I have come to make you the very thing that I demand you shall be—"to seek and to save the lost." Here, then, we have the ethic of Jesus. Here, then, we have the evangel of Jesus.

Let us consider a little more carefully this ethical ideal of Jesus. I think we must try to understand it by trying to understand Him, for if John declared that the glory which shone from Jesus' Person was "glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth," it is also recorded by John that upon occasion Jesus said, "I am the truth." Not, I teach it, not I declare it, not I explain it; but "I am the truth." That is to say, He claimed to be the incarnation of that perfection which He demanded. I am not going to defend His claim. Believing it to be true, I want to see the perfection, first, by listening to His teaching; second, by observing His example; and, third, by noting one stupendous fact of Divine relationship to Him.

First, then, by listening to His teaching. The first of my texts is taken from His ethical manifesto. It breathes the spirit of that manifesto. It catches up the ultimate claim, appeal, demand, thereof. Yet, because it is so inclusive and so vast, let us think of the manifesto itself, not in detail, but in general outline. First, we find in this manifesto of Jesus that He insists on supremacy of character, and of character of a particular type. As I read I am impressed with the fact that no blessing is pronounced on any human being for having anything, or for doing anything; every blessing is pronounced on men for what they are in themselves. Then I discover that Jesus reveals the nature of the character on which He pronounces His blessing. He declares that character is a matter of the soul, a matter of the hidden life, a matter that is entirely inward. There may be external attitudes and actions which convey the idea of rectitude; but if the heart be wrong there is no beatitude. He declares that the character must be purity in the inward parts, "Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God." Not the overt act of sin is that which is supremely to be condemned, but the inner lust after it. God does not shudder and tremble where man does, in the presence of the murderer with blood on his hands; God shudders at those movements of the soul which are of contempt, of hatred, and which presently may express themselves in murder. While the man who does not inflict bodily harm on his neighbor will escape the law of humanity, the man who speaks in terms of contempt of his fellow man is judged in the courts of heaven as being iniquitous and unholy. This is the ethic of love. These are the demands that love sets up on the human soul, and which can be realized or answered only when love masters and inspires the life. Life must be true and gracious, it must be according to light and according to love. It must be stern and hard with irrevocable justice. It must be tender and sweet with unflinching compassion. A man must steadfastly refuse to bend the neck in the presence of any oppression and wrong; and yet he must be ready immediately to embrace the wrong-doer with the love of a great forgiveness. That is the ethic of Jesus, all contained in the ultimate conception of likeness to the God Who is love, and expressed in the terrific word of my text, "Ye shall therefore be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." In the manifesto, moreover, something is added which is entirely peculiar to Christ and Christianity. Jesus says that the true value of character is not that it secures safety to the men who possess it, but that it scatters blessings on other men. Those who have this character are the light of the world, are the salt of the earth. Men are to be men of holy character, true and gracious, not that they may secure their own safety, either for time or for eternity, but in order that from them light may fall on the pathways where men stumble and are lost; in order that they may exert the aseptic influence of salt, salt that hinders the spread of corruption and gives goodness in other people its chance.

When I have done listening to this Teacher I look at Him. When I look at Him I am more than ever impressed with the awful glory of the standard, for the purity of Jesus is something that fills the soul with ever-growing awe. There came a day when Paul was writing a letter in which he declared, "The grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men." That is the value of the second text.

Then he continued: "instructing us, to the intent that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." That is the value of the first text. The words Paul used I reverently use of Jesus Himself. "Soberly"; that means with perfect inward self-government. It is a word that refers to the individuality, and describes life as held in check, in poise, in restraint, none of its passions destroyed, but all held in check by principle. Look at Jesus. We cannot find in the records a single instance in which he lost control of Himself. I can find instance after instance in which He surged with passion as He denounced hypocrisy in language which even at the distance of two millenniums is white-hot and scorching. But He was always Master of His language; no word passed His lips that He had to recall. I have seen Him, His bosom heaving with emotion, and His wondrous eyes of matchless beauty suffused with tears; but I never find Him sickly in sentiment. Thrilling through the threnody of His complaint is the thunder of His righteousness. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem... how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." He lived soberly, that is, with personality powerful, but controlled. That is perfection.

The word "righteously" here defines human interrelationship. It refers to the world around. To live righteously is to maintain the relationships of justice and mercy with our fellow men. Righteousness is supremely merciful. When our Lord commenced His ministry He said to John the Baptist, "Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." He said that when He was bending, stooping, to a baptism that was symbolic of the death whereby He would extend mercy to men. Even His enemies never attempted to bring against Him any charge of ever having wronged man, woman, or child. They did charge Him with profaning the temple, with violating the Sabbath, with being overfriendly with sinning men and women; but never with wronging man or woman, or being unjust to a child. When at last they would murder Him, they must lie in order to do it, and procure false witnesses to trap Him. They charged Him with the violation of the trivialities of their ceremonial in order to nail Him to the Cross; but they could not charge Him with being unjust to His kind.

The last word, "godly," reveals relationship with the great over-world, the ultimate world of the human spirit, the world with which man essentially has to do, whether he admits it or not, for in the hand of God is man's breath, in the government of God are all man's ways. No life is perfect that has no traffic with heaven, no commerce with eternity, no dealings with God. The godliness of the life of Jesus was revealed, not conventionally, not according to the religious standards of His day. The supreme trouble was that He was not a religious man in the thinking of the religious men of the day. He broke the Sabbath, He violated tradition, He failed to give His hands ceremonial cleansing before eating food. But He was godly. Hear His own beatitude, and discover in it a chaplet of glory and beauty that found its first resting place on the head of the Man Who uttered it: "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." See God! Where? Everywhere. See God! When? Now. Jesus saw God everywhere, in the beauty of the lily, in the safety of the bird, in the glory of the harvest field, in the faces of men and women, in the vast movements of history. The vision of God was the inspiration of His humanity. His life was adjusted to God with a familiarity that often fills the soul with wonder. He spoke of God as Father, and declared His unity with Him, and His submission to Him; made the declaration that He never said anything of Himself, but uttered only the things He heard whispered in His soul by His Father, God; that He never did anything on His own initiative, but only as the Divine will constrained and controlled Him. That is godly life, perfect life. The ethic of Jesus was incarnate in Himself.

Once again, and finally, the perfection of Jesus was demonstrated by that supreme and final act of God wherein He raised Him from the dead. On the day of Pentecost Peter for the first time became a truly seeing man, all the blindness gone, understanding as he never had understood, by the sudden, glorious coming of the Holy Spirit apprehending the meaning of the Man in Whose presence he had been for three years. Referring to Jesus' resurrection, Peter declared, "It was not possible that He should be holden of it." Why not? Because of the perfection of His righteousness, the righteousness of His godly life, the righteousness which He perfected in the mystery of His dying. When God raised Jesus of Nazareth from the dead He said to humanity by that act, This is the type of human life acceptable to heaven. By the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead He rejected every other ideal of human life and every other conception of human greatness. By that raising from among the dead of One Who had bowed to buffeting and sacrificial death God declared in human history that the man who desires to rise to power by the oppression of others is rejected of heaven and doomed in the ultimate economy of eternity. By that raising from the dead of this Man God declared that merely intellectual attainment can never be the final ground of humanity's acceptance. By that raising from the dead of Jesus He declared that every ideal and every conception of man that does not harmonize with the perfection of that wondrous life is rejected. The raising of Jesus from the dead is God's signature to the perfect glory of the human ideal that had been incarnate in the Man of Nazareth.

Now I listen again to His second word, so familiar is its ineffable music, and so has it comforted the hearts of multitudes that perhaps there is need to do little more than repeat it: "The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost." The seeking involves the whole of His mission, not merely the earthly mission, but His mission through the Spirit, the methods by which He approaches man's soul and makes His great appeal, seeking, ever seeking. The saving involves not merely the initial act whereby a soul is received, but all the disciplinary processes which follow, until that soul is perfected and presented faultless before the throne of God.

He came to seek, and why to seek? Because of the distance between those whom He came to seek and the God from Whom He came. But God is not far from any one of us. In Him "we live, and move, and have our being." He is "the God in Whose hand our

breath is, and Whose are all our ways." Our distance is that of inability to know and apprehend the near. It is the distance of the blind man from the glory of the picture that is in front of him. It is the distance of the deaf man from the beauty of the symphony sounding round about him. It is the distance of the insensate man from all the movements of life in the midst of which he lives. Men live and move and have their being in God, and do not see Him. His voice, broken up into a thousand inflections, is ever speaking in their ears, but they do not hear them. He is close at hand, and they do not feel or touch Him. This Man saw God everywhere, heard Him always, and always touched Him. Man's distance from God is the distance of death from life in the midst of life. How appalling is the fact that men everywhere are near to God but never see Him. There are men who never see God in a flower, never see Him in a bird; who never see God on the mighty ocean or amid the vastness of the eternal hills. There are men who cannot see God in the war today. They are blind souls. God's judgments are abroad in the earth. His grasp is on all humanity, making humanity work out its own choice to inevitable expression, that He may correct the wrong and bring the light of life to light. Yet men do not see Him. Therefore, He came to seek, to open blind eyes, to unstop deaf ears, to touch the hard heart until it thrills and throbs with emotion. Those who are thus at a distance from God have become unlike God. He seeks them that He may restore to them the Divine image, and them to God Himself. Souls who are remote from God by reason of death are at enmity against God, hating, not God, but what they think is God. He came to seek them, to shine through the gloom, and destroy all false conceptions of God by being Himself incarnate Deity, revealing to men through the glance of the eye, the strength and tenderness of human speech, the glory of human life, all the perfection of grace and beauty, the wonders of what God is in Himself.

He came not only to seek, but to save. He begins with that central, essential fact of human personality, the spirit, linking it again to God, opening blind eyes, unstopping deaf ears, making it keen of scent in the fear of the Lord. He renews the mind also, transforming it until it becomes spiritual. The body He preserves as a temple of the Holy Ghost, and promises that at last there shall come to all trusting souls the infinite wonder that came to Him, resurrection from among the dead.

The announcement at the beginning thus becomes not a command, but a promise. Because He bends and stoops to me in my low estate, and lifts me notwithstanding all, and takes me into His fellowship while as yet I am a polluted man, sitting down to eat with me, a sinner; because He does this, I dare look into His face with reverent awe, and glad emotion of soul, and I dare say to Him in spite of my growing consciousness of failure and weakness, "Thou wilt perfect that which concerneth me."

God help us to submit ourselves to the measurement of His standard. Let us be done with comparing ourselves with ourselves, or finding some crumb of paltry satisfaction in the fact that we are not worse than other men, or a little better than a few. Let us press into His presence that He may measure us and condemn us, for by that process we shall be led to press nearer and yet nearer to His wounded side of ineffable love, that we may know His restoring and healing power, and at last be presented faultless before the throne of God.

078 - Matthew 6:10 - The Kingdom: "Thy Kingdom"

Thy Kingdom

"Thy Kingdom...."

Matthew 6:10

Our theme this evening is that of the Kingdom over which the King reigns. The phrase I have read as text is taken, apparently, almost ruthlessly from its setting. These words are selected from the Lord's prayer. My theme this evening is not the prayer, but rather the Kingdom for the coming of which our Lord taught us to pray. In speaking of it let us remember that He Who taught the prayer was Himself the King; that the prayer itself is formulated with wonderful care, and is part of the King's Manifesto.

At the fifth chapter in the Gospel according to Matthew, we have the account of Jesus looking upon the multitude, and as a result going to the mountain, taking with Him His own disciples, and there upon the mountain height, enunciating in their hearing the ethic of His great Kingdom. At the heart of the ethic is this prayer, and at the center of the first part of the prayer is this phrase, "Thy Kingdom come."

Of that Kingdom Jesus is King by way of manifestation and for the purpose of demonstration. The one sovereign Lord is God. In order that men may know the King, He came into human form; and so coming, not nearer to man, but nearer to his consciousness by the way of incarnation. Therefore in Jesus of Nazareth, Man of our manhood, Bone of our bone, Flesh of our flesh, Life of our life, there has appeared in human history all that it is necessary for us to know concerning the Kingship of God, for in the King, the Kingdom is revealed.

With that thought in mind, we turn to the consideration of the Kingdom for which He taught us to pray that it may come, not that it may be created, not that it may be established, but that it may come, that it may be realized, that it may appear, that it may reach its ultimate fulfilment. In human history kings have often been great only by reason of the greatness of the empire over which they have reigned. But the greatest kings, even in human history, are the kings who have created a great kingdom. The greatness of our King

is created by the greatness of the Kingdom over which He reigns, and the greatness of the Kingdom over which He reigns is created by the greatness of the King. Yet, it seems to me sometimes that we can only come to any recognition of the greatness of the King as we attempt to see the Kingdom over which He reigns. We spoke of the abstract things of Christ's greatness in our previous study; of His character, of His qualifications, of His authority. Now let us try to see the Kingdom over which He reigns.

I shall ask you to follow me as I attempt to speak; first of the actual fact and extent of the Kingdom; and secondly of the present expression of the Kingdom in human history.

First, then, as to the fact and extent of the Kingdom. We are in danger of limiting our outlook when we speak of the Kingdom. I am not going to enter into any discussion of the interesting problem of the difference between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of heaven. Whatever difference there may be of application, there is no difference in the central thought. All the realms of which we are conscious are in the Kingdom of God. "King of kings" was the word of our last meditation. As we remember it we think of rulers and principalities; of dominions and powers; of kings over certain restricted areas. Over all these Christ is claimed by Scripture to be King. All realms are in His Kingdom. The material universe is in the Kingdom of God. The mental realm is under the government of Christ. Over the moral realm He is the one supreme ruler. So climbing up the ascending scale from the material through the mental and moral, we reach ultimately and finally to this: that the whole spiritual universe is within the Kingdom of God and is under the dominion of Christ.

Let us begin with the first of these thoughts; the material realm. To declare that this is in the Kingdom of God is to utter something old and commonplace, and therefore difficult of belief; that is of the belief which touches the heart and moves the emotion and fires the imagination. Yet, I believe that we are losing greatly in our Christian thinking and teaching by forgetfulness of this fact. No words of mine can set forth that truth with such lucidity, with such force, as the words which I read to you at the commencement of our service, selections from the writings of John and Paul. I halt you one moment to ask you to think of the difference between these two men, because as we recognize that difference we shall see how remarkable it is that they both came to identical conclusions concerning the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. John was the mystic, the dreamer; a man of intuition and insight. If I were asked to designate John, I should never speak of him as Saint John the Divine, but as John the Interpreter. I never read "Pilgrim's Progress" and the account of the visit to the house of the Interpreter without thinking of John, the man who saw things never seen, and was conscious of things that other men did not dream existed. The dreamer, the mystic, the poet, the visionary, the seer. Paul was a man of sincerity and honesty; a man of logical acumen; a man who would bring to bear upon the most trivial matters the profoundest powers of the mind; the man who wrote the great treatise on salvation which plumbs the depths, and scales the heights, and shows accurately the movements of God toward the accomplishment of His purpose. I am not saying there was nothing of the mystic in Paul, no vision of the gleam, no consciousness of the glory. In this very treatise he adds to all his statement and his logic, the wings of song, and having begun with the degradation of the Roman Empire, describing it until we shudder at this description, he at last says, "Let us rejoice in hope of the glory of God." He was preeminently a man of logic, a man of argument, a man of debate, a man of strange and strenuous reasoning power, a man who saw his way through all the processes. These two men, brought in different ways into comradeship with Christ, came to the same conclusion. The mystic words of John concerning the Christ are, "The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that hath been made." "In Him was life," and there is dramatic magnificence and inclusiveness in that use of the word "life." There follows a fine differentiation between the lower forms of life and the highest, as John continued "the life was the light of men." Such is the language of the mystic. I turn to Paul and I read in his Colossian letter, "Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in Him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things have been created through Him, and unto Him; and He is before all things, and in Him all things consist." Such is the language of the logician. The conclusion in each case is the same. Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ of God, the Man known of the Galilean fisherman as an intimate human friend; the Man arresting Saul of Tarsus, learned in the law of his people and enthusiastic in his opposition to Christianity; impressed Himself upon the mind of the mystic, and upon the mind of the thinker, and the result was the same. They both saw Him as the Creator and Sustainer of the material universe. That is the Kingdom of Christ. In imagination I stand upon the mountain side, and I see the touch of His beauty in everything. I watch the procession of the seasons as they come and go, and mark their wonderful regularity, notwithstanding the impatient blasphemy of people who are afraid that a week's rain will spoil their harvest, and I know that "In Whom all things consist." There is no flower outside His Kingdom. There is no ploughed field sweeping up the hillside in folds of russet velvet which is not His handiwork. He holds the world in His hand, and is Master and Lord of the material universe. The first fact then for us ever to remember, is that the Christ Whom we crown as King, is King in the material universe; present at creation, He is the Word of creation; He upholds it by the word of His power; and all things made through Him, move toward Him, and will find their final glory when they have attained that form which harmonizes with the infinite perfections, which had their unveiling for the eye of mortal men in the strange and wonderful Person of Jesus of Nazareth.

He is also King in the mental realm. All the powers of thought are under His control, and under His government. There is rebellion in the world, in the universe; but ultimately all is under His control, for no thinking being in the universe can finally escape the strength of the mind of God. He is absolute Sovereign. All beautiful thought owes its origin to this one King; and every expression of beauty is

the outcome of His reign and His Kingship. Of music, art, poetry and philosophy, He is the Lord and Master. Test your music by the harmonies of His perfections, and it sings its last unutterable note when it celebrates the Messiah. Art comes finally to Him, and that in art which is untrue and unclean is that in art which is unlike Christ and against the purposes of His Kingship. Poetry sings itself out in highest strains when it celebrates the name of this one great King. Philosophy is final when it is true to His wisdom. Thus through all the mental realm He is King.

The fact of His Kingship in the moral realm is beyond dispute. His law is the standard of morality. Gradually the world in its progressive civilization is coming to understand His ethic and obey it. Men outside the Church at this hour, sincere men, are telling us that we need to set up a new social order, and the proportion in which these men are uttering the truth about society, the relation of man to man in brotherhood, is the proportion in which they have heard the ethic of Jesus. In civic life, national life, here or anywhere else; the proportion of its purity is the proportion of its approximation to the ideals of Christ. In our moral ideals for the individual, the community, the nation, the world; the final standard is the ethic of Jesus. Thousands of men who have refused personally and individually to crown our Lord and Master, are crowning Him indirectly when they accept His ethic and bow before His standard of morality. From His Sermon on the Mount, light has flashed upon every age, rebuking it, shaming it, and gradually men are coming to honor the great ideal. I will put the whole case in other words. No ethic has ever yet been enunciated so severe, so searching, so high, so perfect as the ethic of Jesus. Twenty years ago a man who was filled with doubt and questioning concerning the Christian religion, said to me quite frankly, "My only complaint against the ideal of Jesus is that it is impracticable; no man can fulfil it." I only quote that, I need not argue it. I agree with it, No man can fulfil the ethic of Jesus save as He receives from Him the necessary dynamic force. I quote it in order to say that it was a recognition that Christ is King in the moral realm. To obey Him absolutely, completely, finally, is to come to the ultimate in morality.

Christ is King finally over the whole spiritual realm. The highest side of life develops under His rule. He has so spoken to men who have questioned and doubted and groped in the darkness after God, that they have found Him and come to know Him. By His interpretation of truth concerning God, men have come to such conception of God as has enabled them to worship and to serve. The whole spiritual world has been opened to the consciousness of man by the ministry of Jesus. He has given us back into a present fellowship, the faces "loved long since and lost awhile." "We sorrow not as those that have no hope." The simple phrases of our holy faith link us in that communion of saints which laughs at the terror of the tomb. They are not dead, but gone before. "Absent from the body, present with the Lord." We know that when Christ shall appear, they shall appear with Him in glory. He has not killed the capacity for sorrow; but He has gilded the teardrop with His smile and made the desert garden bloom awhile, by opening before us the gates, and giving us to see the infinite distances, and to enter even here amid the dust and turmoil of this present life into the communion with the saints who have gone before. If we follow Jesus we have no need to mutter in the dark in order to talk with spirits that have gone. We are their fellow citizens. If for a little while we wait amid the conflict, in this waiting we are not divided, but one with those who have gone. And presently, when the end comes, the followers of this Christ, this King, will look into the face of the rider upon the pale horse, and hail him as friend rather than foe, recognizing, as Bishop Taylor once so exquisitely put it, that Christ has taken from him his sting, and made him forevermore a porter at the gate of life. The consciousness of the spiritual world is born of the touch and presence and victory of this Christ King. He reigns over all things material, over all things mental, over all things moral, over all things spiritual.

Let us consider secondly, the present expression of the Kingdom.

I am speaking out of the midst of a world, and out of the midst of a condition of affairs, which made it necessary for the King to teach men to pray "Thy Kingdom come." The Kingdom is not apparent, it is not perfectly patent, it is not seen of ordinary men save in partial degree. It is an actual essential fact. It is seen of such as have seen the face of Christ. We remember the word of the writer of the letter to the Hebrews, that old and familiar word, let us recite it now with this particular meaning in it: "We see not yet all things subjected to Him. But we behold Him Who has been made a little lower than the angels, even Jesus." The writer of those words recognizes the fact that within the Kingdom there is rebellion; but he affirmed that at last the victory would be won, and all things would be subjected unto the King. His words suggest the unfinished work of Jesus, "Not yet all things subjected unto Him"; and the assurance that it will be finished, "We see... Jesus."

Yet, while we recognize His actual sovereignty in all these realms, let us also remember that it is not only actual, it is active. Think of the rule of Christ today. We must remind our hearts of it or we shall lose courage in many a day of battle and darkness. He holds the reigns of government over all the forces in the midst of which we live. Think of the crowned heads of the world, kings as we name them; think of the merchant princes of today; think of the rulers of the scientific world; or yet again, think of the great spiritual leaders of this and every age. Think of all these, and then hear again this word, He is "King of kings." Begin on that first and simplest level where it sometimes seems impossible to believe it; He is King of all the crowned heads. It is not manifest; but it is an actual and active fact. Go back to the Old Testament and catch one gleam of light. Speaking to Cyrus, Jehovah said, "I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known Me." There was a man of faith in the olden days who was agnostic in the presence of what he saw about him, and Habakkuk said in his honest agnosticism, "Why is God doing nothing?" The divine reply was, "I work a work in your days, which ye will not believe though it be told you." Then said Habakkuk, "If that be true, I will up to the watchtower and watch and

see." Then God told Him what He was doing. "I am taking people outside the covenant, cruel, brutal people, and making them the ministers of My sovereignty, for the chastisement of My people, that they may be ultimately saved." The man who began his prophecy by saying that God was doing nothing, ended by singing:

Though the fig tree shall not blossom,
Neither shall fruit be in the vines;
The labour of the olive shall fail,
And the fields shall yield no meat;
The flock shall be cut off from the fold,
And there shall be no herd in the stalls:
Yet will I rejoice in the Lord,
I will joy in the God of my salvation.

Do not forget the significance of these old-world pictures. Things are different today you say. Only with a superficial difference. At this moment God girds Cyrus though Cyrus does not know Him. The whole philosophy of the government of Jesus over crowned heads, and parliaments of the world, is contained in this Old Testament declaration, "Surely the wrath of men shall praise Thee: The residue of wrath shalt Thou gird upon Thee."

If you take all that away from me, then I am a lost man indeed, without any hope. My hope is not in Parliaments. My hope is in the fact that God reigns, and that His King holds the reins of government. I do not always understand the process; I get so weary of waiting. Oh, feverish heart of mine, be still! One day with Jehovah is as a thousand years, and a thousand years is as a day. Mount up to the mountains, and see the going of God; live in the spaciousness of eternity, and know this, that all hell, and all the devilishness of men, cannot finally defeat the enthroned King. He holds in His own right hand the government of the world. Though the process may seem long, and the conflict may be severe, Christ is reigning and ruling, this anointed and appointed King.

He is King also of merchant princes. Have you ever heard a business man talk about creating wealth? You cannot create wealth; you can amass it. God must ever create wealth. What is the ultimate, final wealth? Money? Surely not! The thing that He creates is wealth. Only that which comes out of life is wealth. A man may reap his fields of golden grain, and garner all the wheat, but he has not made wealth; he has reaped in order to make himself rich, which is quite another matter. It is the King Who creates wealth. If Christ hold in check the resources of His universe for one year and there is no harvest, then what is the use of money? He is King over all merchant princes, and can beggar them if He will.

Christ is King of science. Let every young Christian hear that word. Never be persuaded for one single moment either by the man who attacks Christianity, or by the man who defends it, into believing that science and religion are out of harmony with each other. Of course we need to be very careful to draw a distinction between scientific facts and scientific hypotheses; and to draw a distinction between Biblical declaration and human interpretation of its meaning. I stand for no man's interpretation of the Bible, not even my own, but I stand for the Bible. I am interested in every hypothesis of science, but I hold in reserve my judgment, and ask for the ascertained fact; and when I find the ascertained fact, and the simple statement of Scripture, I find that they are one. In all the scientific world Christ is King. All scientific discoveries and investigations in modern years have been made possible by the coming of Christ and the preaching of the gospel. Every discovery is a revelation. You speak to me of the discovery of some force. It was there before you discovered it. Why did we not discover it before? Because the hour had not arrived, and we were not ready for it. Take electricity for example; when the hour arrived the King discovered the secret to man, who forevermore says he discovered it. It was revealed to him rather than discovered by him, in answer to his endeavor. Ask, seek, knock, that is not merely for the Christian man when he is praying in his own inner chamber; it is the law of life. When a man asks, there is the answer; when he seeks, he finds; when he knocks at the door of entrance to hidden secrets, the King discovers them. In all the scientific realm it is by the coming of the Christ that men have been set free for investigation and equipped for investigation. Christ is King in that realm.

Once again, and I need not stay to enlarge upon this: He is today King over all spiritual leaders. Men who lead in spiritual matters, men who help other men to vision, are all men who have kissed the sceptre of Christ, and bent themselves before His Cross.

What is the present expression of this great fact of Christ's Kingship? We thank God for the measure in which His Kingship is acknowledged directly or indirectly in this and every land. We cannot, however, say that the Kingdom has come in England. Where then is its expression to be found? It ought to be found in His Church, for there He is crowned King, there His laws govern, there His commands are obeyed, there His interests form the supreme interest. No man can say that without shame. There is a measure in which it is all true; and the measure in which it is true is the measure in which the world knows something of the Kingship of Christ; but in how much greater degree it ought to be true than it is. I find it almost impossible to rejoice in the expression of the Kingdom when I think of the corporate Church of Christ, for very shame of our failure. Therein is the secret of the unrest and indifference and rebellion of the outside world. The rebellion is against the Church that fails to manifest the Kingship of Jesus. There is no rebellion against the Kingship of Jesus when truly manifest in the Church. We have not realized His Kingship in our corporate capacity. The

armies of the Captain of Salvation are engaged in internecine warfare when they ought to be confronting the foe. Yes, we must recognize that the measure in which the world knows anything of the glory of the Kingdom is the measure in which the Church has revealed it.

Whereas criticism of the Church's failure is of very little use save as it may inspire us to face individual realization; I turn to that matter in conclusion. The reign of Jesus can be expressed in individual life. If life is in His Kingdom, then it expresses His Kingliness. He desires that His Kingdom shall be manifest through His Church and through His people; and He has indicated the line of present expression and the value thereof. Salt is pungent, aseptic; potent for the prevention of the spread of corruption; and it gives goodness its opportunity, wherever it exists. Not only salt, but light; "Ye are the light of the world," said the King to His own disciples in His manifesto; and He explained His own figure. "A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a lamp, and put it under a bushel, but on the stand; and it shineth unto all that are in the house." The lamp is individual, local, personal; the illumination of private places by His own children; the city is the Church in its corporate capacity, flashing its light upon the darkness, illuminating the far distant places. These are the ideals of Jesus. The world can only know the King as it sees the Kingdom; and it can only see the Kingdom through those who are in the Kingdom.

I discard all larger applications, and close upon this note.

How far are we exhibiting to the world the meaning of the Kingship of Christ, and so revealing the King Himself? When we pray for the Kingdom, do we mean it? When we say, "Thy Kingdom come," if we simply utter words, allow them to pass our lips, we take the name of God in vain; and our blasphemy is more terrible than the blasphemy of the man in the slum. We can only pray that prayer out of our inner life when the Kingdom has come there. If we say, "Thy Kingdom come," while still the idol holds sway in our lives, and unholy, filthy things, which are an abomination to the King, are retained in our lives, then are we taking His name in vain. God have mercy upon us and deliver us from such blasphemy. Let every man, and woman, at this hour, by solemn affirmation and solemn oath, surrender to the King, saying: "Here, O King, is my life, rule over it, be Master in it, realize Thy purpose therein; take the territory and subdue it to Thy perfect will; and through it show, my children, the servant maids in my house, the men to whom I pay wages, all the people I meet, what is the meaning of Thy great Kingdom." We can be microcosms of the Kingdom, in which its laws, its purposes, and its beauties are seen. God help us so to be.

079 - Matthew 6:24 - Righteousness or Revenue

Righteousness or Revenue

Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

Matthew 6:24

These words occur in that part of the Manifesto of Jesus in which, after enunciating His laws for the government of human life, both in its human and Divine relationships, He declared the necessity for a super-earthly consciousness in dealing with all the things of the earth.

You will at once recognize that the paragraph which I read to you this evening, beginning with His charge, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust doth consume, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven," is a paragraph bringing those who listen to the King face to face with the truth upon which He perpetually insisted, that it is impossible to live the earthly life as it ought to be lived unless there is an abiding consciousness of things above and beyond the earth.

In the course of this particular instruction, He warned His disciples and all the subjects of His Kingdom against two perils, those of covetousness and of care; the two opposites, the desire to possess, and the anxiety lest not enough may be possessed to meet the bare necessities of life. His charge against covetousness closed with these words, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." They are emphatic, clear, and final, and constitute one of those brief declarations of which it is almost impossible to miss the meaning, unless we come to the text with prejudice, and desire to read into it things that are not in it, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

This evening I propose, first, an examination of these words of Jesus; and secondly, an immediate application of them.

First, then, let us take the statement itself, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Three words arrest our attention; the emphatic words around which all the rest are grouped, and to which the rest do but serve as connecting links to create the declaration. The three words are God, mammon, serve.

Because it is always necessary to get back to the simplest and most elemental things in our study of the words which fell from the lips of Jesus, I am going to ask you to take these words one by one, and examine them, before we consider the declaration. Let us for the moment put the whole declaration out of mind; we will come back to it, for the text is the message of the evening. In order

that we may return to the declaration and consider it, let us then look at the words God, mammon, serve. If I am to understand this declaration of Jesus, I must seek to find out what He meant by God, what He meant by mammon, and what He meant when He used the word serve.

This is a very large inquiry, and one to which for a perfect answer it would be necessary to take the whole scheme of His teaching as you find it in the gospel narratives. I suggest to you that we take another method in order to answer the inquiry, which I think will be perfectly fair. In the whole of this Manifesto what conception of God is manifest?

Mark carefully this thing. He neither argued for the existence of God, nor attempted to define the mystery of the Divine nature. So far as the teaching of Jesus is concerned, we are left without anything in the nature of definition. He came and exercised His ministry, taking God for granted, never occupying one single half-hour in defending the doctrine of His existence, or in defining the nature of His Being. Therefore, if I would know what He meant by God I must listen for the incidental things, and must pay attention to the underlying conceptions which manifest themselves through those incidental references. In order to find these, I read again this Manifesto of the King, going through it merely to take out of it the direct, immediate references to God which occurred in the course of its deliverance. With what result? The first reference is in the fifth chapter and the eighth verse, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." The next is in the ninth verse, "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the sons of God." The next are in the thirty-fourth and thirty-fifth verses of the same chapter, "Swear not at all; neither by the heaven, for it is the throne of God; nor by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet." In the forty-fifth verse, "That ye may be sons of your Father which is in heaven: for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust." In the forty-eighth verse, "Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." Then I read through chapter six and I find these references, "Your Father Who is in heaven," "Thy Father which seeth in secret shall recompense thee." "When thou prayest, enter into thine inner chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall recompense thee." "Thy Father Who seeth in secret shall recompense thee." "Behold the birds of the heaven... your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not ye of much more value than they?" "If God doth so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith." "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him." These are the references He made to God, never arguing for His existence, never defining His being, but, incidentally, referring to Him.

From these I discover a God of essential purity, the pure in heart shall see Him; a God Who is a God of peace, the peacemakers are His children; a God Who is a God of authority, supremacy, power; heaven is His throne, the earth His footstool; a God Who governs in all things in the material world, and is in that sense a God of providence, making His sun to shine, sending His rain; a God of perfection, "as your heavenly Father is perfect"; a God rewarding men, recompensing men in the sense in which the great word appears in Hebrews, "He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that seek after Him"; a God of infinite resources, caring for the birds, clothing the flowers, giving food and raiment to all who put their trust in Him. This is not exhaustive, it is only suggestive. If we let the sublime and glorious thought of God, which evidently filled the soul of Jesus, break upon our consciousness as the result of these incidental allusions, we shall see what He meant when He said "God."

Turn to the next word, mammon. The word represents wealth, material possessions not necessarily in particular quantity, but the fact of them, material things. The only place in which the word occurs in the New Testament is here in the Manifesto, and once when Christ, speaking of material wealth, said, "Make to yourselves friends by means of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when it"—the mammon—"shall fail, they"—the friends—"may receive you into the eternal habitations." What then is mammon? What is mammon according to the conception of Jesus? Something about which men should never be anxious. Something which God knows men must have. Something which God promises He will add in the proper measure and proportion to men according to their need, "Seek ye first His Kingdom, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." Something which a man may so use as to transmute it into infinite possession in the land of life which lies beyond. The word suggests material possessions, nothing inherently evil, and nothing necessarily improper.

I turn to the third word, served, which need not occupy us above one minute to understand. To serve as does a slave, for the word is one that suggests bond slavery. Its root suggestion is, to be bound by. The interrelated word in the text is master. "No man can serve two masters." "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." It is a word which suggests the supremacy of another; the idea is that of being mastered, and of yielding supreme obedience.

My own conviction is that my task is now really accomplished, that every man and woman can come to this simple statement and see its true impact and discover its true meaning, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

This is not a comparison of equal forces in opposition to each other. Jesus is not putting God on that side and mammon on the other as necessarily antagonistic. Had this text said, Ye cannot serve God and the devil, it would have been quite another thing. I am not saying that that is not true, but that is not the text. The underlying thought, the suggestiveness, the philosophy of the text is not the

same as it would be under such circumstances. Jesus is not putting God and mammon necessarily into opposition. Everything that mammon connotes is in the Kingdom of God. It has its place in the fulfilment of His purpose. He knows man's need of material things. He will add to man the things he needs. Mammon can be the means to the highest ends. It is possible for man by means of mammon to make friends who will receive him into age-abiding habitations. There is nothing inherently evil in it. The tragedy suggested is not that of man standing between two forces that are forever in opposition, choosing which he will serve. Mammon is simply non-moral. Lay your hand upon a coin, I care not what the coin, a sovereign or a copper, and think with me. That coin is non-moral. There is no inherent evil in it. There is no inherent good in it. The questions of right and wrong lie wholly in the spiritual nature of man, and mammon is affected thereby. You can take that coin and put it to such base uses that it will damn you. You can take that coin and put it to such good uses that it will make you richer forever and ever.

Christ does suggest two possibilities which are in opposition. The one, that man can serve mammon. The other, that he can serve God. What is it to serve God? To be His bondsman, yielding all to His absolute supremacy. The abandonment of everything to which the name of God connotes, purity, peace, and all those other facts of which we spoke. That is a possibility for every man and nation. There is the other possibility, to serve mammon. To be the bondsman of material possessions, and every poor man can be that; to yield wholly to the sway of the things which are only material; the abandonment of the life to husks. Jesus declared the possibilities to be mutually exclusive. To serve God and be His bondsman. To serve mammon and be its bondsman. To serve God is to command mammon, not to serve it. To be wholly yielded to God is to be the master of all material things, not to be bound in slavery thereto. To state the case from the other side. To serve mammon—to live saying only, What shall I eat, what shall I drink, wherewithal shall I be clothed, and how shall I possess these things, is to dethrone God. "Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

Take two illustrations. First, an individual one. Here is a man standing at the parting of the ways, facing a moral crisis. He knows perfectly well that two ways are stretching out from the point where he stands. He knows perfectly well that he is at a moral crisis in his life. What are these two ways? There is the way of temporal advantage, and there is the way of eternal advantage. These things are not always, necessarily, forever antagonistic to each other, but the hour comes in which they are in opposition. Which will the man do? That is the hour of crisis. We leave him at that point.

Take another illustration, a national one. The hour has come in the history of a nation when two ways lie out before her; one is the way of righteousness. Let us abbreviate the word and make its impact greater, rightness. Let us further abbreviate the word, the way of right. What is the other way? The way of revenue. These two things are not altogether, always antagonistic. They are not necessarily in conflict. There is a way of revenue which is the way of righteousness. There is a way of righteousness which is the way of revenue. But the hour comes in the history of a nation when these two are in opposition. There is the crisis. That is an hour of destiny for the nation because it is the hour of crisis.

Take your two illustrations again and let me say a second thing. We have seen the crisis, mark the choices. I see a man standing at a moral crisis, at a place where two ways meet, the way of temporal advantage and the other way of eternal advantage. I say to that man, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Which will you serve? I say to the nation, as the nation stands at the parting of the ways, when the hour has come that she must decide between righteousness and revenue, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Which will you serve?

I go back to the individual in the place of crisis, in the place of choice, and I now look for the consummation. He says, "I will seek first the Kingdom of God." Then all the things which are necessary to him will be added unto him. In that hour, when he has made God supreme, he has come to mastery over mammon.

I go back to the nation and watch her as she makes her choice. I inquire what the consummation will be. I see the nation decide that "righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people," and make her choice to do right at all costs, and I see that nation never lacking the revenue necessary for the maintenance of her moral integrity and abiding strength. "All these things shall be added unto you."

You will notice there are no neutral tints in this sermon. I stand here tonight first, always first, so help me God, as a minister of Jesus Christ, but I stand here as an Englishman. It is time that we have done with neutral tints, and that we come back again to the clear dividing lines of Jesus Christ. "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." You say, Is there not such a thing as policy? The Church has nothing to do with it. The Church of God must stand in every hour of crisis by the side of the individual man, in the presence of the nation, insisting upon the hard, clear, sharp, beneficent dividing lines which the Christ of God creates; to the right or to the left, life or death, light or darkness, heaven or hell, for the man or for the nation. "Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

What is the application? You will find in the pews a pamphlet scattered broadcast. My only regret is that I was unable to secure enough to be sure that every man and woman would go home with that pamphlet in their hands at the close of this service. I want those of you who are interested and can lay hands upon one to take it home and read it. That is the second part of my sermon. I cannot pause to read it, neither is it necessary that I should. It is from the pen of a man for whom we all thank God, Mr. Arnold Foster, one of our missionaries in China.

Tomorrow a conference will meet in Shanghai. How many of us know of it? Does the Christian Church in England know of it? I have seen some incidental references to it, some few things said concerning it in the religious press. I have seen more in what men call the secular press than in the religious. The Church of God is asleep about this matter. What was the genesis of that Conference? The answer is in the pamphlet on pages five and six. There Mr. Arnold Foster tells us that this Conference is the outcome of an approach made by the United States Government. What is the constitution of the Conference? Twelve nations are to be represented, China, Japan, Siam, Persia, Russia, Germany, France, Great Britain, Italy, Holland, Portugal and the United States of America. For what are they gathering in Shanghai? The answer is given in the pamphlet. To consider, "The character of the opium habit as a habit. The results of opium on the Chinese as a nation. The volume of the trade, its sources of supply, and the rights of the traders." That is very technical. I do not profess to understand diplomacy or policy. All these things are very necessary I suppose. It is necessary that our Government should send these commissioners. I am profoundly thankful she has consented to do so and that they have gone.

Nevertheless, there is a sense in which the whole thing is a farce. We know perfectly well what the opium habit has done for China. We know perfectly well that the blame and shame is on us. If there were such a thing as a national conscience that was worth anything, we should blush to remember that America had to ask us if we would not consider this problem.

Well, the Conference is to meet. Its object is thus stated, "Suggestions of measures which the respective governments may adopt for the gradual suppression of opium cultivation, traffic, and use within the Eastern possessions, thus assisting China in her purpose of eradicating the evil from the Empire." I quote from the communication sent out to diplomatic agents by the United States State Department.

England has twice declared, through her elected representatives in Parliament assembled, that the opium traffic is "morally indefensible." Since doing so, within the last two years, the Government has steadily resisted China's own efforts to rid herself of it. It is said that we must proceed slowly, that there is the need of policy. I know nothing about policy. I face the facts. I stand in the presence of China's undoing, and I can hardly speak of this thing as I feel it. I know perfectly well that some people will say, the preacher was in danger of getting excited. I am terribly in danger of it. I can hardly possess my soul. Where attempts have been made in certain quarters, during the last two years by China's government, to put an end to this traffic, our Government, by its agents and representatives, has declared that it cannot be done because of existing treaty rights, and that there must be a gradual ending of the thing. That is where we are.

This is not a question of politics, party politics. By unanimous vote, not merely of men sitting on one side of the House, but of the whole Assembly, England has said through her elected representatives, this thing is morally indefensible: but we are halting. Why? There is only one word. Revenue! India is perpetually quoted if we urge haste. Make your calculations of what it would mean to end the traffic forthwith, and then remember that the amount of money necessary for the doing of it, costly though it would be, falling upon this nation by way of taxation, would not begin to compare with the two hundred and fifty millions spent on the Boer war, and the forty millions we have added to our annual expenditure as the result of it. I am not dealing with the Boer war. It may have been absolutely necessary. It may have been a piece of devilry. I do not know or care anything about that now. The fact is that for purposes of wrong or right we spent that money. Here is a great nation crippled, blighted by a traffic we have forced upon her, and we are now standing at the bar of an awakening world conscience. The world is watching this conflict. The representatives of these other nations, however we may question it or wonder about it, will be principally interested to see what Great Britain suggests or is prepared to do. What a chance we have, not wholly to redeem the past—that we can never do—but to set ourselves right with China. We profess an interest in China. Here is our opportunity. What a chance to show the awakening world conscience that we prefer righteousness to revenue.

Has Christ anything to say to us, to England? Who am I? I am but a voice crying in the wilderness. How can I speak to England, or to governments? I may not be able to do so, but I must speak as I can. I say here tonight solemnly in the name of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the word of Christ to this Government and to this nation at this moment is no other than this, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." If we serve God we shall prefer righteousness to revenue. If we serve mammon, we shall put revenue before righteousness. If we do that, then it would be for the benefit of the world and all the coming ages that we should cease to talk about God. It is this attempt to persuade ourselves that we can still be Christian and worship God, while we persist in the wrong and shameful thing for the sake of revenue, that is harming the Kingdom of God, and flinging a blight o'er all the earth.

The issue is clear cut and definite. To serve God is to co-operate with Him, and to have done at all costs with the thing that is blighting another people. To serve mammon is eventually to be destroyed by God.

We need to be saved from our national pride, from this actual devilish conviction that neither God nor man can harm us. Already the judgment of the moth and rotteness—to use the language of one of the old Hebrew prophets—is upon us. Already, everywhere there are evidences of weakness. I say again, I have said it in other connections, our safety is not in the two-power standard. I am tired of the monotony of the phrase. Our safety is not in the new territorial army. If we do wrong persistently, we are doomed as the

nations of the past have been.

Now is the hour of the Church. She should be gathering everywhere in assembly for prayer and humiliation, and insistence upon this great truth. Half the resolutions passed in our denominational assemblies and Free Church Council Federations are of little importance in the light of this. What we need is to come to the knowledge of the fact that we stand nationally at the parting of the ways.

When I have said all, I have not said half that should be said. When I have said all, the last thing and the best thing is that I should get down, and that you should get down before God, taking the sin of our nation into our own hearts. We make our boast that we are of Great Britain. Her shame is ours also. Let us get down before Him in humiliation. Let us cry to Him that He will at this moment guide, direct, and deliver us from this shame, to the glory of His name.

080 - Matthew 7:28-29 - The Authority of Jesus

The Authority of Jesus

And it came to pass, when Jesus ended these words, the multitudes were astonished at His teaching: for He taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.

Matthew 7:28-29

These words occur at the close of the manifesto of the King. They chronicle for us the fact of the impression produced upon multitudes who had been listening to His teaching of His followers. That which supremely arrested their attention was the note of authority. This becomes the more striking in view of the contrast suggested by the evangelist as he records the fact: "The multitudes were astonished at His teaching: for He taught them as having authority, and not as their scribes." Now, as a matter of fact, the most prominent note in the teaching of the scribes was that of authority. As revealed to us in the life of Jesus, these men were argumentative, dogmatic, critical, ready to ostracize and excommunicate all who did not receive their teaching. The people regarded them as the official interpreters of the law of Moses and the traditions of the fathers.

Yet, when the gathered multitudes had listened to Jesus unfolding the law of His Kingdom to His disciples, when they had heard Him pass from the winsome tenderness of the opening beatitudes to the solemn severity of the closing warnings, they were astonished at His authority as distinguished from that of their own teachers.

What, then, was the authority of the scribe? It was interpretative, dogmatic, official. None of these words is necessarily indicative of wrong condition. Interpretation is of infinite value; dogmatism has its place, and an official position is not necessarily false. To this kind of authority the people were perfectly accustomed, but having listened to Jesus, they said He taught as having authority, and yet they declared that it was not as their scribes.

His was not the authority of interpretation, although He was the great Interpreter. Neither was it that of dogmatic statement, although He taught without reference to other authorities and without apology. Neither was the sense of authority created in the mind of those who listened that of one who had a right to be heard because of some official position.

It was rather that of the self-evident truth of His teaching combined with a sense of His personality resulting therefrom. To put this in other words, men listened, and then said, "That is true." As they listened, moreover, they were conscious that this man was speaking not in the name of another. He was not exercising the authority of words already spoken. His was the authority of origination, of Kingship, of supremacy, the thrilling, awe-inspiring authority of the final voice.

We are not surprised to read the statement which immediately follows our text: "And when He was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him." Authoritative speech is always attractive, because man everywhere is conscious of his need in this respect. The authority may be false, but nevertheless it is attractive. Dogmatism always draws. It has been demonstrated that a man may erect a great organization upon the basis of a lie if only he will utter it with authoritative emphasis. We have no right to be angry with people who follow a false authority, for it must be remembered that the desire for government is one of the essentials of human personality. Angry with the false leader we may be, but pity should fill our hearts for those who are deceived. The great cleavage in the Christian Church between Romanism and Protestantism has been created, not by a difference as to the need for authority, but concerning its true seat. The watchword of the Romanist is the authority of the Church. The watchword of the Protestant has been, and I pray it may remain so, the authority of the Scriptures. Man instinctively seeks for authority. This is especially true in the realm of spiritual things, in those matters which affect creed, and conduct, and character. Therefore it is not surprising that the authoritative note in the teachings of Jesus drew the multitudes after Him. What the issues of their following were is not the question under consideration. We must never forget that the element of will enters largely and finally into the question of issue. My ultimate relation is determined not by what is said to me, but by what I answer. For example, the claim of the Bishop of Rome to authority in matters of Christian doctrine does not constitute authority for me. I deny the claim, and therefore am not bound by it. If I am able to establish

the claim that the authority of Christ is based on truth, even then how it affects any of us will depend upon one's answer. We may keep His sayings and so build upon the rock, or we may refuse them and erect the superstructure of character upon sand. In this lies the awful majesty of human life. The supreme and overwhelming dignity of human personality is that of will. The majority of the multitudes who were attracted by Hisority did not crown Him.

This whole question is a most vital one. I do not desire to discuss it academically, but rather in its living relation to those choices by which character is built.

Thank God, we are emancipated very largely from the intervention of men in the realm of conscience, but we remain profoundly conscious of the need of authority. For the sake of illustration let me speak personally. I cannot allow any man to decide for me what line of action I am to pursue, or what is to be the creed upon which my life is based; yet I do need someone to direct me, someone who shall tell me what for me is really right or wrong. In hours when the consciousness of life's strength is strong upon us we imagine that we are masters of our own thinking, and are free to do exactly as we please. Sooner or later, however, there comes to every soul the crisis when the need is keenly felt for a voice of authority, for one who will lead us into the highest, and the best, and the noblest. In order to the perfecting of life we need guidance in the finer decisions and subtler choices of the will. Any authority, to be finally satisfactory, must satisfy the reason and move the heart, and so energize the will. It is only such authority that will enable us to make our decisions with a sense of perfect rest. The message I bring you is that this need is profoundly important and is met only by the One of Whom the multitudes of olden days declared that "He taught... as having authority." I affirm, therefore, at once, and shall attempt to prove my affirmation by argument and illustration, that there is but one voice which can perfectly answer the clamant cry of our souls. There is but one Lord and Master to Whom we may absolutely submit ourselves, and know that in such submission we tread the pathway leading to the highest realization of the possibilities of our own personality, and that one is Jesus.

So wide is the field of illustration that it will be better for us to confine ourselves to one portion of survey. Therefore I shall draw my illustrations from that Manifesto, the uttering of which created the sense of authority in the minds of those who heard it. We shall follow two lines: first, that of the consideration of the authority of Jesus, and, secondly, that of our relationship thereto.

At first it might seem as though something in the manner of Jesus impressed the crowds with His authority. While admitting that almost certainly there were dignity and authority in the very way in which He spoke, there can be no doubt that this manner was associated in the closest sense with the matter of His speech. It is almost impossible to dissociate these two things in studying His Manifesto. To minimize the value of the teaching is to rob the personality of its dignity. On the other hand, to be convinced of the truth of the teaching is at the same moment to realize the Kingliness of the One Who speaks. We find ourselves constantly contemplating the Teacher as we listen to His teaching. As His words fasten upon my conscience, sometimes scorching, sometimes soothing, I find myself irresistibly appreciating the Kingliness of the Person. Each utterance of His convinces my reason, carries my heart, constrains my will, and I stand in the presence of the one and only royalty, the King of men. The manner and matter alike appeal. The "how" is born of the "what." The manner is created by the matter, and thus the great sense of Mastership breaks upon the soul. In attempting to see the Person through the teaching, nothing is further from my desire than to indulge in any merely imaginative speculation. I do not propose to attempt an ideal portrait of Jesus, but only to discover Him as He is revealed through His teaching. Taking for granted your familiarity with the general scheme of the Manifesto, I submit that it reveals One Who speaks with the authority of perfect knowledge, of pure emotion, of poised volition. His perfect knowledge is manifested in His clear conception concerning God, concerning man, and concerning their interrelationship. I do not mean to say that in this Manifesto final knowledge concerning God is given to us. Such knowledge is not possible to man. My argument is rather that the conceptions of God which underlie appeal to the deepest in man are absolutely true. As the unfolding of law proceeds, God is revealed to the mind as being essentially supreme, relatively interested, and actively reigning. There is no discussion by this Teacher as to the difference or agreement between the doctrines of the transcendence or immanence of God. He speaks familiarly rather than argumentatively. In the appeal it makes to the deepest in us every reference indicates His perfect knowledge. "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God," and in that word as in a flash of light I find that this Teacher places God in the position of absolute and final supremacy. "Be not anxious," "your... Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." In that sentence, and in the paragraph of teaching connected with it, I learn His estimate of God's interest in all things which He has made. "Seek ye first His Kingdom... and all these things shall be added unto you." And in these words I discover His declaration of the active government of human affairs by God. Thus, listening to His teaching concerning God, I am constrained to say, "He speaks truth." Every view which He sets before me carries conviction to my reason, sways my heart, and woos my will into submission. According to Him, God is supreme, is interested, and reigns.

And yet again, while convinced that this man knows God, I ask, "Does He know man?" And I listen for His estimate of human life. First of all, I discover that He thinks of man as a being in whom the spiritual is supreme. According to Him, the measurements of life are not those of time but of eternity. The deepest consciousness of human nature is not that of the senses but that of the spirit. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth,... but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven." According to these words, man is able to possess things in the infinite life that lies beyond the present. Moreover, Jesus' view of man is that it is his nature to be anxious or to seek. Jesus recognizes the restlessness which is the inspiration of endeavor. No word of His treats this as wrong in itself. He corrects the method of its activity. There are things about which man should not be anxious. There are matters in which he

may seek. Jesus deprecates the turning of this power to the issue of acquiring that which is sordid and material, and urges that it be exercised toward the realization of all the highest and abiding things. Moreover, He is evidently intimately acquainted with all the facts of human nature. Every beatitude suggests a common human capacity, and as we hear them falling from His lips we know that they make their appeal to the facts and forces which are part of our nature. Thus, by way of His teaching, I find myself in the presence of One who knows God and man.

Moreover, the Manifesto reveals to me His intimate knowledge of the true lines of relationship: the relationship of man to God, the relation of man to man, the relation of the things of time and sense to those of eternity and the spiritual world. Here is a Teacher Who is not an ascetic withdrawing Himself from the thousand and one matters which I must touch every day, but One Who understands me in all these, even to eating and raiment; One, moreover, Who understands the passion of my life for possession, and Who comes into the midst of everything with such light as enables me to see clearly all relationships. Thus I have found through this teaching a Person Whose knowledge is perfect—knowledge of God, of myself, and of all the interests of my life.

But this Teacher is more than One of intellectual accuracy. He is also a Man of pure emotions. His sense of justice is of the keenest. His words are characterized by a fine scorn of imperfection, and yet they thrill with the tone of delicate and exquisite sympathy. He is not a mere man of tears, maudlin in His pity, and unable to help me. Neither is He merely an iron-handed administrator. He is both. The same lips said, "He that looketh on sin with desire hath committed it," and "Your Father knoweth." No tone of mine can give full expression to either of the things in these words. The first scorches and burns. The second has in it the infinite music of the love of God.

And yet once more, through this Manifesto, I discover a Person of perfectly poised volition. For Him it is evident there is one center for all life, and that is the throne of God. His conception of life in all its varied capacities and responsibilities is that it must maintain its relation to that throne. All His decisions are regulated by that central passion of His being.

"Having authority." And it is the authority of One who knows God, knows me, and knows the lines of relationship. It is the authority of pure emotion. I cannot fear and dread Him, though His sense of justice be of the keenest, though His scorn of imperfection be of the finest, for both are atmosphered in a sympathy which is exquisite in its tenderness. It is the authority of a will perfectly poised in the good, and perfect, and acceptable will of God. Standing in imagination among the multitudes of old, and listening to Him, I am constrained to say, "I have found my King."

And yet, again, let us think of the teaching, for it was this which led to the Person. As we attempt to review in general outline that teaching, let us ask ourselves the simple question, Are these things so? A survey of the Manifesto reveals certain estimates of Jesus. He first of all declares that character is supreme. That is the meaning of the opening of this discourse. He pronounces no blessing on having or doing, but all on being. This is certainly startling and remarkable. Men have never come into perfect agreement with this view—at least, in their active life. We still say, "Blessed is the man who has" money, property, position. We still say, "Blessed is the man who does." Jesus says, "Blessed is the man who is." According to His estimate, the great man is the man of character rather than the man of property or of activity. Now, whether in active life we yield to this conception or not, I affirm, without fear of contradiction, that we are all convinced that the estimate is true, that the great man is the one who is pure and strong and tender rather than the one who owns anything or even everything. In the presence of that fundamental estimate of the King the heart is convinced.

To take another emphasis, having declared the supremacy of character, Christ proceeded to declare to the men who by yielding to Him had accepted his view of the supremacy of character and of its nature, "Ye are the salt of the earth.... Ye are the light of the world." In these words He affirmed the importance of influence, and revealed His conception of the kind of influence which the world most needs. Salt is pungent and antiseptic, and not always pleasant in the vicinity of a wound, but it saves, it heals, it blesses. Light flashes and flames, and is not always welcome to the man hiding in darkness, but it will help him to find his way out if he desires to come.

Take another emphasis, that on the necessity of law, concerning which He said, "I came not to destroy, but to fulfill." Do any of us think that He was wrong in this? I will not stay to argue it. Every man's deepest conscience assents to His wisdom. Or, again, mark another emphasis, that which He laid on the matter of the true motive of righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. The righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees consisted in doing right in order to be well thought of by their fellow men. The motive was bad, as it is not strong enough to ensure righteousness under all circumstances. The righteousness which exceeds is that which acts in response to the throne of God and for the glory of God. When I was a boy I remember writing in my copybook, "Honesty is the best policy." No one questions the truth of that, but the man who is honest only because it is the best policy is at heart a rogue. Again we are compelled to consent to His view as to the motive of righteousness.

Further, He recognizes that there is a place in human life for anxiety, and the recognition appeals to me. It is useless to tell me not to be anxious, that it is wrong to think, and plan, and arrange. The capacity for these things is in my very nature. This King does not forbid them, but brings them into highest use. He says in effect, "Take the capacity, which is restlessness to achieve, and use it, not

finally to procure things which pass and perish, however necessary they may be, but rather to put the fire and passion of it into the business of seeking the Kingdom of God." Thus He places anxiety in its right relation to infinite things.

Or to refer again to things already dealt with, His emphasis on the care of God and the true responsibility of man appeals to the deepest within us.

Taking a still more general view of all, we find that this Teacher has a twofold intention. He is seeking by His enunciation of law to realize the glory of God, and this by securing the good of men. Now let us pause a moment and earnestly ask ourselves certain simple questions. Are these conceptions true? Has He said one false thing? Where do we differ from His positions? Where does our criticism commence?

I think I can answer the questions. We begin to criticize by saying, "It is too high. It cannot be obeyed." And at this point I will not argue. All I ask at the moment is, Is it high? Are we prepared to grant this?

Many years ago a man in Birmingham said to me, "My quarrel with your Christ is that He is not practical." And I said, "Give me an illustration." He replied, "Confucius said to his followers, 'Be just to your enemies.' Christ said, 'Love your enemies.' Confucius is practical. I can be just to my enemy, but I cannot love him." That was a criticism honest and straightforward. I said to my friend, "But suppose you could be brought to love your enemy, what then?" He answered, "Then you would solve all the problems of human nature." That is all I ask. Is this ideal high? Is it noble? Does it at least command your admiration? Do you recognize its tone of authority? The multitude of Jesus' own day passed from the mountain impressed with the authority of His teaching. "He taught as having authority, and not as their scribes." The scribes dogmatically interpret authority, but Jesus has authority.

Then it would seem as though there were no more for the preacher to say. The issue is so evident. Yet here begins his most solemn and tremendous work. What are we going to do? There is really only one thing to do, and that is to be true to conviction. There is only one honest attitude in the presence of established authority, and that is obedience. And yet, here is the realm of uncertainty. The relation between conviction and issue is dependent upon that most awe-inspiring power of human personality, the power of choice.

Therefore, in conclusion, let me say three things. First, a word concerning the logical relation between conviction and conduct. That may be expressed in one word—submission. If there is authority in this teaching of Jesus, when the logical issue is that I submit. Submission may be explained simply as the crowning of the Person and consequent obedience to His teaching. But there is a possible alternative. This also may be stated in one word—rebellion. Rebellion against the truth of which the intellect is convinced—that, namely, of the authority of His teaching and the consequent supremacy of the Teacher—must mean submission to the base, surrender to the low, which, in turn, means ultimate degradation. Mark the fact carefully. This high truth stands before you, claiming the consent of your inner consciousness. That you have granted. You have said, "Yes, that is the ideal, that is the Teacher." Now, if, after having given such intellectual consent, you turn your back on Him and choose to disobey His teaching, by such action you submit yourself to that which is low, to that which is a lie, to that which will inevitably degrade. That is the appalling alternative. If we could but see this hour as God sees it, then we should see how, within the next few minutes, crowds of men and women, yea, all of us, will pass into close personal contact with the Teacher, and in that contact shall crown Him, and so find our feet set upon the highway which leads to the realization of life at its best; or, rejecting Him, shall hand over our lives with all their capacities to the low, the mean, the ignoble. There is no middle course for anyone who has stood in the presence of the King.

Let us follow this thought of the issue a little further. What follows submission? Inevitable conformity to the likeness of that to which we submit. Obey the truth and the truth will make you free. Crown the high ideal and it will transform you into its own nature. What is that? Heaven. Where? Here, and forever. On the other hand, rebel against conviction, deliberately refuse to crown the Christ, decline to submit to the true. What then? Instead of conformity, disparity, difference. Instead of growing likeness to Him, increasing dissimilarity, drifting further and further from truth, and what is that? Hell. Where? Here, and forever. You make your own choice. God grant you may choose aright.

A final word. Someone in this audience is saying, "I will submit." Such decision immediately brings the one making it into a new consciousness of sin and failure, a consciousness more profound and overwhelming than it has ever been before. Consent to the truth of what Jesus utters and abandonment to its claims is always followed by a keen sense of past sin and present inability. I have often said, and sometimes have been misunderstood, that having been brought up in a godly home, and saved thereby from many of the vulgar forms of sin into which others who have lacked my privilege have fallen, I never trembled in the presence of Mount Sinai. I always feel the profoundest sympathy with the young man who looked into the face of Jesus, and said, "All these things have I kept from my youth up." But while the majestic mountain of the ancient law never filled me with trembling, when I came to the clear shining of the ethic of Jesus, and stood in the presence of the rare and radiant loveliness of His perfect humanity, then I cried, "I am unclean, a sinner before God." Such is the experience of any soul honestly submitting to Him. And more, sin is not merely a pollution, it is a paralysis. I am not only defiled, but weakened. It is not merely, and not principally, that I cannot wash out the stain; it is that "when I would do good, evil is present with me" as a poison, as a disability. In the presence of these things, what are we to

do? The acceptance of the ideal of truth never enables a man to realize it in experience.

Thank God, when the King had ended His Manifesto He had not finished His work. He went forward until He hung on the cross, and in the stupendous and unfathomable mystery of that darkness bore our sins in His body on the tree. Yet more, He returned from among the dead, victorious over all the forces which are against us, and having won out of death a life which He communicates to all such as put their trust in Him.

Now, as I come to the wicket gate to enter the Kingdom in obedience to the call of the King's authoritative voice, He first gives me pardon for my sin upon the basis of infinite justice, but He gives me infinitely more. He gives me His own life as the dynamic which shall work to the realization of His ideal. Trust Him as the Saviour, crown Him as the King, and you will find, not only the quiet rest of the reign of truth, but the infinite ability of the communication of power.

081 - Matthew 8:9 - Submission and Responsibility

Submission and Responsibility

I also am a man under authority, having under myself soldiers: and I say to this one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh.

Matthew 8:9

All the scenes of New Testament history lie in the atmosphere of Roman government. Its earliest stories are connected with the decree that went forth from Caesar Augustus that the world should be taxed. The last definitely historical picture that it presents is that of a notable prisoner, at large in his own house in the imperial city. As we read we grow familiar with Roman armies, with cohorts, legions, and bands; with captains, centurions, and soldiers. We meet with seven centurions. The first one appears in the passage from which my text is taken. He came to Jesus about his servant who was sick; the next one we see at the close of the Gospel narrative, in charge of the crucifixion of Christ; then in the book of Acts we find Cornelius, a devout man, the first Gentile believer to be baptized by the Hebrew apostle; then a centurion placing bonds upon Paul, and, as Paul objects, immediately seeking the advice of his superior officer; then two centurions taking Paul to Felix and protecting him from the threatened hostility of the crowd; then one who took charge of Paul and gave him great indulgence by the direction of Felix; until we come to the last, Julius, who was Paul's custodian on his voyage, and who became interested in Paul, so much so that he saved him from death at the hands of the soldiers in the hour of threatened shipwreck. In all these centurions there is something to admire; in some of them much to admire; and in one of them at least everything to admire. The three first mentioned stand out upon the page of the New Testament, and are remarkable in many ways. This one came to seek the aid of Christ for his slave, and uttered the remarkable words of my text. At the crucifixion another centurion watched the dying of the Man of Nazareth, and so keen and accurate was his observation that he said, "Truly this was the Son of God." Of Cornelius the highest things are written.

How is this excellence to be accounted for? If I were to declare that the military system accounted for it, I am inclined at once to say that would be too broad a statement, yet there is a sense in which it is true. I want to discover that sense, and to make it the method of my appeal to the young manhood of this congregation, to whom this message is to be particularly delivered. The end of the life of the soldier is not in view. I am not dealing with that. Whether that end be war, or whether it be that for which war is waged, I am not discussing that question at all at the present moment. It may be that if I were I should arouse the hostility of some of you, or, rather, I should not find you in perfect agreement with my own standpoint. I think there is a wonderful amount of insight in words which occur in The Comments of Bagshot, "There is no peace at any price party. There are only various parties which disapprove of each other's wars." I was recently reminded that so eminent a theologian as the late Dr. Dale once said, "I am for peace at any price, even at the price of war if necessary." I am not discussing that. I am attempting to bring you to a consideration, not of the end of the soldier's life, whether that end be war, or the reason for which war is waged; but of the method of the soldier's life. In understanding that method we shall discover why it is that these men of the old Roman armies had an excellence that attracts us.

That method is declared clearly and simply and inclusively in the words that the centurion uttered to Jesus, "I also am a man under authority, having under myself soldiers." That is a philosophy of life. I wonder if he had ever said that before. I think not. I am inclined to think that it was a sudden expression of a subconscious philosophy. Remember, while he spoke in the first person singular, and while the philosophy was stated in the terms of experience and not in the terms of theory, this declaration was drawn from him by what he saw in Jesus. With an accuracy that should make us very thankful, the revisers have restored to the text a little word omitted in the Authorized Version, "also." You can drop the word "also" and you still have the philosophy, you still have the experience. "I am a man under authority, having under myself soldiers." That is my whole text, and yet it is not my whole text. It is the "also" that attracted me to the text. It is the supreme word. The centurion implied that Christ was a Man under authority and that He had those under Him. He looked at Christ and he saw in Him the fulfilment of the highest ideal of life as He knew it, and so Christ compelled from him the confession of the level upon which he was living his own life, the confession which revealed the philosophy of his life, which I think he had never formulated before.

I shall ask you, first of all, to consider this philosophy of life, "I am a man under authority," that is submission: "having under myself soldiers"; that is responsibility. I am a man under authority: I have soldiers under me. I know how to bend the knee to a throne: I am able, to exercise the power of a throne. I have kissed a scepter: I sway a scepter. I am responsible to a throne: I therefore am able to be responsible for those who are beneath me. I am a man under authority, submission. I have soldiers under me, responsibility. That is the highest philosophy of life that can be stated for a young man.

Let us attempt to see a little more clearly what it really means. So far, then, as the method of the life of the centurion is concerned, I borrow the career of such a one as the ideal for young men. First consider the view of life suggested, and then see how the Christian life realizes that ideal at its highest and best.

What is this view of life suggested? This man first said, "I am a man under authority." To illuminate this I will take three simple prepositions: "to," "of," "for." "I am... under authority." That is submission to, submission of, and submission for.

Submission to. The Roman soldier was submitted to the cause of the Roman Empire, but for the Roman soldier the cause of the Roman Empire was personified in the emperor. The Roman soldier was under authority, and so was submitted to a cause personified in a person. You need not stay with the Roman soldier. It is true all through the ages. For king and country is the motto of the soldier today. The king is the personification to the soldier of the larger purpose and issue. The soldier is submitted to the cause of his country as it is personified for him in the king.

Submission of. The submission means submission of the central will. Upon enlisting in the army of the emperor the Roman soldier surrendered his will, his property, his relations. From the moment when he enlisted he had no will of his own, no possession of his own, no property of any kind. He could not hold property. Neither could he speak of his relations as any longer being his. He gave up everything. The soldier submitted to a central authority has submitted his will and everything else. His time, his habit of dress, his choice of foods, and all his ability are handed over.

Submission for. The Roman soldier was submitted for fitting himself for his work. That meant drill. He was submitted also for his work. That meant war.

The centurion was submitted to the service of his country personified in a sovereign; he had made submission of his will and of all he had: he had submitted for the purpose of his own perfecting, for the accomplishment of the work to which he was called.

Turn to the other side of this: responsibility, "having under myself soldiers." I want you very patiently to follow me as I say that the responsibility of the centurion was connected intimately with his submission. He was responsible for the soldiers under him, to the state to which he himself was submitted. He must identify himself with them. He must exert an influence upon them. He must insist upon certain things in their lives. All this for the sake of the state. The state looked to him, held him responsible, for all those who were placed under him, that he should recommend it, utter its requirements, and insist upon the realization of its purpose. So there was the most intimate connection between the soldier's submission and his responsibility. "I also am a man under authority, having under myself soldiers." The first was an upward look to the throne to which he bent; the second was a downward look to the territory over which he reigned. The upward look was in order that he might realize the territory over which he reigned. The downward look was in order that he might satisfy the throne under which he served. In order that we may understand this great philosophy of life, I am more anxious that we should realize the connection between these two things than that we should see either in isolation. This is not a picture of the two sides of a man's nature, the one side subservient to authority, and the other getting satisfaction out of the fact that he was able to make others bend the knee to him. Here is a man who says, For seven years I have been serving a master, now it is my turn. I am going to make someone else serve me! Or here is a man who says, In a certain department of my life I have obeyed; now I am going to compensate myself for the irksomeness of that by making someone else obey me. That is not the picture presented by these words. Let us be careful to draw the distinction. The unifying conception of life to the centurion was the Roman Empire. He said, I am under the empire and of the empire. I submit to its authority and I represent its authority. I look up to a throne in order that I may represent the will of the throne to those over whom I reign. I look down upon the territory over which I reign in order that I may realize in it the will and purpose of the throne to which I am submitted. This is a perfect harmony and interrelationship. There can be no right and perfect government of the territory over which I reign, save as I am in right relationship to the throne over me. The reason why I should perfectly submit to the throne over me is that I may exert its influence among those who are placed under me. I am under authority, submission; I have soldiers under me, responsibility. The responsibility of reigning is intimately connected with submission.

That is a revelation of perfect life. Before I turn to show that the Christian ideal realizes that, do you see the importance of it? Let me get my sermon out of shape and take the application now. To what throne is your life submitted? What territory are you reigning over? Have you found a throne to which you bend the knee? Have you found a kingdom over which you reign? That is the meaning of human life. Every man is intended to reign, but before a man can reign he must submit. Every man here has found a throne. Every man has found a territory over which he is reigning. You cannot escape it. These are the deep things of human nature which

no man can elude. The trouble is that men submit to the wrong throne, and therefore their reign is that of despotism, destruction, death. The influence you are exerting within the circle of your own manhood, the circle of your friends, in your home, your city, is an influence created by your relation to a throne. If the throne before which you bow is the throne of the world, or the throne of the flesh, or the throne of the devil—and these are not separate thrones, that is the trinity of evil—if you bow before that throne, you are still reigning, but it is a reign of devastation, a reign of death. You cannot escape submission to a throne. You cannot escape the exercise of influence, of power. Whether the power be constructive or destructive, for life or death, for lifting or flinging down, depends upon the throne to which you bow the knee. Every man can say, "I also am a man under authority, having under myself soldiers." I am not here to press young men to go forth and find a kingdom. I am here to press them to see to it that they find the right authority, and are exercising the right influence in the place where they reign.

That leads me to the second point. The Christian revelation most perfectly realizes this ideal of life. That ideal was perfectly presented as a pattern in Christ. That is what this man meant, though I do not imagine, or suggest, that he perfectly understood it. Thou art a Man under authority, and Thou hast soldiers under Thee. That is the story of Christ's life. Jesus of Nazareth might have said with perfect accuracy and with far fuller, richer, more spacious meaning than did the centurion, "I am a Man under authority, having under Myself soldiers." Jesus Christ was under authority. He was under authority to the state, the great universal empire of God, which He expressed in that term which we are still using and are only beginning to understand the meaning of, "The Kingdom of God"; and that for Him was personified in God Himself, Who was King, Ruler, Sovereign over the whole empire. He was a Man under authority. "I do nothing of Myself... I do always the things that are pleasing to Him." "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to accomplish His work." It was a life under perfect and absolute authority. It was a life of perfect and absolute submission. It was a life, therefore, responsible, "having under Myself soldiers," all the forces of the Kingdom of God over which He was appointed to reign. He was under authority and exercised authority. The authority He exercised over the things under Him was the authority to which He submitted, as He yielded Himself wholly to the will of God. The authority of love, light, love, the authority of pure, high, noble ideals; to these things He yielded Himself, for they were in the will of God. These are the very elements of the empire of God. Wherever He exercised His authority it was toward the realization of these things in human life.

Christ did not merely reveal to us the fulness of this ideal as a pattern; He came to call us into submission to it, and to communicate to us the power that would enable us to fulfill that in our life which is essential to it on the highest level and in all fulness and breadth.

To what, then, does Christianity call every young man? To submission and responsibility! Submission to what? To the Kingdom of God personified in Christ as King. I call you in the name of this Christ to submission to the Kingdom of God. I pause because I am so conscious that the familiarity of these terms robs them of their spaciousness and grandeur and beauty. Young men are constantly telling me they are looking for a career. Here is an all-inclusive one, passion for the Kingdom of God. All honor to the soldier who really and truly and deeply loves his country. I ask you to make the master passion of your life not this country of Britain, but the Kingdom of God. If the idea be too spacious, too gracious, as indeed it is, then focus it, localize it, personify it, only remember when you have personified it that that to which you come, or He to Whom you come, does stand for the larger purpose, the Kingdom of God. We call you for this purpose to the Christ, for submission to Him is submission to the Kingdom of God. Come, not merely that you may kiss a scepter and be under a King, but that you may make the Kingdom of God the goal of your endeavor, the passion of your life, that to which you devote all your energies. Here is the true throne. Here is the true state. Here is the true empire to which men should give themselves. The man who can go forth from this chapel saying, I am a man under authority to God's King, and God's Kingdom, is fulfilling the essential necessity of his life on the highest level and in the fullest, best sphere.

Remember that if submission means submission to the Kingdom of God it means submission of the will, and as the Roman centurion in the olden days, having handed over his will and choice, ceased to have property, or time, or relations of his own, so must the soldier who submits to the Christ. If you say I am carrying my figure too far, listen to the King Himself. "If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." "If any man cometh unto Me, and hateth not his own father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." This does not mean that the man giving himself to the Christ is to have no love for father, mother, wife, child, brother, sister; but that forever, in every hour of crisis, in every commonplace, in all circumstances, if there should arise conflict between the interest of Christ and that of father, mother, wife, child, brother, sister, Christ must have the pre-eminence, and the Kingdom of God must be first. So that "he that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me" is the awful and yet necessary word of the King as men come into contact with Him and desire to submit themselves to Him. Sometimes I think that we lose something of power and force by stating the case in all its widest reaches and its most spacious applications. It means that the soldier is to have no habit unremitted to Christ for approval or disapproval, no hour of his time which he calls his own, no interest in life which is to him vacation from vocation, no single detail of life over which Christ is not supreme, which does not enter into the supreme master passion of bringing in the Kingdom of God. That is the life of the Christian. I know there are a great many people who call themselves Christians who have never come within a million miles of realizing this. Are they Christians? I suggest the question and leave them to their own conscience and the clear teaching of Christ for decision. "Under authority." You have played at life long enough. Begin to live by giving yourself in tremendous submission to this King.

When you have done that, what then? Begin to reign in power. Begin to realize your kingdom. Where shall I begin? says some young man. Give me my work. I give it to you now. "He that ruleth his spirit is better than he that taketh a city." That is in Proverbs. I am not going to preach from that text apart from the New Testament. I long ago gave up preaching the doctrine of self-control. I never say to a man, Control yourself. "The fruit of the Spirit is... self-control." You begin to control yourself only as you hand yourself to your King. That is the first empire over which man is called to reign. All the forces and conditions of his own life, the desires and aspirations; the movements of intellect, emotion, and will. I can reign only when I am under authority, when I have kissed the scepter. Enlarge it without my staying to illustrate it. Your home, your class in the Sunday school if you are a teacher. This pulpit is a throne of power for me if I am under authority. If I am not, then it is an awful opportunity for wrecking human life. I am not talking idly. These are the deep and awful and heartbreaking convictions of any man who knows what it is to be called to preach the Word of God. Yet blessed be God, as the apostle declares, the true minister is "led in triumph." If I would reign in this pulpit and bring a territory into subjection to the vast empire of God's Kingdom, then the measure in which I submit is the measure in which I command, and reign in my own life of service. So also in your city, in your country, everywhere. First under authority, and then reigning in power.

I go back to the application which I have already used in the middle of my sermon. Under what authority are you living? What are the sanctions of your life? To what do you remit everything? The lusts and desires of your own life? Is that so? Under what authority are you living? Tell me that, and I will tell you the effect you are producing upon the territory over which you are reigning. The authority to which a man submits is the authority he exercises. Let us break this up. Are you submitting your life to the authority of the flesh, answering its clamant cry, yielding all the forces of your being to whatever your flesh life asks and demands? Then you are exerting the authority of the throne to which you bow. You are spreading a poison and paralysis wherever you go for no man liveth unto himself. Are you bending the knee to the world with its maxims and methods? Then you are exerting the influence of the world in the circle of your friendship, and your friend is becoming worldly because you are reigning over him in the power of the world to which you bow the knee. Are you serving the devil, the devil who was a liar from the beginning and a murderer, the devil who is the prince of compromise and of subtlety? Then you are exerting the influence of the devil wherever you go. Are you serving that great Kingdom of God by crowning Christ? Then you are exerting the influence of that Kingdom and that Christ wherever you go. That which you are under, you transplant into that which you are over. That has a wider application than to young men. Fathers and mothers, that is true of you. It is not the precept which you utter, it is the throne before which you bend that you will see reproduced in your children. It is true everywhere. Let me cease my illustrations and leave the vast, awful sublime truth upon your conscience, and turn to my final word to young men.

Man, you must fulfil your manhood by bowing the knee to a throne and reigning. To what throne are you bowing? That life of yours, the history and mystery of which I know not, nor could I know if you attempted to tell me, the history and mystery of which you know not, for there are vaster reaches in your manhood than you have ever discovered. God only knows it all. Take that life and hand it over to that One Who out of the eternal ages came into the little spaces of passing time that evil men might know the meaning of life in its richest fulfilment. Hand your life to Him and He will—this is the gospel, the evangel that comes like music to the heart of the man who has failed—He will "restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten." He will give you back the things you have missed. Though the vessel be marred in the hand of the Potter, He will make it again, another vessel as seemeth good to Him. If you, like Jonah, in unutterable folly have paid your fare to try to escape Jehovah, and have gone to Tarshish, if only you will get back, the Word of the Lord will come to you the second time, and He will establish His Kingdom in your life and then you may begin to reign in life. Is there anything you more desire than a sense of power? Is there anything any man who is a man at all desires more than to be able to say, "I can"? It is the next great word to "I am" on the level of human life. "I am" is the first expression of human personality. If the next be "I think" the outcome is "I can." Do you want to say it? Oh, the scores of men who say to me, "I cannot." They are here tonight. You are here tonight, my brother, you are saying, "I cannot, God knows I would if I could, but I cannot do it. I see the vision, but I have no virtue to win the victory." No, you have bent to the wrong throne, and the influence resulting from your bending to the wrong throne has been destruction of the territory over which you reign, for, remember, your paralysis is your own doing, your weakness is the result of your own yielding. I pray you turn the deafest of deaf ears to the false and damnable teaching which declares that you cannot help your sin. You can help your sinning. Sin is the rebellion of your will, and it is rebellion against God. You know that you need not have crossed the threshold of the house of sin, or put your life at the disposal of evil things; but you have done it and now you cannot help it, you are poisoned, paralyzed, spoiled. You are saying, I cannot, and you have ruined your kingdom because the throne to which you bent was the wrong throne.

There is a "trysting place where heaven's love and heaven's justice meet," and the trysting place is the Cross where the Christ, Who came to give the pattern, died that you might know how in the mystery of pain God is able to communicate power that makes life over again. If you have been the slave of the awful evil things to which you have yielded yourself, the chain can be broken now. God help you to find the right authority and bow under it, and so find your kingdom and reign over it.

Christ's Call to Courage

Son, be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven.

Matthew 9:2

Daughter, be of good cheer; thy faith hath made thee whole.

Matthew 9:22

Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.

Matthew 14:27

Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

John 16:33

Be of good cheer; for as thou hast testified concerning Me at Jerusalem,
so must thou bear witness also at Rome.

Acts 23:11

Five familiar pictures of the New Testament are recalled by the reading of these words.

The first is that of a man sick of the palsy, carried by his friends into the presence of Jesus; physically trembling and troubled in heart by the consciousness of sin.

The second is that of a woman struggling to reach Him through the movement and pressure of a jostling crowd, troubled by all the suffering of twelve years, twelve years of physical pain, of divorce, of ostracism, of excommunication.

The third is that of a company of disciples in the midst of difficulties which had arisen in the path of duty. The Master had bid them set the prow of their vessel toward the farther shore, and the wind was contrary, and the waves were boisterous. The picture is that of these men suddenly confronted by a new and nameless terror, a specter of the night, moving over the waters toward them.

The fourth is that of a company of disciples face to face with three facts: first, the fact of their Lord's approaching departure by some way they could not understand, and to some bourn about which they knew nothing; second, the fact of the antagonism of the world to Him and to His ideals, and consequently to them also, if in His absence they remained loyal to Him; and, third, the fact of their own appalling weakness. Or briefly, it is a picture of a company of men troubled by the fear of the future.

The last picture is that of a servant of God in prison, rescued from the mob yesterday, threatened by a new conspiracy tomorrow, troubled by the force of circumstances which hindered the progress of his service.

The central fact in these pictures is not that of the troubled souls. The central fact is that of Christ, and of what He said to these people. To the man sick of the palsy He said, "Be of good cheer, child." To the woman broken, bruised, weary, emaciated, and forlorn, He said, "Be of good cheer, daughter." To the disciples in the midst of the storm, terrified by the approach of the phantom, and to the disciples yet more afraid of the future without Him, He said, "Be ye of good cheer." To the man in the prison, hindered in high and holy service, He said, "Be of good cheer." In each case He challenged fear, and uttered a call to courage, and gave His reason for doing so.

These incidents illustrate and illuminate the whole realm of discipleship, and I bring them to you this morning in order, as I may be helped by the Spirit of God, to fasten your attention upon that challenge of Jesus. I bring them to you as a New Year's greeting, not as my word to you, for that would be very worthless, but as the Master's word to you. "Be of good cheer."

Let us then consider, first, the call of Christ itself; second, the arguments of Christ as we find them scattered over these stories; and, finally, let us inquire what is the way of obedience to this call of our Lord.

First, then, the call of Jesus, "Be of good cheer." Now I take up my New Testament, and I find that these are the only occasions on which we have any record of His using these expressions, and no one else is ever recorded to have used exactly the same expression in addressing men. The word is almost peculiar to Christ. It emerges in the writings of Paul in certain applications; but this personal, direct, immediate call was peculiarly that of the Lord Himself. It is therefore important that we should, with all simplicity, inquire what He really did say. In the Revised New Testament from which I read, you will notice that there is uniformity of translation, that on each occasion we have these words, "Be of good cheer." In the Authorized the translation is, "Be of good cheer" in each case except one; in the record of His speech to the woman, the 1611 translators rendered Jesus' words thus, "Be of good comfort."

Now, without any question, there is a fault in this translation, "Be of good cheer." There is something very bright about it, very hopeful about it; and before I am through I shall show you that I have robbed you of nothing by saying that it is not exactly what our

Lord said. Indeed, so to translate it is to miss the deepest value of the word. "Be of good cheer" suggests the result rather than the cause. The actual word of which our Lord made use described the cause, and left us to discover the result. There is another word in the New Testament for cheerfulness. When Paul wrote, "The fruit of the Spirit is... joy," the thought is that of cheerfulness. But that is not the word here. Cheerfulness will be the outcome of what Christ commanded, but He did not command men to be cheerful. He never dealt with the surface of things. He never told men to smile when they were in agony. He dealt with the underlying agony, and thus called men into such attitude of soul as made cheerfulness possible.

The word employed indicates courage rather than cheerfulness, and, moreover, courage subjectively as a feeling rather than objectively as an enterprise; "Be of good courage" rather than, Do a courageous thing. Our Lord did not say, Forget your trouble by doing something. That may help for the moment, but the agony surges back when the activity ceases. The word that our Lord addressed to the man, to the woman, to the disciples, to the imprisoned apostle, was a word suggestive of that strength of heart which is at once the inspiration of daring and the reason of cheerfulness. The call, then, is to freedom from fear, and to an absolute assurance of safety.

Passing from that attempt to consider the actual meaning of the Lord's word, let us glance at these pictures once more, in order to discover what Christ meant in each case.

There is a conscience troubled by sin; to that man He said, Do not have any fear, be of good courage.

There is a woman's heart trembling through long suffering, which has become destitution; to that woman He said, Have no fear; be full of courage; there is nothing to be afraid of.

Look carefully at those men on board the ship. What was their condition? Intelligence menaced by mystery. I wish I could bring you into real sympathy with those fishermen of blue Galilee. They were men accustomed to the storms that suddenly swept its waters, men who were not often baffled, even when the sea was tossed into fury by Euroclydon. Their chief trouble that night was not that of the storm, but that of the specter moving across the waters. They did not know what it was. Do not, in your superior wisdom, say they ought not to have been frightened at ghosts. That is what you are frightened at this morning! What you are fearing you will find presently to be the Lord Himself! So do not be angry with these men. Try to sympathize with them. Their intelligence was menaced by mystery; and when He came to them, He said, Do not be afraid. There is nothing to be afraid of. Banish panic, establish peace, be of good courage.

Then look at the group of men in that upper room. They were men full of a spiritual aspiration, but threatened by opposition, not merely the opposition of men who were angry with Jesus, and about to crucify Him; but that most subtle and forceful opposition of worldliness in the true and New Testament sense of that word, those materialized ideals for which the enemies of Christ stood, and which had gained so strong a hold upon the heart of the multitudes. That little group of men in the upper room saw Him going. They had been able to believe while He was with them. They had been able, with Him, even through tremblingly, to believe in His philosophy when He said, "Be not afraid of them which kill the body and after that have no more that they can do." But He was going. How were they to be true to that high spiritual ideal, with all the forces of the cosmos as men were interpreting it, against them. To them, thus filled with foreboding, He said, "Be of good courage," there is nothing to fear. Do not be afraid.

And then we come to the picture of Paul, the man of high purpose, and unswerving devotion, who had said, "I must also see Rome," knowing that Rome was the very center of the world, the strategic point from which to proclaim the Gospel and send the messengers of the King along all her highways through the nations. Everything appeared as though he were not going to reach Rome. He was in Jerusalem, and there he had been mobbed, and barely rescued yesterday; and conspirators were planning to murder him to-mor-row. Paul was not grieved by reason of his own imprisonment. He was troubled because he was an ambassador in bonds, and his high purpose was being hindered. It was night, when suddenly the Lord spoke to him; and said, "Be of good courage," Paul, there is nothing to be afraid of, neither the mob of yesterday, nor the conspiracy of tomorrow; be of good courage.

Now, I will say the thing some of you are thinking. That is all very well; but if Christ said only that, other men have said it, and it does not help us far. It does mean a little when I am troubled and perplexed, and harassed by fear, and my heart is trembling, to have someone bid me be of good courage. I like the man who comes and says to me, Put on a brave face! I think he helps me for perhaps half an hour. I would rather have such a man than the one who comes and says, I will tell you how you got into this trouble. Put that man out!

But the man who can say to me only, Be of good courage, is not the man I want on this first Sunday as I lift my eyes and try to peer into the mists that lie along the valleys, and wonder what forces are marshaled against my soul. If Christ is going to help me He must give me a reason for courage.

And so I pass to what I think is the central value of the meditation, the arguments of Christ in favor of courage as I find them scattered through these stories.

Inclusively, Christ had one argument with which to confront fear—Himself. There is nothing else to say. To every force which challenges the soul of man He opposes Himself.

In no case does He minimize the antagonistic forces. That is not merely a passing word. That is something to be thought of and remembered. To the man sick of the palsy He did not say, You are quite mistaken about this palsy. You have none. He did not say, There is no such thing as sin, cheer up. Is there anything more deceitful, dastardly, devilish, than to tell that to a man who knows what sin is in his own blood and life? That is not the word of Christ. He was not minimizing the fact of sin; He did not tell the woman who for twelve years had been in the grip of an infirmity that there was no reality in her suffering, that if she would make up her mind there was nothing the matter, there was nothing the matter. Oh, these utterly foolish, devilish things by which men are being deceived. Jesus did not laugh at His disciples because they were afraid of a ghost. He did not even rebuke them for that fear. He did not tell the men in the upper room that there was nothing in the force of the world as against them. He knew its force, He knew its lure, its subtlety, its insidiousness. He did not tell Paul that the opposition through which he had come was nothing. Christ did not, and does not, minimize the reality of the antagonistic forces which await us and confront us. No, what He did in each case was to place Himself between the assaulted soul and the assaulting foe.

Now let us again pass over our stories. He said to the man sick of the palsy, "Thy sins are forgiven." The rulers immediately objected: "This man blasphemeth.... Who can forgive sins but One, even God?" To this objection the Lord replied, "Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? For whether is easier to say, Thy sins are forgiven, or to say, Arise, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins (then saith He to the sick of the palsy), Arise, and take up thy bed, and go unto thy house; and immediately he took up his bed, and departed."

That action on the part of the man was the demonstration of the fact that Christ had dealt with the principle of evil out of which the physical limitation had sprung, that when He said, "Thy sins are forgiven," He had spoken not merely a word of judicial authority but a word of redeeming power. He stood between the sins that assaulted the soul of the man—and righteously assaulted his soul, for had he not been guilty of them?—and the man himself; and therefore He was able to speak the infinite and abiding and perpetual mysterious word of Christianity, the word of forgiveness, the authority and power of which was demonstrated by the new power that appeared in the life of the man.

To the woman He said, "Thy faith hath made thee whole," and before He had said it she was healed. How was she healed? I cannot paint pictures, but there are some I would like to paint, and this is one. Jesus was walking along, with crowds jostling Him; just ahead of Him was Jairus, eager if possible to hasten Him to the house where his little girl lay dying, when, somehow edging her way through the crowd, the woman touched—a better word would be "clutched"—His garment with the grasp of the last, despairing agony of a needy soul. Jesus immediately turned round, "Who touched Me?" His disciples reminded Him that multitudes were thronging Him, and pressing Him; but He said, Someone has touched Me, for I perceive that dynamite has gone out of Me. That was the argument of His call, Be of good cheer. His virtue came between her and the assaults of her limitation and pain, canceled them, banished them, lifted her back to life and joy. Daughter, be of good cheer, be of good courage, by My virtue thy need is supplied.

I look at the men as they crossed the sea, and with terror on their faces gazed on the strange, mysterious phantom moving slowly and yet surely toward them over the storm-tossed waters. Christ challenged that fear in the words, "Be of good cheer; it is I." If I but knew how to say that, I need say no more. "It," phantom, ghost, terror, "is I." He did not say to them, Never mind, you do not understand it, it will pass presently, and you will forget all about it. No, out of the heart of the infinite mystery He spoke. That is a parable in itself as well as a miracle.

To the men in the upper room, afraid of the forces of the world that would be against them, He said, "Be of good cheer," and His argument for courage was expressed in the words, "I have overcome the world." Over those very forces which they feared He had been victorious through three and thirty years of life; and in His Cross and in His resurrection He perfected His conquest by the reclamation of the cosmos, and the reintroduction of regenerate men to it as having dominion over it instead of being enslaved by it. In fellowship with Him in overcoming life, men find the very cosmos which man's abuse had turned into an enemy, becoming God's minister of light and healing and help and blessing, cooperating with God in all high and holy purposes and enterprise. This, then, was His argument: I have overcome, I have remastered, I have recaptured the very cosmos. Do not be afraid of it. Find in it, in fellowship with Me, that which shall minister to all your need.

And, finally, in the quietness and silence of the prison He stood between His servant and the brutality of the mob and the subtlety of the conspirators, and Himself was the argument for courage. No longer present among His people in bodily form, He appeared to this man as to one born out of due time in a great crisis of need, when the heart was disappointed because service was hindered, and He said, "As thou hast testified concerning Me at Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome," and thus He was the argument for courage, the inspiration of cheerfulness.

I think that after that Paul lay down in the prison and had a wonderfully restful sleep till the morning. Be of good courage!

If you will take those stories and go through them again in some half hour when you are alone, I think you will find that there is at least a suggestion of sequence in them. First, be of good courage because thy sins are forgiven by the Redeemer. Then be of good courage because all thy weakness and limitation can be supplied by the virtue that comes from Him. Then, when thy soul is assaulted by some mystery, be of good courage, resting assured that out of the heart of every mystery He will emerge. Then, when the sense of the forces of materialism and of worldliness are opposing thy soul, and thou art conscious of the difficulty of loyalty to Christ and high spiritual ideals, be of good courage, because He has overcome. Then when devoted to high purpose and holy service, thou art baffled, beaten, prevented, hindered, be of good courage, for in the silence of the night He will assure thee that He has made the plan of thy service, and all hell cannot prevent thy coming to Rome if He would have thee there.

Whether this is a sequence or not, it is at least certain that the first is the fundamental word. Christ calls men to courage by dealing first with sin, that deepest reason of trouble, of fear, of panic; and He builds the superstructure of His palace of peace on the purging of the conscience and the putting away of defilement.

Now, how are we to obey Him? That is the final inquiry. The importance and difficulty of this are patent. Intellectually we agree when He says to us, Be of good courage; but actually we so constantly fail.

Suffer me to clear the way by one or two negative considerations. How am I to obey Him when He says to me, Be of good courage? By love? Nay, that fails in my experience. By hope? Nay, on many a day that fades from the sky. By faith? Nay, for in my case faith fears oftentimes; it fears as well as falters.

All this may be confession of weakness. You may say to me, You have no right to have these experiences. Love ought not to fail, hope ought not to fade, faith ought not to fear. Well, if they are confessions of weakness, and they may be, they are certainly statements of fact. What, then, is the condition of courage? Love, hope, and faith are the outcome of the fulfilment of a condition. Love fails, hope fades, and faith fears, when that condition is not being fulfilled. The abiding condition of courage is clear vision of the Lord. Change the word "vision," if you will, and say "definite consciousness of the Lord's nearness." Or better, cancel the preliminary words, the vision of, and the consciousness of, and leave only this, the Lord Himself. I change, He changes not. My love still ebbs and flows. His love can never die. Not my faith, not my hope, not my love, are the final conditions of a real courage, but Himself.

Go back over our illustrations. Did that man, sick of the palsy, lose the sense of fear I think he did. How? Because he made himself believe? No. How, then? Because he believed without being able to help it. How? He saw Jesus, he heard Jesus speak, and he believed. The woman's faith procured her healing without banishing fear, for mark the place in the narrative of the word of Jesus. She touched and was immediately healed. Yet she was full of fear. But when she came in front of Him, and told Him all the truth in trembling; and when those love-lit eyes looked down into her sorrow-dimmed eyes, eyes haunted with the fears of all the years, then fear fled, and courage filled her heart. It did not matter to her that she was excommunicated, ostracized, poor; she had seen Him, and fear folded its raven wings and dropped dead.

I am talking out of my own heart. I am a fearful soul, and I am ashamed of the fact. I have been trying to find out how to be courageous. I have found out! God help me to be true to the revelation! It is to see Him! Looking off unto Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of faith! Consider Him Who endured such contradiction of sinners!

I am speaking to Christian men and women, to those who are familiar with Him in some sense. All our fear and all our panic result from a dimmed vision of the Lord, a dimmed consciousness of Christ. I believe that is the trouble with us all today, individually and in Church life, all these tremors, all these fears result from lack of the sense of His presence.

Another word, and I have done. Have you no fear in your heart at all? There are those who are quite without fear. Well, let them suffer me to ask a question. Why not? I believe that there are men and women who answer my inquiry by saying, Because we have seen Him; because we see Him now. I have no more to say to them. Such men and women have found the secret of peace.

But there are others who are not conscious of fear today. Let me press upon them the same question. Why not? I charge all such most earnestly to remember in these days, when there may seem in their case to be no cause for fear, no trembling, no panic, weakness, foolishness, that any reason for absence of fear, short of the vision and consciousness of Christ and confidence in Him, is false and your confidence is misplaced, and it may be that before this first Sabbath day of the year be gone to its last hour the crack of doom will come to you, out of the light will come the darkness, and from behind the mountains will rush innumerable foes to assault your soul. There is no refuge for the soul of man other than the Lord Christ.

But now, finally; trembling, terrified, troubled souls, I pray you look and listen! Look to your Lord, and with eyes fastened upon Him listen to His word, "Be of good courage." That means, when He says it, that He puts Himself between thy soul and all the forces in hell and earth that may be against thee.

What shall we say to Him? Well, I am prepared to say that because of what He is my heart is full of courage. I believe, I hope, I love!

And having this confidence in my own heart, my message is expressed perhaps most perfectly to my own consciousness by one of those great old hymns of Charles Wesley. Let me conclude with it:

Surrounded by a host of foes,
Stormed by a host of foes within,
Nor swift to flee, nor strong to oppose,
Single, against hell, earth, and sin,
Single, yet undismayed, I am;
I dare believe in Jesu's name.
What though a thousand hosts engage
A thousand worlds, my soul to shake?
I have a shield shall quell their rage,
And drive the alien armies back;
Portrayed it bears a bleeding Lamb;
I dare believe in Jesu's name.
Me to retrieve from Satan's hands,
Me from this evil world to free,
To purge my sins, and loose my bands,
And save from all iniquity,
My Lord and God from heaven He came;
I dare believe in Jesu's name.
Salvation in His name there is,
Salvation from sin, death, and hell,
Salvation into glorious bliss
How great salvation, who can tell!
But all He hath for mine I claim;
I dare believe in Jesus' name.

083 - Matthew 11:27-30 - Burdens: False and True

Burdens: False and True

All things have been delivered unto Me of My Father; and no one knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him. Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.

Matthew 11:27-30

In all probability no words that ever fell from the lips of our blessed Lord have more remarkably and profoundly taken hold on the heart of man than those of the last three verses of this paragraph.

There is something here that charms the heart of man, not in one age, but in every successive age, and not among one class of people, but among all classes of people. It is a remarkable and arresting fact that it is impossible by translation to rob these words of music, or to weaken their appeal. In every zone, frigid, temperate, and torrid, they have the same effect.

We are driven to ask, Why is it that this passage has so remarkably taken hold of the heart of the human race that wherever the Bible comes, and the words are given to the people, they are almost invariably taken out and committed to memory, and passed from mouth to mouth until men everywhere who know anything about the Bible know these words? Why have the words so profound an effect?

It may be said that their attraction is due to their simplicity; but that does not touch the deepest reason, for the simplicity of superficiality may charm for the moment, but it does not live. The general answer I make to this inquiry is: The words have had a profound effect because they are profound words. This is not merely the language of a tender and beautiful sentiment. Sentiment is an excellent thing; God have mercy on the man that affects to disapprove sentiment. But sentiment does not live century after century. You must create new sentiments if you would move men by sentiment. Something infinitely more than a soft lullaby that appeals to the tired side of humanity is needed to grip humanity's heart and hold it; something infinitely more than what I have already described as a wooing winsomeness is needed to take hold of the heart of a man as he fights his battles and bears his burdens and feels the strenuousness of life. And the infinitely more is here in this call, or it would long ago have been forgotten.

That which has made these words live is revealed in the verse that comes before them. The profundity of the invitation is not understood if you begin with the words of invitation. Immediately before this, Jesus uttered stern words; He upbraided the cities in which most of His mighty works were done. Suddenly He ceased, and, standing still in the midst of the crowd, He lifted eyes and heart to God, and spoke no longer to men, but to God. "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes; yea, Father, for so it was well-pleasing in Thy sight."

Having thus spoken to His Father, He turned back to the crowds, and said, "All things have been delivered unto Me of My Father; and no one knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him. Come unto Me... and I will give you rest."

Most reverently and carefully may I put this into another form? Jesus upbraided the cities that had not known Him, the cities that had been blind to His presence, deaf to the music of His voice, unconscious of their day. Then, suddenly turning to God, He said, "I thank Thee, O Father," that these things are revealed to the children, and the simple-hearted and the men that lack understanding. Turning back to the people, He declared: God has put everything in My hands. He has committed all things to Me, and yet men do not know Me, no one understands Me; My Father understands Me. But it is also true that no man understands the Father but the Son, and the man to whom the Son will reveal Him. And to whom will He reveal the Father? "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." What rest? The rest of the revelation of the Father, the one and only rest that man needs, the rest that comes to the soul when God comes to the soul and the soul comes to God.

Jesus Christ thus virtually said to men: All your restlessness is Godlessness. All life's fitful fever is the result of the exiling of God; all the tempest-tossed experiences of men are due to the fact that they do not know the Father. Jesus, looking at the multitudes, sorrowing and suffering, tempest-tossed and driven, restless and tired, weary and heavy-laden, said to them, in effect, If you could know God all your restlessness would cease; but you cannot know Him except through Me. But if only you will come to Me I will reveal Him to you, and you will find your rest.

That is the reason why the verses live and the music wins its way through all the centuries. Jesus is not saying to men: Never mind, do not trouble, it will soon be over; He never deals with sorrow and trouble that way. He is saying to men: Get right at the foundation of your life and the surface will be right. He does not come to men and say to them: Cheer up, it is all right; I sympathize with you, I pity you. That is not the way Christ deals with the restlessness of human life. It is not pity He offers men, it is power. His gift is not an opiate that puts them to sleep and makes them forget; it is life that wakes them, and makes them triumph. Get right with God, and the only way in which you will get right with God, says Christ, is by coming to Me.

Having seen the setting of the words, let us examine them in that setting and in that relationship.

Confining ourselves from this moment to the actual words beginning, "Come unto Me," I shall ask you to notice three things. First, that Jesus here makes His appeal to something that is a necessary part of all human life. Second, that in the words of His great appeal Jesus separates humanity into two camps. And, finally, that the call of Jesus is a call in which He appeals to this underlying fact of life, and invites men from a false position into the true.

I do not care for the moment whether you are a Christian man or no, whether your life is godly or godless, pure or impure, restful or restless; there is an essential fact in human nature, and it is to that fact that Jesus makes His appeal.

In order to find it, I am going to take you to my second division first. I shall return to it for consideration in detail at a later stage. Jesus divides humanity into two camps. Notice carefully these words, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden"; that is a description of one class of people. Pass to the end of the verses, "My yoke is easy, and My burden is light." That is the condition of the other class. Mark the contrast: People that labour and are heavy laden; a Man Who says, "My yoke is easy. My burden is light." Remember that when Jesus said, "My yoke is easy, and My burden is light," He did not mean the yoke He was going to give us and the burden He was going to impose upon us. He did mean that also, but fundamentally and primarily He was speaking out of His own experience. The yoke I wear is easy, the burden I bear is light. "Labour." "My yoke is easy." "Heavy laden." "My burden is light." The contrast is self-evident and arresting.

Now we will find our way into the discovery of that which is common in human life by looking at those contrasts. What is common to both conditions? There are people who labor and are heavy laden. Here is a Man with an easy yoke and a light burden. It is a great contrast, but the common quantity is a burden. These people are carrying a burden. This Man is carrying a burden.

When that is seen, there is discovered the underlying fact in human life to which Jesus appeals. No human being lives without carrying a burden. I am not now speaking of the burden of sorrow, of the burden of care, of the burden of grief, of the burden of trial. When Paul was writing to the Galatians, toward the close of the letter, in very close proximity, he said two things: "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ," and then, "Each man shall bear his own burden." That is not a contradiction. Whereas the word "burden" in neither case is incorrect, as a matter of fact, the apostle did not use the same word; the words that lie

behind are different words. Those who are familiar with the Greek Testament will remember the fact, but to those who are not, if I simply utter the words that lie behind, you will see the difference in the sound—Baros and Phortion. The first word means a burden of sorrow, of pain, of difficulty, of trial. We are to bear one another's burdens of that sort; but the second burden is the burden of responsibility. Every man must bear his own burden of responsibility; no man can carry his brother's responsibility. No man can live and work under the impulse that drives his brother man.

What, then, is this burden of responsibility? It is the master passion of life, whatever that may be. It is the conception of life that dominates it, drives it, sends it through the days. It is the aim that a man has in life, the thing that has taken hold upon him, and is molding him; it is the conception that lies at the back of his will, creates the reason for its decisions, and, therefore, is the motive power in his life.

There is no man who has not such a reason, has not such a master passion; it is present in every life.

A great many men have never named it, have never taken time to ask what is the all-inclusive conception of life that drives them through the days; but if it has never been written down or found, it is there. In these days of psychological investigation we hear men correctly talking of a subconsciousness; and the burden may lie in a man's subconsciousness, but it exists.

I do not want to lead you into any metaphysical disquisition, but in the name of God I want you to find out the deepest thing in your life. I want to deliver you from surface living, and therefore I beseech you to recognize this deepest, simplest, profoundest thing. Back of your life there is a reason, a motive, an aim, an impulse, a master passion: the conception of life that is mastering you and driving you, making you rise in the morning, toil through the day, rest at night. Back of all the externalities is some dynamic, and this is so in every life.

A friend of mine once said to me, when I had said something like this in preaching, I do not think you are quite right about that. I think there are men who have no aim in life, no motive power, no master passion. And I said, Well, tell me of one. And he named someone whom we had known for long years. Look at So-and-So. You know as well as I do that he has just drifted through the years, and done nothing in the world, simply because he has no aim in life. And I said to my friend, The man you quote is a forcible argument in favor of my position. And he said, But surely his trouble has been that he has had no aim in life. I replied, His aim in life is to do nothing. And it is a most remarkable thing how hard some men will work to do nothing. This man had one conception—to shift responsibility and shirk work. Mean and contemptible, but there it was, the master passion that made him shiftless and lazy.

We all have a master passion, and that is the matter with which Jesus is dealing in these old sweet words. He is getting underneath the external action, and underneath the surface thinking. He is getting down to the deep subconsciousness of life, putting His hand on the thing that molds and makes all the externalities, and He is saying to men, in effect, If you will get the right master passion you will have rest. If only you will find the right motive, the right aim, the right reason, then the friction will go out of your life, peace will take its place, and you will find yourself at the secret source of all strength.

Now let us pass again to the second point for more careful examination. Jesus divides men into two camps. On the one side are people trying to carry a burden too heavy for them, and the yoke in which they are attempting to carry this burden galls and frets them. All life is a weariness because they are attempting to carry a burden that they were never meant to carry. Jesus looks on them in pity and declares, "My yoke is easy. My burden is light."

Let us endeavor to discover these different burdens.

What is this burden that Jesus described as light? What was the master passion in His life? What was His aim, His motive, His impulse, the reason for everything He did, every journey He took, every word He uttered, all the output of life, in thought, and speech, and deed? There was one unswerving principle at the back of the life of Jesus, one master passion that always drove Him. I take you back for a concrete and wonderful answer to an Old Testament prophecy concerning Him, and then ask you to hear how through His life the music was always true to the chord of the dominant.

In the roll of the book it is written of me;
I delight to do Thy will, O my God.

That was His master passion. Take His life for a moment, a fascinating and delightful study, which we can only glance at, but of which we may see enough as we go to learn the truth. The first recorded words of Jesus are, "Wist ye not that I must?" Now listen. That is what I want to find out. When a man says, I must, I am getting at the deepest thing in his life. It is not when a man says, I ought, or I would like; that does not matter, but I must. "I must be about my Father's business." There the master passion flamed out. His Father's business for Him at that moment was that He should go home and be subject to His parents, that He should learn the trade of His reputed father, Joseph; and then that He should remain for eighteen long years in the seclusion of the carpenter's shop, doing what men call "the daily round, the common task."

Then He passed into public life, and again we listen to some of the things He said: "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me." "I can of Myself do nothing." "The Son can do nothing of Himself but what He seeth the Father doing." "I do always the things that are pleasing to Him." "I... have accomplished the work which Thou hast given Me to do." "It is finished." "Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit."

Oh, ye masters of the modes of music, tell me, is not that harmony? The will of God, the master passion operating through all Jesus' days and doings. Back of Calvary, and back of the carpenter's shop, back of the infinite teaching, back of the sweet human life, back of the majestic marvelous unveiling of God, and back of the tender patient unveiling of man, the will of God was His master passion.

Now listen and be astonished. He says, "My burden is light." Some of the simplest things Jesus said are the most startling if only we take time to listen to them. My brother, you have been saying in your heart, I would like to be a Christian, but I cannot be one because it is such hard work; it is very hard work to please God always. Jesus says it is not. He says it is easy; and let me say it very kindly, I would rather believe Him than you. I would rather believe Him, because He always did it, and you and I have not always done it.

This is one of the superlative notes of the Gospel which needs to be delivered today. Jesus says that the light burden is the will of God, says, in effect, that it is easier to please God than not to please Him. My testimony by the side of His is very imperfect, but I have discovered that it is far easier to please God than any man.

I would rather please God because the law of God conditions human life according to its first intention and its true possibility. Oh, but a man says, if I am going to be a Christian everything will go against the grain. Nothing of the sort. Everything will go with the grain. You have been going against the grain all your life. Our Lord will take hold of the inherent and created capacity, and put it into its right relationship with God. When a man is born again all the essential facts of his first birth are found and realized and crowned. The second birth of a man is finding the first birth, and putting it into true relation with God.

And now let us look at the other camp. Jesus said, "Ye that labour and are heavy laden." What are the burdens they are carrying? Let us try to find out. We need not go back to Palestine. Some of you have been honestly exercising your heart and mind in the last few minutes. You have been saying, Well, what is my burden? The preacher says that perhaps we have never found it out. What is it? Some man is getting down to the undercurrent of his life, and is trying to find out. What is it, my brother? Well, says one, if I am honest, the master passion of my life is money; I am living for money; I am living for wealth. I am thinking and planning and working and toiling for money; that is my master passion. Some other says, I care nothing about money; but, if I am to confess the truth, the thing that is driving me is the passion for fame; I want to be known, I must make a name among my fellow men; that is the goal toward which I am running. Yet another says, No, I care nothing for money simply for the sake of money, and fame never attracts me; but if I had to confess, the master passion of my life is pleasure. I want pleasure, enjoyment, a thrill, and a sensation; I must have it; that is what I am working for; if I work hard it is that I may earn the wherewithal to secure pleasure. Oh, what thousands are living for that today! They work hard, and the goal is always the pleasure that is to come presently. Still another says, I care nothing for money, nothing for fame, nothing particularly for pleasure; all I want is ease and quietness and to be let alone. If you will just let me alone, that is all I ask; I want to go through life peaceably and quietly, not to be perplexed or bothered.

Now let us be very careful. As a matter of fact, none of these constitutes the burden of any human life. Money, pleasure, fame, ease—not one of them is a burden. You have not thought deeply enough; you are confounding the yoke with the burden. These are the yokes in which men are trying to carry burdens, but the burdens lie deeper.

Will you let me cross-examine you for a moment? What do you want money for? Why do you want money? For whom do you want it? Want it for? Of course, I want it for myself. Exactly; now you have named your burden. For myself. Of course, there may be a man who says he wants it for someone else. Well, he is so rare a specimen that I will not discuss the question with you. I am dealing with the average man, the man who wants money for himself. Or this man who says, I want fame. I am not seeking fame for anyone else. It is my name I want to be carved into the granite. Or this man who is seeking for pleasure; he seeks it for himself. And the man seeking ease, the answer is always the same: self.

There are only two burdens that men can carry. One is the will of God, and the other is self. The life of every man, woman and child having come to years of discretion and understanding is centered around God, or around self. Self is very subtle, very insidious, hides itself in all sorts of masks, dresses itself in all garments; but if God is not at the center of your life, man, you have put yourself on the throne. There are only two burdens but thousands of yokes.

Now listen again to Jesus. He says you are heavy laden if you are living for self. What does He mean? He means that it is very difficult for any man to please himself, very difficult for any man to satisfy himself. Difficult? I dare venture to go further, and say my blessed Lord meant that no man can satisfy himself. A boy at school dreams of the day when he will be able to please himself. I know that I did; I know I thought when I was once out of school, and away from discipline, I could please myself. And I have found out that I pleased myself more in those days than I ever have done since.

Can you find me a self-satisfied man anywhere? You say, Yes, quite a number of them. Self-satisfied men? Yes, have you never heard of one? I have heard of many, and never seen one. Oh, but if you only knew this man whom I know, he is just that; he is self-satisfied! Get in to his inner life, and you will find that the man most self-satisfied in outward manifestation is always uneasy lest some other man should not think of him as he thinks of himself. He is never at rest.

Oh, men, oh, women, hear me; I would not trifle with this tremendous and awful truth. If you want to know what hell is enthroned yourself, try to please yourself, live for yourself long enough. The lady in the West End, she lives for self, talks about ennui. And what is ennui? Hell! The poor soul in the East End, when that soul lives for self, speaks only of despair. And what is despair? Exactly the same thing as the other, only at one end of London they give it a French name; but it is the same thing. It is the worm that dieth not, gnawing at the vitals of the life. It is the fire that is never quenched, burning at the center of the soul. Live for self, and you are trying to carry a burden that crushes you as you carry it. Jesus says, Mine is a burden that is light; take Mine, it is the will of God.

You will not find any woman of culture and refinement who is devoting her life to God who talks about ennui. My dear sisters, if you are suffering from ennui give your heart to Christ, and come and give your life to service, and I will cure you of ennui. I will cure it by putting your life in contact with the suffering of some poor fallen sister, and as you begin to take that poor fallen life, and care for it and love it, the peace of God will flow through your life. My dear brother, troubled with restlessness, anxious when there is a fall in the market where you wanted a rise, or a rise where you wanted a fall, give your heart to Christ, and bring your business acumen and your splendid possibilities and say to Him, Lead me into the will of God, lead me where God wants me, and you will find that the peace of God, as a river, will come surging through your life, and the song of the everlasting rest will be the anthem of all your days. Live for yourself, and you are heavy laden. Live for God, and life is a rapture, and the burden is light.

Finally, Jesus called men from the false into the true. He said, "No man knoweth the Father, save the Son." "My burden is light." I know my Father, and because I know my Father I delight to do His will, and that makes life restful. And to the heavy-laden people He declared, You are trying to please yourselves because you do not know My Father. "No one knoweth... the Father, save the Son." You will never try to please God until you know Him.

Oh, God, of good the unfathomed sea,
Who would not give his heart to Thee?

That is the language of a man who had come to know God. And when a man comes to know God, he yields Him everything. And how did I get to know Him?

I heard the voice of Jesus say, "Come unto Me and rest."

I came to Him, and He revealed the Father to me, and when I saw God in Jesus there was nothing left that I did not yield to Him.

Let the last word be of the simplest. What is this that Jesus said? He said, "Come unto Me." Oh, thank God for those little words. There is no room for pope, or priest, or pastor, or preacher, or penitent form. There is room for nothing but Christ and the soul. Get to Him, man, get to Him. Get to Him now, come to Him Whom you know so well theoretically, and say:

Just as I am, Thy love unknown
Has broken every barrier down;
Now to be Thine, yea, Thine alone,
O Lamb of God, I come.

And to whoever will do that, He will reveal the Father, and you will find God through the Son, and your whole life yielded and trusted and reposed in Him, you will accept His will as your master passion.

What then? Rest, sweet rest, deep rest; rest in the midst of the battle, rest while the testing and the trial and the triumph press, rest all the way until the final rest be won.

084 - Matthew 12:50 - Christ's Next of Kin

Christ's Next of Kin

Whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, he is My brother, and sister, and mother.

Matthew 12:50

In order to have an accurate appreciation of the meaning and value of these wonderful words of Jesus we must carefully consider the circumstances in which they were uttered. The story is told in a brief paragraph, of which these are the final words. There is a similar paragraph in the third Chapter of Mark's gospel; indeed, the similarity is very remarkable. The story as Mark tells it is hardly

changed by sentence or phrase. There is absolutely no difference in any essential matter.

However, in his context, Mark does give some details which Matthew omits. Christ was so pressed with His work, so eagerly sought after by the crowds, so eagerly responding to their seeking, so completely giving Himself up, without stint and without reserve, to the demands that were being made on Him that "when His friends heard it, they went out to lay hold on Him; for they said, He is beside Himself" (Mar_3:21). After recording that fact, Mark goes on to tell the things that were happening in Capernaum, and then, at the thirty-first verse, he resumes the narrative commenced in verse 21, "And there came His mother and His brethren."

Christ, as I have said, was giving Himself without stint, without reserve, to the thronging, pressing multitudes; they followed Him from place to place, came with their criticisms and with their agonies; and with patient courtesy He replied to their criticisms, and with infinite compassion He relieved their agonies. He was so busy that He had not time to eat, was so perpetually occupied that He had no time for rest. That news was conveyed to His mother and to His brethren after the flesh, who evidently were in very close association with Mary, and shared her anxiety and concern for Jesus. His mother heard, and she said, and they said, "He is beside Himself," He is losing His reason. In consequence of this conviction they started on a journey to reach Him, in all probability from Nazareth to Capernaum. When they arrived, they found that He was in a house, surrounded by a crowd of people.

The word was passed to Him that His mother and brethren were without, seeking to speak to Him. He knew why they had come. "He knew all men,... He needed not that anyone should bear witness concerning man; for He Himself knew what was in man." His mother had come, full of anxiety for Him, persuaded that He was beside Himself, eager to prevent Him from killing Himself by excess of zeal and toil. She did not understand Him. That is revealed in the gospels from beginning to end. She loved Him with a great mother love; she knew the infinite and appalling mystery of His being; but she never understood Him. When He began His ministry she sought to hurry Him to some demonstration of power, and He had to say to her, "Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come." Because she loved Him she would have persuaded Him to take care of Himself.

Knowing this, Jesus said, "Who is My mother? and who are My brethren?" and, pointing to the little group of disciples, exclaimed, "Behold My mother and My brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, he is My brother, and sister, and mother."

This word was not a slight cast on the natural love of Mary for Him. He was not speaking slightly of the mother love that had come after Him to stop Him injuring Himself. It was rather a revelation of the fact that there is a closer affinity than that of natural relationship. His word was a declaration that those next of kin to Him are such as share His spiritual conceptions and compulsions. He was revealing to His mother, to His disciples, and to the crowds, the fact that men and women who have fellowship with Him in spiritual vision and spiritual toil are nearer kin to Him than even the woman who had been highly honored as the one who bore Him and gave Him that natural life, through the mystery of which He wrought out into human history God's redeeming purpose.

Let us, then, consider two matters: first, our Lord's teaching in these words concerning the essential nature of that kinship with Him which all those of us who are truly His disciples share; and, second, the particular privileges of kinship which He here described.

First, then, as to the teaching of this declaration concerning the essential nature of our kinship with Jesus. May I ask you to observe negatively that our kinship with Jesus is not that of our humanity; neither is it that of His divinity. I think, perhaps, these things need to be carefully considered and most earnestly stated, for our investigation during recent years, our search, our inquiry, our pressing nearer to the fact of Christ, have resulted in real values, but also they have created grave perils. We have come to a new apprehension of the actuality of the humanity of our Lord. If there are any great artists in the world today they will not paint Christ as the great artists of the middle ages painted Him. We have escaped from those conceptions of our Lord which put Him at a distance from the ordinary things of everyday life. The music of the declaration that He was a carpenter is understood as it never has been understood. Whereas I believe there is great value in this rediscovery of the human Christ, I feel that there is peril in the use we may make of the discovery. I hear people perpetually speaking of the Lord Jesus as though He were entirely, absolutely of their own humanity; or speaking of their own humanity as though it were entirely part and parcel of the humanity of Jesus. That is not the case. No man can come to anything like a careful study of the human Jesus without discovering the infinite distance between Him and ourselves. In all the things that demonstrate His nearness we find the supreme evidence of His distance. If you tell me that He was a Man tempted, and therefore of our humanity, I agree. But His attitude under temptation, and his victory over temptation, demonstrate the fact that in His human life He was infinitely removed from any other man. If you suggest that He was a man Who lived on the principle of trust and faith, I perfectly agree; but in that very activity of trust I find Him at infinite distance from myself. His trust never faltered, never wavered; mine has been faltering and wavering all my life. It is when you press on me the fact of His humanity, and I come most perfectly to an apprehension of the truth that He was human, that I am most startled, ashamed, driven back, defeated by the vision of His perfection.

The teaching of the New Testament is that He was not merely of our humanity, but that He was the second Man, the last Adam, the Founder of an entirely new race. As the first race was created in the economy of God by the inbreathing of the Spirit of God to dust, the new race is to be created of that very humanity by a new birth of the Spirit of God. I go back to the Genesis story, and there I see

a living creature of the dust, enswathed in Deity, and by that enswathing, inbreathing, created man, differentiated by infinite gulfs from all the creation that lies beneath him. In process of time, out of that human nature, fallen and degraded, in an awe-inspiring mystery the Holy Spirit took of the seed of the woman and made a new Man, the first of a new race, all the members of the succeeding race, to be of fallen humanity but remade, reborn, recreated by the activity of the Holy Spirit. The first Man of the new race was, in an infinite mystery, of the old race, but separated from it by the mystery of His birth. I am not kin of Jesus by virtue of my humanity. That humanity is of the race fallen, and Jesus is the Head of a new race.

Neither is our kinship that of His Divine nature, I am not one with Him in essential spiritual life, for my spiritual life is created, His spirit life is uncreated, His spirit life is of the very life of God, absolutely without beginning. He was in Himself, in a mystery that has for two millenniums defied the analysis and explanation of the schoolmen and theologians, and which will defy them to the end of time, the very logos of God, with God, of God, very God from everlasting. To speak of that in man which may be of the Divine nature, that in which He is in the image and the likeness of God, as being kin with the essential mystery of the Deity of Christ, is to show there is no true comprehension of the Christ of the New Testament.

Thus the statement of Christ becomes illuminative and remarkable, for He reveals what kinship with Himself really is, in its deepest and profoundest. Not here does He tell the mystery of its genesis; here, rather, does He reveal the marvel of its expression. What is the expression of our kinship, what is the actuality of it, the nature of it? "Whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, he is My brother, and sister, and mother." He is next of kin to Me, that soul who does My Father's will!

Kinship with Christ consists in doing the will of God, doing the will of God, interpreted in the light of His immediate actions, those very actions which His mother had come to hinder, and doing the will of God as interpreted in the light of His perpetual attitudes. If one should inquire what it is to do the will of God, there is but one answer: Behold that Man, and know what it is to do the will of God. Mark well the impulse of His activities; mark well the doing of all the days; observe carefully that the greater part of His life was spent, not in public service, but in private duty. Remember that first there was the naturalness of the child life and its development. Remember that, second, there was the daily round, the common task for eighteen years in the carpenter's shop. Remember that, finally, when the Voice called there was the abandoning of the carpenter's shop without any of that hesitation or modesty which is of the essence of rebellion. He went forward immediately to face the crowds, declaring the will of God, revealing the heart of God in tenderness and compassion. Know what the will of God is by observing Him pouring Himself out in sacrificial service, violating false sanctities in order to establish the true sanctity, breaking the Sabbath to heal a man in order that the man may forevermore find unbroken sabbath of rest in God. Now, said Jesus, whosoever is doing that is next of kin to me, My brother, My sister, My mother. That is the final word.

What lies behind doing the will of God? Knowing the will of God. The man who does the will of God is the man who knows the will of God. The will of God is discovered and must be discovered in a life of personal, direct, immediate communion with God. The will of God must be discovered by persistent and perpetual inquiry as to what the will of God is. All these things are illustrated in the life of our Lord. We hear Him saying such things as these: I speak nothing of Myself; what My Father gives Me that I speak. I do nothing of Myself; what My Father commands Me, that I do. I am not alone, My Father is with Me. He did the will of God because He knew the will of God. He knew the will of God because He lived in communion with God, waited for God, submitted to God, inquired of God. He said, The men who do that are My next of kin.

What, then, is the fundamental thing? What lies at the back of this doing, deeper even than this knowing? Now, we touch not the activities of Life, not even the intelligence of life, we are at the central citadel of human life, the will of man. Once again let the light of the Lord's perfect revelation flash on our thought. We go back, as we so constantly have to do, to the prophetic Scriptures, in order to hear the very keynote of His life:

In the roll of the book it is written of me:
I delight to do Thy will, O my God.

The will of God chosen, the will of God inquired after in communion, and consequently known, the will of God done in the actual activity of life—that is the story of Jesus, the whole story, including the stoop from the height to the depth, including the whole mystery of incarnation and the process of the incarnate life and the ultimate darkness of the Cross. Everything is there. The will of God chosen, the will of God known as the result of communion, fellowship, inquiry—the will of God carried out.

Said the Lord: The men who live on that principle, choosing the will of God, inquiring after it in perpetual communion, carrying it out in all the details, in the crises and the commonplaces—these men are next of kin to Me. "Whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, he is My brother, and sister, and mother."

Now we turn to what seems to me to be the peculiar and remarkable emphasis and value of this declaration concerning the privileges which He suggested. Let us hear the words again, "Whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, he is My brother, and sister, and mother." That declaration emphasizes what we are to Him rather than what He is to us. Again, remember the

local circumstances: His mother and His brethren after the flesh were outside; she was there out of great love for Him, but she stood outside the circle of His own vision, His own passion, His own mission. She did not understand Him; but these men did, and the grace of the declaration is most marvelous when I remember the men, when I remember how they blundered and faltered and failed. Nevertheless, He did say this thing concerning them, and He did say afterwards that they had been with Him through all His temptations. He knew these men, and knew that the choice they had made of discipleship was far finer than the blunders they had made on the way. That is God's attitude towards man. God judges us at last, not by the accidents, but by the motive, the passion that lies underneath. They were twelve valiant saints. I take them at the Lord's measurement rather than at that of any man. They failed and blundered; but He knew them in the deepest of them, and He said, I know all the imperfections, and failings of these men who are with Me, but I know that the central passion, the master passion of their lives is to do the will of God. They supply what I lack in the sympathy of My own mother. She has not yet reached this inner circle; they have, and they are to me all that is suggested by these wonderful words of human relationship, brother, sister, mother.

In that is the exceeding wonder and glory of my text. It does not declare that if I do the will of God Jesus will be Brother to me. That is true, perchance. The text does not declare that if I do the will of God He will be Sister to me in all the sweet suggestiveness of the word. That may be true. That is not what He said. The text does not declare that He will mother me with infinite tenderness. That is true, but that is not what He said.

There He stood, lonely, criticized, misunderstood, and He declared that those blundering, frail souls who nevertheless had chosen the will of God, and who were seeking to know it, and to do it, were by that attitude coming into such affinity with Him that they were to Him brother, sister, mother.

That is the highest, holiest privilege of doing the will of God. Oh, the privileges of doing the will of God! What are they? The perfecting of my own personality presently? The realization of all that is profoundest in my own being by and by? These are privileges; but this is highest—oh that I may say it reverently and yet say it as our Lord said it on this occasion, when He was being misunderstood by everyone—the highest privilege of doing the will of God is that I can minister to the heart of Christ, that I can be His brother, His sister, His mother.

Everyone sees that the words are suggestive, beautifully, exquisitely poetical, chosen by the Master of words and thoughts in order to convey to human hearts that are touched by these human affections great spiritual truths of the possibilities of the influence exerted upon Himself, by the men who do the will of God.

Did you struggle all last week my brother, my sister, to do the will of God in difficult circumstances, in places of temptation, with sorrow wringing your heart and problems pressing on your spirit? Did you steer straight for the goal so far as you were able? Was the passion of your Heart to do His will? Then you were brother, sister, mother, to Jesus.

What do these words suggest? Now, you must use your own faculty of imagination and interpretation. Imagination and interpretation never succeed save as they are love-inspired. You must begin with human love. What is a brother? "A brother is born for adversity." Yes, that is it! Those two boys live together; they are often terribly rude to each other; yes, they are brothers, but wait till one of them has been hit by sorrow, by sin, then you will discover that the other is his brother. "A brother is born for adversity." I love the Hebrew word there: A brother is born for a tight place! "Whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, he is My brother." God help us to see this thing. The words of Jesus can touch to heavenly music only chords that are already in our hearts. Is Jesus ever in a difficulty? Yes, in London He is in difficulty, in a tight place. Men are still buffeting Him, bruising Him, crucifying Him. Will you be His brother, standing up for Him, helping to bear His burden? I would like to be. We may be if we will do the will of God.

Not His brother only; His sister. Sometimes I think I could speak better of this. I never had a brother, but I had a sister. When I was getting this sermon ready I was greatly impressed to notice that there is no tender reference to a sister in the Old Testament, except, perhaps, the references to Rebekah and to Miriam. When I come into the New Testament, every reference to a sister is thrilling with tenderness. You are quite welcome to charge me with imagination—I believe in imagination—but I wondered why this was. Among other things, I noticed a story which said, "A certain woman named Martha received Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary." That is how Mary was known, as Martha's sister. John, in writing of them, put it the other way, "Mary and her sister Martha"; yet even he, in the course of a few sentences, was saying "Martha and her sister." Mary was a sister. When Jesus said, "My sister," I wonder whether He was not thinking about Mary. If the courage that stands by you when you are in a tight place is the peculiar quality of a brother, what is the peculiar quality of a sister? That you confide in her because she understands. There have been hours in the lives of many men when they had some confidence, tragic confidence; they could not tell father or mother, but they told their sisters. When, presently, the priests seemed to be winning, and Judas was plotting, Mary made her way to Jesus and violated all the economies by pouring costly nard on His feet. What did it mean? She knew His secret. She was doing it to His burying. I would like to be able to hear His secret. I would like to have some little part in the reception of His confidence in the hour when He needs someone to tell His secret to. Is it possible? Yes, "whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My sister."

We come to the last word, and it is the greatest word of all, "mother." What does "mother" stand for? There is but one answer. If brother is a synonym for courage, and sister for confidence, mother is the synonym for comfort. "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you." Comfort: the heart of Christ comforted! Yes, said Paul, "To you it hath been granted in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer in His behalf." We can comfort the heart of the Lord.

How shall I comfort Him, the sorrowful One, for He is still sorrowful in the presence of the world's sin and agony and sorrow—how can I comfort Him? By doing the will of God. Every life conformed to the Divine will, conditioned within it, devoted to it, busy about the Divine will, ministers comfort to His sacred heart.

"Whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, he is My brother, and sister, and mother."

Notice that the figures end there. He did not say the same is My father. Other than of God, He never spoke of any in that relation to Him. When at twelve years of age His mother came to Jerusalem looking for Him, having missed Him from the company, she said, "Thy father and I sought thee sorrowing." He answered her, "How is it that ye sought Me? wist ye not that I must be in My Father's house?" That inquiry was a revelation of His recognition of the fact that God alone was His Father. The figures made use of in my text were all on the human level. We can never be to Him in the place of His Father. When we apply these relations as implying what He is to us, He is brother, sister, mother, and all because He is able to look into our eyes and souls and say, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father."

Those who do the will of God enter into the sacred possibilities of ministering to Him. Does not that make it supremely worth while to do that will? How have I sought to appeal to some of you to do the will of God for the saving of your own souls, for the sake of the influences you can exert upon other men for their healing and help. I reach a higher level of appeal now: I pray you choose the will of God as the principle of your life, find your way into fellowship therewith, and seek to do it, not merely for the sake of your own soul, not alone in order that you may help others, but that you may minister to the need of the heart of Christ. I feel that is the highest motive. Oh, if in a life of service, by suffering and by sacrifice I might place another gem in the Redeemer's diadem, weave another garland wherewith to deck His brow; if by devotion to the will of God, and service expressive of that devotion, I can stand up for Him in a tight place, can receive the confidence of His sorrow, and break upon His feet some alabaster box of ointment; if I can only comfort the sorrowing Heart of Christ, then, so help me God, as I know it and am able, I desire to do the will of God.

The final word of the message is this. He made the assertion of my text not only with regard to those disciples who were there, but as a proclamation, and He introduced it with the greatest of all the words of the New Testament, in some senses, "Whosoever shall do the will of My Father."

If my name had been written there, I would have thought some other man had borne my name and that it did not mean me; but "whosoever" includes me, includes you. That is my appeal tonight. For Christ's sake, because He needs brothers, and sisters, and mothers, for courage, for confidence, for comfort, seek, and do the will of God.

085 - Matthew 13:51-52 - Things New and Old

Things New and Old

Have ye understood all these things? They say unto Him, Yea. And He said unto them, Therefore every scribe who hath been made a disciple to the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is a householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old.

Matthew 13:51-52

Jesus had been instructing His disciples in the mysteries of the Kingdom of heaven; and at the close of His parabolic teaching He declared to them the purpose thereof. He had not been instructing them merely for the satisfaction of their own spiritually intellectual curiosity. There was a practical bearing and value in all that He had been doing. He asked them, "Have ye understood all these things? Do you understand the meaning of the present hour? Have you caught any vision through the pictures which I have presented to your view, of the purpose of God, of His plan?" I am always astonished when I read their answer. "They say unto Him, Yea." I am the more astonished, that He did not rebuke them. He is wonderfully patient with us when we think we understand the things He says. He knew, however, that they had at least seen the broad outline; and He knew that presently, when the Spirit, the Comforter should come He would bring to their remembrance all the things of which He had spoken, and would explain in greater detail and with infinite patience the meaning thereof. Therefore, even though as yet they certainly did not perfectly understand, as their subsequent action demonstrates, He told them the reason of His teaching. "Every scribe," and one is halted by the word, for it is an interesting thing that Jesus uses that word here of His disciples, "Every scribe." What was a scribe? A scribe in the days of our Lord was a moral interpreter. The office of the scribe was created by Ezra, and had continued from his time. The scribes in the days of Jesus were in opposition to Him, but their office was that of moral interpretation, that of exposition of the law, and application of it to the conditions in the midst of which they found themselves. Christ used the word and appropriated the office on behalf of His disciples for all the coming ages. "Every scribe."

Mark the preliminary necessity. "Every scribe who hath been instructed to the Kingdom of the heavens." There can be no doing of His work, no fulfilling of His purpose, no cooperation in His travail, until a man is himself a disciple to the Kingdom of the heavens, and is instructed in the principles of that great and gracious Kingdom.

Let all this be taken for granted, what then? What is the responsibility that rests upon the scribe, the instructed one? "He bringeth forth things new and old."

In these two verses we have one of the smallest, as to number of words, of the parables of Jesus, the parable of the householder; a final picture to teach these men the value of the pictures already given them. The picture is that of a wealthy householder meeting the necessity of all those who are in his household, by scattering to them his treasures.

That is the perpetual responsibility of the Christian Church. Jesus said to the Hebrew people as His ministry was approaching its close, "The Kingdom of God shall be taken away from you, and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." In that great and remarkable sentence, He transferred the responsibility for certain teaching and certain work, from the Hebrew people who rejected God's King, to a new nation which Peter described in his letter as a holy nation, an elect race. This is the responsibility that is referred to here, as bringing forth things new and old.

"The Kingdom of heaven" is the supreme phrase in this parable. It is not local in its application. We must not narrow that application to Judea. Neither must we narrow it exclusively to the millennium that has not yet arrived. It is not necessary to discuss now the differences between such phrases as "the Kingdom of God," "the Kingdom of heaven," and "the Kingdom." The thing that matters is that we should find the quantity or quality which is common to the whole of them. It is that of the rule of heaven, the mastery of heaven, the establishment of the heavenly order. In preceding parables, Jesus had told the story of the vicissitudes of the Kingdom principle in the present age, showing how sometimes there is victory and sometimes defeat. Through all the parables the phrase, "the Kingdom of heaven," recurs. The word, "Kingdom," does more than mark a realm; it emphasizes a rule. We sometimes speak of the Kingdom of God as though it referred to a place, a time, a covenant, a method. It refers to all of these, but the fact of that Kingdom is greater than all. "The Kingdom of God," suggests the throne of God, the government of God, the reign of God, the sovereignty of God. "The Kingdom of heaven" suggests the supremacy of heaven over the things of the earth. That Kingdom of heaven abides. Take heart, my brethren, do not be constrained to believe that God's throne has trembled, or that the supremacy of heaven has ceased. Every man is in the grip of the Divine government and cannot escape it. The devil does not reign even in hell. God reigns there also. Because the Kingdom of the heavens abides, it has a message to every century, to all conditions of human life, and the responsibility of the disciples of the Kingdom is that of delivering that message.

I think sometimes our phrases mislead us all unconsciously. For what are we labouring? The establishment of the Kingdom? The Kingdom is established. What then is our business? To reveal its bearings upon human life, to dictate its terms to the sons of men; out of the treasure house of the established supremacy of God and of the heavens to cast things new and old upon the earth, and in that sense to establish that which is established, to bring to the consciousness of men the facts from which they can never escape; so to love and help men and the age; that their relation to the Kingdom shall be one that results in blessing upon themselves and upon humanity, rather than in blasting and in cursing.

"Things new and old." What are these? If we can understand this phrase, we are getting to the very heart of the teaching of Jesus here concerning our responsibility. These are one in essence. We are not to understand that Jesus said "things new," and "things old," as though He were speaking of two sets of ideas. There is only one set of ideas suggested; the things are new and old. The new here does not mean fresh in the sense of just about to begin. The old does not mean ancient in the sense of about to pass away. Everything is new and everything is old. The principle is old, the application is new. The root is old, the blossom and the fruit are new. The two are necessary to growth. Destroy the old and you will have no new. Invent a new by the destruction of the old, and that new withers while you look at it. It is equally true that the absence of the new destroys the life of the old. Preserve your old and do not allow it to express itself in the new, and it withers. Some of you have planted bulbs in your gardens, all russet robed and devoid of beauty. Why did you put them in your garden? Why not lay them away on a shelf? Why not preserve them because they are the bulbs out of which flowers sprang two years ago? To preserve them is to destroy them. If you do not allow them to repeat themselves in new blossom and new fruit, they will die. Take the inter-relation of the thoughts of this phrase in another way. New things which contradict old things are not from old things, and therefore they are false; and the old thing which has no new in it is dead and valueless. Was it not this that Russell Lowell meant when he sang:

New occasions teach new duties; Time makes ancient good uncouth;
They must upward still, and onward, who would keep abreast of truth;
Lo, before us gleam her campfires! We ourselves must pilgrims be,
Launch our Mayflower, and steer boldly through the desperate winter sea,
Nor attempt the Future's portal with the Past's blood-rusted key.

But when you recite that, do not forget that if you attempt the future's portal with any other key than that which hangs upon the girdle of the Son of Man you will never unlock it. It must not be a rusty key, but it must be the same true key of David. The Kingdom of the heavens is old, and the application of its principles to our own age is new. Methods, manners, men may change, but this fact of the Kingdom of heaven abideth, rooted in the being of God, and blossoms afresh in every generation among the sons of men.

Let us turn from these generalities. Let me speak of some things new and old, for the bringing forth of which the Church of God is responsible at the present hour.

First the old things. The Church of God exists to affirm unceasingly and without apology the fact of the Divine Kingship; to declare that the throne is occupied and that government is exercised. The oldest of all the old is the fact of God; a fact which we are all so appallingly apt to forget, when we become practical. We remember God when we are poetical; we forget Him as the busy days run on. The Church stands in the midst of the nations, in the midst of the world, wherever her sons and daughters are found, for the old truth. I will use a phrase we are almost afraid of—our fathers loved it, preached it, lived it—the sovereignty of God.

The necessity for righteousness is also old. The fact that apart from righteousness there can be no permanence, no individual life, or social life, or national life. The fact that the wages of sin are still death. You may change your terminology and speak of sin by other words, but the old fact remains.

Or again, the fact that man is a sinner. I am quite willing to postpone discussion for a considerable period as to how he became a sinner. I am interested in the fact. Man today has the same passions, the same heartache, as had his father, and his father's father. We change a man's raiment, but the man abides, the slave of forces that mar, and master, and destroy.

The fact that plenteous redemption is provided is also old. Plenteous redemption for every man, and if not, for no man. Plenteous redemption to satisfy the human conscience; a word of pardon spoken out of the mystery of the bloodshedding of the Cross; and virtue communicated whereby men, gripped, enslaved by the forces that spoil, stand erect.

What of the new things? There is nothing new, save a new statement of the old things. There may be a new interpretation of those things, but in the new interpretation let us be very careful lest we devitalize the old.

There is a new interpretation of Kingship in the terms of Fatherhood. Do not be afraid of the thought. Do not imagine that Fatherhood merely means tenderness and love. That is weak and false fatherhood. Of all the books written on the atonement through recent years, in this particular respect the one that I think most illuminative is Dr. Scott Lidgett's, in which he shows that in Fatherhood there lie all the facts of God; Kingship is there, Judgeship is there. The King is Father, His law is love. That is not to make law less severe, but more severe. There are no eyes so keen in watching as lovelit eyes. The throne abides, but we have found that the King is Father. The reason of His law is His love. So that today we say to our children not merely, You must because you must, but you must because it is best.

Righteousness abides the old truth; but today we are coming to a new understanding of its reasonableness.

Sin abides, but we are gaining a new understanding of the truth that the essential sin is unbelief. Read the letter to the Hebrews. The master sin with which the writer of that letter deals is the sin of unbelief. What is unbelief? The refusal to obey intellectual conviction. That is the sin of all sins. That is the easily besetting sin. Drink is never an easily besetting sin; men acquire the habit. Lust is not an easily besetting sin. The easily besetting sin, the sin in good standing around, is unbelief, the dishonesty of the man who will not obey the call of truth. There is the new emphasis of sin. That is what we need to say to men today.

What of redemption? The old provision abides. The new emphasis needed is that redemption is necessary, that no man can live the life of his own ideal, the ideal born in the moment of vision, apart from a force that is beyond himself, and outside himself. Harold Begbie, an honest disciple of Professor James, the great psychologist at whose feet we are all glad to sit today, has given the Professor a few additional problems in his book, "Broken Earthenware." What are you going to do with O.B.D.? What are you going to do with the Puncher? Now if Harold Begbie will write another book, and I hope he will, let him not confine himself to slum districts, but let him cross to the West End here, and he will find the same problem. I know the thing of which I speak. I know it better tonight than I did five years ago when I began my ministry here. I know that beneath the veneer, the culture, the refinement, there is the agony of broken hearts, and of conflict with sin. Thank God, I know also that the redemption provided is as powerful in the West End as in the East End. I know that this plenteous redemption is redemption for man as man. What we need is to emphasize its necessity and proclaim its absolute sufficiency.

A new statement of the old things, yes, but more, a new application of the old things is what this age peculiarly needs. It needs a social application based upon a specialized individual application. Here is the trouble with our age. The gleams of light are everywhere, men are seeing visions of an established order, in which man shall be brother to man; yet, the prophets of that new order are principally men who care nothing for their fellow men, but everything for themselves. That is the peculiar trouble of the hour; gleams of light everywhere, and visions of a great brotherhood of man; but how are you going to produce it? It is old, and trite,

and commonplace; but it is true that we shall never have a brotherhood apart from a Fatherhood. To attempt the establishment of a social order without the foundation of God is the most fatuous folly. We must begin aright.

The Church of God needs the social application within her own borders. Here is the place where we ought to be in humiliation before God; that we fail within the Church itself; that we have men and women within the Catholic Church of God suffering alone and unhelped; that it is possible to cross the threshold of the Church of God and carry over with us the wretched, miserable caste conditions which exist outside. That is the paralysis, the devil, that is spoiling our testimony. We need the new application of the old principle of the government of God, in a new social life in the fellowship of the Christian Church. But we must begin aright. The commonwealth is created by the wealth of all. Socialism demands individualism. Individualism creates socialism. Do not be afraid of the word. I said socialism twice and some of you went pale. I decline to hand over any great word to abuse, misrepresentation, and misunderstanding. I make my solemn protest here again that the man is woefully mistaken who says we can have a perfect social order—for the moment whether it be competitive or co-operative is not within my outlook—wherein human wrongs shall be righted, without God. But grant a community of individuals remade by the grace of God, and you have your society. But, ah me, how is it the Church has failed in social realization? Because the children of the Church have held back part of the price. There have been successors to Ananias and Sapphira as well as to the apostles. Because we have not been true to the whole claim of the Divine Kingship in individual lives. Thus we have not been able to realize the meaning of the Divine Kingship in the corporate life of the Church, and reveal it to our own age.

One other word for the purpose of practical and immediate application. The scribes of the Kingdom of heaven are to be the moral interpreters of the law of the Kingdom to their own age. That is our business. In order to do it, we must see and understand our age. How are we to do it? The question is one perhaps more easily asked than answered. We cannot do it by reading newspapers. The whole of our press, with rare exceptions, is touched at the present moment with that sensationalism which destroys truth. The man who is going to see his age will not see it in a newspaper. Sometimes you must read books that do not sell, to see the age. What are the facts of our own age? I can summarize them in three words, Atheism, Animalism, Abjectness. I will grant that there are other things to be said. There is a wistful, longing and looking toward the East for signs of morning. There is an awful hunger after spiritual things which is manifesting itself in trafficking with the occult. There is a new desire everywhere for the heroic.

The secularist halls are closed, you tell me. It is a bad sign. It shows that atheism is more dangerous than it used to be. Atheism is without-Godism. That is very awkward, but it helps me. Without-Godism. One of the supreme evidences is the frivolity of our age. Men have no personal commerce with God, and therefore it is an age of pleasure, of light literature, of frothiness. It is an age of indifference. There is no sense of God, and therefore there are no infidel lecturers. There is no worship, for atheism is the mastery of material ideals.

Animalism is always the sequence of atheism. Men say of the prophet of God, "As for this Moses... we know not what is become of him," and the next thing is the making of the golden calf and the worship of it. Although the golden calf is intended to be the representation of Deity, it is in very deed also a representation of animalism. The story of the golden calf is a tragic story. They made a golden calf, and they said, "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." Then Aaron built an altar and said, "Tomorrow shall be a feast to Jehovah," mark that I pray you, "a feast to Jehovah." Then they worshipped Jehovah before the golden calf. What is the next thing we read? "The people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play." Now you have the whole tragedy of the situation. That is animalism. "What shall we eat, what shall we drink?" Oh for the return of prophet or apostle who dared to say true things to men even though their sensibilities were hurt. Oh for a Paul to say once more to this age, "whose God is their belly, who mind earthly things"; eating, and drinking and playing.

The consequence is abjectness, submission to forces that are destroying national life, and that without protest. Abjectness is trying to persuade itself that it is of the essence of courage to prepare for war. Abjectness has nightmare if an aeroplane crosses the eastern sky.

What is our duty in the presence of these things? To apply the fact of the Kingdom of God. In face of all the forces of the Kingdom of darkness, what are we to do? Bring forth things new and old, the new application of old principles. New phrasing of old truth, new channels for old streams. Taking the old for granted make appeal for the new.

First, there must be separation of the subjects of the Kingdom of the heavens from all complicity with the kingdom of Satan. That is where we must begin. The Church will have to say, "There is no room within our borders for any man who in his business is identified with the forces that are damning humanity." We must begin there. The Church must be true to the Kingdom of heaven within her own borders. Judgment must begin at the house of the Lord. Let the priests themselves believe and put on salvation. That is the first word.

Then, out of that life of true separation of the members of the Kingdom, the Church may go forth in a new witness to Godliness as against atheism, and spirituality as against animalism, to courage as against abjectness. There must be a new crusade against every form of evil; the Church forevermore manifesting herself as opposed to the things that destroy; the Church against war, and

against lust, and against gambling, and against the drink traffic; against all the things that spoil humanity.

I plead today for a new enterprise in the interests of the old and abiding things, to reach the unreached masses of our cities. I am longing for the striking of the hour when it shall be possible for me to stand side by side with Canon Hensley Henson, or Mr. Stuart Holden, or the Bishop of London, somewhere off these ecclesiastical grounds, and preach the gospel to the unreached masses of the city. That hour ought to come. Surely we have some common belief on which we can stand together. My brethren, the concern of the Church ought not to be that of the defence of her own views, but attack upon the strongholds of evil and the proclamation of the evangel to the man who stands outside and with a fair show of reason says, "When you have done your quarrelling inside I will be prepared to listen to you when you talk to me."

I plead for a new enterprise in which we close our ranks, and carry the principles of the Kingdom of heaven to the age in which we live.

In order to close our ranks I think we may do these things. I would first of all, postpone all theological controversy to the calm of eternity. I think we shall be far more likely to come to a correct apprehension of the mystery of the Kenosis in heaven than we ever shall on earth.

I propose that we learn to sympathize with ecclesiastical convictions which we do not share, that we begin to believe that the man in the opposite camp is in heart sincere; that there are things about which we ought to agree to differ, and to cease our controversy in the presence of a common foe and a common God.

I propose that we abandon once and forever all petty jealousy, and rise into a great and grand conception of the Kingdom of the heavens, that we may speak with no uncertain sound to our own age.

In the name of God and of humanity let us act as though we believed the things we profess to believe.

Rouse then, soldiers! rally round the banner!
Ready, steady, pass the word along;
Onward! Forward! shout aloud Hosanna!
Christ is Captain of the mighty throng!

087 - Matthew 16:16 - The Sifting Of Peter

The Sifting of Peter

Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.
Matthew 16:16

He began to curse, and to swear, I know not this Man of Whom ye speak.
Mark 14:71

The contrast is a startling one. It is at first sight almost inconceivable that these are the words of the same man, and yet we know that they are. Then surely we have placed them in the wrong order, and ought first to have read "I know not the man," as language used in the days before he met the Christ; and his declaration, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," must have been made subsequently. We know, however, that this is not the case. If, indeed, they have been read in their right order a long period must have intervened between affirmation and denial. As a matter of fact, not many months had passed between the hour in which Peter rose to the height of that most wonderful confession and the hour in which he denied any knowledge of Jesus. So startling an association of texts compels us to inquire the meaning of the change which has come over Peter since that glorious and radiant hour when, amid the rocky fastnesses of Cæsarea Philippi, in answer to the challenge of his Lord, he had said the one thing the heart of Christ had been waiting to hear, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

I do not propose to consider particularly that confession of Peter, nor do I intend to dwell at any length upon the final words. I am desirous rather of asking you to consider with me the awful possibility of passing in brief time from the most blessed confession to the most dreadful denial. I think perhaps I might take another text from which to preach tonight, and if I did so it would be by way of application at the beginning as also at the close. The text would be, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." The story of Peter's denial is the story of backsliding, and it is a story which reveals the truth which we perpetually need to remember, that no man openly backslides at once. The open blasphemy is always preceded by heart backsliding. If we would understand how it came to pass that from that height of affirmation to that depth of denial a man could pass in those few brief months, we must go back to the occasion of the affirmation. We must see what happened immediately afterwards, and then attempt to trace the downward progress of this man, until from mountain height we find him in the depth of the valley.

You will remember that immediately after Peter's confession our Lord told him of His purpose concerning His Church and His

Kingdom.

For the first time He introduced the band of disciples, in so many words, definitely and plainly to the fact of which He had been conscious all the while, that He could win His crown only by way of the cross. Immediately, while the light of the glory of the confession and the annunciation concerning the Church was still about them, I find the first movement in Peter's backsliding. He said to Jesus, "Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall never be unto Thee." As we hear him we are inclined to sympathize with him. We feel that we would have said exactly the same thing under the circumstances, and in all probability we would have. That, however, does not prove Peter to have been right. We may make every excuse that we will—and it is better that we should—for his limited light, for his fickleness and feebleness of character, but the fact remains that in that moment he passed out of immediate and close fellowship with his Lord.

When this man could not see Christ's method he withdrew from absolute and unquestioning loyalty to his Lord. So long as Jesus had spoken to him of building a Church, Peter remained loyal; but the moment Jesus ceased to speak about keys and began to talk about a cross he was puzzled, astonished, disappointed, confused. He could not see how suffering could be the way to the throne. He could not see how his Master's going to Jerusalem and being ill-treated, and finally—for he would use no other word—murdered, could issue in the building of that glorious Church to which his Lord had just made reference. He could not see how keys of any kind could be of use to him if the Master were to pass into the shadow and lose His life. Neither could I have seen it, nor could have you. So far, let us confess our perfect sympathy and fellowship with this man. It was a strange thing Jesus said to him. He had so hoped for the coming of a Deliverer. The Deliverer had come, and at last, Peter, in a moment of supreme, divine illumination, had looked into the face of the long-hoped-for Messiah and confessed Him. In his confession there was the outpouring of his soul's hope of triumph, and victory, of the breaking of chains and loosing of the captives, of the restoration of order and the setting up of the Kingdom of God. I am growingly reluctant to criticize Peter, but for our own soul's profit let us see wherein lay his mistake. It lay in the fact that he was not prepared to accept his Master's estimate of necessity, was not prepared to follow his Lord simply, even when he could not understand his Lord's method. That is the common mistake of the saints. We have all made it, and therefore, sooner or later, we have found ourselves at a distance from Jesus.

The great lesson of Peter's denial is that wherever there is arrested development of Christian life there must follow deterioration of Christian character. Life must make progress to higher levels or sink lower until it pass away. I must follow Jesus Christ wholly and absolutely without question, or there will be an ever widening breach between Him and myself, until I, even I, presently shall deny Him with blasphemy over some flickering imitation fire. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

Your affirmation of loyalty is God-inspired. Your confession of Christ is true to the deepest within you. You are perfectly honest and sincere. God help you to follow Him all the way, whether you understand Him or not. God help you at least to keep by His side when clouds almost obscure the vision of His face, for if once you let yourself question His wisdom and His word there will be distance which must increase. Let us trace this in the history of Peter. The whole subsequent story is written for us in chapter 14 of Mark's Gospel. I am not going to read the whole chapter, but I desire to take you from stage to stage, that you may see how this man passed away from Jesus ever a little further, until we come to the open denial in our second text. Remember that the first step was taken when Peter shunned the cross because he did not understand it, and questioned his Lord's wisdom when He declared the method necessary to His crowning. You will find the next step in verse 29 of this chapter. "Peter said unto Him, Although all shall be offended, yet will not I." Then going on to verse 37, I read, "He," that is Jesus, "cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? Coudest thou not watch one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Notice, the Lord did not call him Peter then. He went back to the old name. The next step is to be found in verse 47. "A certain one of them that stood by drew his sword, and smote the servant of the high priest, and struck off his ear." Mark is Peter's friend, and does not mention his name, but we know that the "certain one" was Peter. There we have the next step, and increased distance. I pass on to verse 54 and read, "Peter had followed afar off," and I think he seems yet a little further away from his Lord. At last he was sitting with the officers and warming himself in the light of the fire. Then, in verses 68-71, a serving maid charges him with being a Galilean, and tells him that his speech betrays him, and thrice, and finally with curses, he denies his Lord. Let us now notice the stages.

First, refusal to follow his Lord into the mystery of pain and refusal to believe that his Lord knew best. Next, boastfulness. "Although all shall be offended, yet will not I." What follows? Failure in the devotional life, inability to watch, and the cessation of prayer. Then zeal without knowledge, hastiness, the drawing of a sword, not under the command of his Master. What next? Following afar, because his Lord had rebuked him for his zeal without knowledge. Then in the chill of the night we see him warming himself over a fire which the enemies of Christ had built. And then a laughing serving maid and a lying Apostle. Christ is denied, and the man of the mountain is in the depths, the man who thought he stood has fallen. The first refusal to follow Jesus has culminated in dastardly and blasphemous denial.

These things need looking at a little more closely, that we may see how perfectly natural is the story. After the refusal of the cross Jesus Christ sternly rebuked Peter. "Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art a stumbling-block unto me; for thou mindest not the things

of God, but the things of men." From that moment there was in the heart of Peter a consciousness that his Master was not able to trust him, a strange sense of distance between friends which is the most agonizing consciousness that can ever come either to one or the other. This man, knowing his Lord's attitude to himself, will endeavor to lessen the sense of distance by loud profession. John tells us the story far more fully than it is stated in Mark. Peter said, "Lord, whither goest Thou?" Jesus looked at him and said, "Whither I go, thou canst not follow Me now; but thou shalt follow afterwards." Then Peter asked, "Lord, why cannot I follow Thee even now? I will lay down my life for Thee." Jesus answered, "Wilt thou lay down thy life for Me? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, the cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice." Then Peter said, "Although all shall be offended, yet will not I." I pray you notice the principle which questioned his Master's knowledge working itself out. Peter said, in effect, "You do not know me, although You think You do. You are suspicious of me. You think I will deny You, but I will never deny You." Moreover, his boastfulness is of that most objectionable kind which puts itself into contrast with other people. "Although all shall be offended, yet will not I." In that moment Peter went further from Christ. Jesus set His face toward the cross even though there was not a single soul able to sympathize with Him. He gathered Peter, James, and John, and took them to the somber shadow of the Garden of Gethsemane, and, withdrawing Himself from them, told them to watch. He returned to find them asleep, and going up to the man whose profession had been so loud He said, "Simon, sleepest thou? Coudest thou not watch one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." Peter boastful had become Peter unwatchful. Peter confident in himself had become the man who did not feel his need for watchfulness or for prayer, and thus in the presence of the very agony which the Lord had predicted he fell asleep. Suddenly, upon the darkness of the night there flashed the torches of the foes of Christ who had come to arrest Him. Peter was there. He had been boastful and unwatchful, and now he must make up in zeal for what he lacked in devotion. He drew his sword and smote Malchus, cutting off his ear. The Lord immediately rebuked him, "Put up again thy sword into its place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." Then we read that "Peter followed Him afar off." Oh, the humanness of it. Peter said in his heart, "I can do nothing right. Whatever I say is objected to. Whatever I do is wrong. Very well then, I will drop behind." He "followed afar off." Do you see the growing estrangement? He still followed, but it was "afar off." It was a cold night, and there was a fire in the court, round which the soldiers and enemies of Christ were gathered, in all probability laughingly discussing the arrest they had made, and perhaps wondering what it all meant, for in the garden they had seen the glory flame from His eyes and had fallen to the ground. They were now perhaps laughing at their own stupidity and superstition. Peter was cold, and he warmed himself at their fire. When a man gets there it is so easy for a laughing servant girl to make him swear that he never knew his Friend at all.

Let us turn from the picture, keeping it in our minds only as a parable and a teaching. Let me say to you that the steps of Peter's downward career as here revealed are always the steps manifest in backsliding from the Lord. It begins at some moment when it is impossible to follow Him by sight and we decline to follow Him by faith. It begins in some crisis when He calls to something higher than we have known, and because the way to the higher level is the way of the cross and shame we draw back. Backsliding begins in some moment when we think we understand the genius of Christianity better than Jesus Christ does. You say, "Does man ever so imagine?" Ask your own heart if you have not come there often. I believe and confidently affirm that the fact that you have left the Church of God and have turned your back thereto does not constitute the first thing in your backsliding. You were disobedient to the heavenly vision. Some of you have entered only today upon that first phase. The cross has confronted you, and you have shunned it. You did not believe that could be the pathway to the higher life of crowning and victory, and you have put your own thinking concerning Christian experience over against the clear command of your Lord and the word of your Lord, and immediately there begins to be distance between you.

The next thing inevitably will be boastfulness. I want to put this as practically as I know how. I am always afraid of the man who tells me he is never going to deny Christ. I have been in experience meetings, in testimony meetings, in fellowship meetings, and I have heard men say, "Whoever else turns his back upon Jesus Christ I am never going to do that." If a man should so speak in a Church meeting over which I presided he is the man I would watch over and pray for, because he is in danger. The moment a man says "I will never leave Thee nor forsake Thee, O Christ, though everyone else shall," that man already has passed a little way out of communion with his Lord. The trembling soul in the Church who says, "I walk fearfully, I am afraid lest I should grieve Him, I am afraid lest there should grow distance between me and my Lord," I need not watch over. That trembling soul will be found close to the Lord all the way.

What follows boastfulness? Always the same thing, lack of prayer and lack of watching. Young man, when you commenced your Christian life you were very regular in your habits of prayer, you were afraid of yourself and watched constantly for the coming of the enemy. You burned bridges behind you which, alas, you are beginning to reconstruct today. You dared not walk down certain streets after you broke with evil and set your face toward following Jesus Christ, but you are beginning to frequent those old paths again. You are not quite so watchful as you were, and you excuse your lack of watchfulness by saying that there is no necessity for that carefulness and narrowness which characterize some people. There is great need for narrowness when you are walking amid precipices. The man who is sure he is safe, and who ceases to watch and drops prayer out of his life, who imagines he can live an independent life as a Christian soul, is falling already.

What follows? Again, always the same thing as in the case of Peter—zeal without knowledge. The Church of God today is cursed by

zeal without knowledge. This is the age of fussy feverishness, and there are multitudes of people who are attempting to overtake their lack of spiritual life by service. It is not very long since a young lady came to me and said, "I feel my Christian life is at a very low ebb. I feel that there is distance between me and my Lord, and I do not know how to improve matters. Do you not think it would be a good thing for me to take a class in the Sunday school?" I replied, "A thousand times, no. In the name of God leave the children alone until you are right with God yourself." The same thing expresses itself in the invitations which sometimes reach me. People write, "Will you come and conduct a few days' special services? We want to see a deepening of our spiritual life, and we think if you came and held some evangelistic services it would help us." I invariably reply, "Get right with God first and then, if I have time, I will come." You cannot make up by doing for what you lack in being. It is well for us to remember that the last act of Divine surgery which the hand of Jesus ever performed was made necessary by the blundering zeal of a distant disciple.

What follows zeal without knowledge? A slackening of the zeal, following afar off. Let us speak in the language of the day—one attendance at church on Sunday instead of two! On Sunday morning looking out to see whether it is wet, a thing you never do on Monday morning. I do not say these things to raise a smile. If they amuse you, God have mercy on you. Following afar. Following, yes, I will not deny you are following, but afar.

If you are far from Jesus you get cold, and then you want to warm yourself, and you begin doing it at the world's fires. There are all sorts of fires—they are called fires, but they are not, they are only painted. You begin to talk of narrowness. Your father did not allow you to play cards or go to the theater, but you are so chilly you want something to warm you. There are scores of men who ought to be tramping to Calvary with Christ who are playing with the devil's fire trying to get warm. That is what I mean, nothing more and nothing less. What right had Peter at that fire? It would have been better for him to have been starving outside in the cold night than getting warmth there. The world knows you. You cannot drop the speech of Jesus all at once. You are of the same country and kin as He is, and your speech will betray you. You will have someone say to you when he meets you at one of the world's fires, where you are trying to get a little warmth, excitement, enthusiasm, "I thought you were a Christian."

Where ought we to draw the line as Christian people? Where the world draws it for us. The worldly man has a very keen and accurate estimate of what the Christian man ought to be. You will have some servant maid, someone in the world, say to you, "Really, I thought you were a Christian." God have mercy upon you—that is the moment of your last peril. You may not curse. You may not take any oath on it. You may adopt the method of the age in which you live, and smile, and say, "Yes, I used to be." You may just as well swear at once. I do not think any worse of Peter for swearing that day. It is the fact that he denied his Lord which is the tragedy. The blasphemy was the expression of his nature. If he had remained true to Christ the same impetuous, impulsive nature would have expressed itself in a song instead of an oath. It is the relationship that is wrong, the distance is wrong. It is the tragedy of denial that is the agony of the story.

To you who have drifted away from nearness I might use the Apostle's words, "Ye were running well; who did hinder you?" This, is the final thing, that you break with the Church and break with the ordinances of religion, and break with the external manifestation of Christianity. You are now known among your friends as a man who once held religious views. God have mercy on you! The swearing word was the accident of a temperament; the denial was the sin of a soul. The fact that you do not swear is simply due to your temperament, and yet you may even do that. It is not long since a dear and beloved friend of mine, a Christian minister, sheltered in his own home for the last weeks of his life a man who had been a preacher of the Gospel, an evangelist, winning souls, but who, when my friend found him, was preaching his sermon and praying in a public house for a pint of beer. You say, "I will never do that." Beware, that is what Peter said. You say, "I could not sink to such a level as that." "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." You have made a glorious confession. It was sincere, true, high, noble, God-inspired, Christ-approved, and yet close to you is the depth of denial.

Another thing I would say to you is that if you have wandered the slightest distance from Christ your only hope of safety is in immediate return. You may return now, if you will. Listen to me—and God forgive me if there has been anything of undue and un-Christly sternness even in my tone—have you denied Him? Have you actually gone so far as to say you never knew Him? He will take you home now if you will come. Next Sunday evening I hope to speak about Peter's home-coming, but you need not wait for next Sunday, you can get home now. You have gone a long way from Him, but He has not left you. You say that is a contradiction. There are all sorts of contradictions in Christianity, and its paradoxes are its most blessed things. You are as far off from Him as denying Peter, but He is close to you; and tonight, without sign or sound for man's knowledge, fling yourself back upon His heart and He will blot out all your sin and love you freely. You are not as far as that perhaps. Where are you? Place yourself. Warming at the world's fire? Quit it. I am talking to those of you who have confessed Him and known Him, but have lost your power for witness because you are at a distance from Him. Are you warming at the world's fire? Leave it. Jesus can make fires for you if you are cold. He made one for Peter by and by. I know you are tired. I know the drab drudgery of the life that some of you live, but do not make the mistake of trying to warm yourself at painted fires. Go back to Him. Walk with Him. Talk to Him. Serve Him. Let Him talk to you. Then, suddenly, in the midst of the chilliness, you will say, "How my heart burns within me when He talks to me by the way." Or are you following afar off? Is the old first love, the love of betrothal and espousal gone? Press back to Him. It is you who have changed, not He. It is your love that has cooled, not His. Press back to Him, and you will find Him ready to receive you even now. Or are you

among the number of those who are neglecting prayer in order to do more work for God? Do less work for God and pray more. Are you neglecting the hour of devotion because you have so many things on hand in connection with the Christian Church? Get some of the things out of your hands and hold your hands empty to heaven for a longer space, I charge you. I often think it would be a blessed thing for the Church of God if for a little while she attempted to do less and worshiped more. The doing, in the end, would be not less, but more and mightier. I pray you hasten back to the mountain top, the place of quietness and seclusion, of keen watchfulness and prayerfulness, which marks your sense of dependence. Perhaps you have not come so far as this, and are a little angry with me tonight. You are saying, "Why does the preacher so talk to us? We shall never do this thing. I am never going to deny Christ." Is that the language of your heart? Then it proves you are a distance from Him. The nearer a man is to Christ, the more conscious he is of his own frailty, and the more is he possessed of strength, though he hardly knows it. The nearer a man lives to Jesus Christ, the more acutely conscious is he of distance between him and his Lord by reason of his Lord's superior strength and his own frailty, and the more he presses closely to Him.

Are you shunning some cross which His will appoints, setting up your own estimate of His will and method as against His? Do not shun the cross. He sees the cross as a means of grace. It is an old word and we have made a proverb of it. We used to engrave it upon bookmarkers—"No cross, no crown!" It is the whole philosophy of Christian life. Remember the cross there is not His cross, but your cross. Did He not say, "If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." It is when a man shuns the cross that he passes out of intimate fellowship and begins the downward course.

My final word is that already twice said. Wherever you may be, you need go no farther. Turn back to Him and to His love, back to His heart ere you rest tonight, and you will find Him the same loving, almighty Saviour.

088 - Matthew 16:16-17 - The Great Confession

The Great Confession

And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

Matthew 16:16-17

These words were spoken at a time of crisis in the ministry of our Lord and in the experience of Peter. Indeed, they constitute the pivotal words of that particular crisis. The confession of Peter completed the first stage of His work, and prepared for the second and final one. When, in the consciousness of one man, the victory of the Kingdom propaganda was won, the King set His face toward the passion whereby all men might pass into the Kingdom.

Our present theme is that of the confession of Peter, and there are four matters to which I propose to ask your attention. First, the man who made the confession, Simon Peter; second, the confession he made, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God"; third, how Peter arrived at that conclusion, "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven"; and, finally, what that confession meant to him subsequently.

First, then, the confessor. There is no man in these New Testament stories more fascinating than Peter. Every story about him interests us, and the more the portraiture of him is considered in its entirety, the more powerfully does it appeal.

The reason for this persistent fascination is to be found in his essential human greatness, and in his constant failure to realize that greatness. The appeal is twofold. We cannot read these stories of his life without feeling how near akin we are to him in certain essential, elemental qualities. We cannot read the story of his life without feeling how near akin we are to him in his blunders and failures.

His human greatness consisted in the fact that the elemental forces of human nature were all strikingly present in him. Other of these New Testament men were in certain senses greater than Peter: Paul in massiveness of intellect, John in mystic intelligence, James in practical ethical convictions; but in this man we find all the elemental forces. In mental power he was a great man, quick of thought, eager of inquiry, swift of conclusion. In emotional power he was equally great, a man of hot affection, burning anger, deep depression. In volitional power he was capable of making courageous ventures, heroic choices, dangerous experiments. All these elemental forces manifest themselves in him, and we are all in touch with him at some point.

We are brought into even closer kinship with him as we observe his failure. He was a man of mental power, yet characterized by strange blindness: to use a phrase of his own, "seeing only the things that are near," and unable to apprehend them in their true spiritual relationships; his was a mind quick, eager, swift, and yet never arriving at any final conclusion in his own unaided strength. He was a man of fine emotional power, yet contradicting the impulses of his love and wounding his lover. He was a man of remarkable volitional capacity, capable of courageous venture, heroic choice, dangerous experiments, and yet suddenly becoming craven in his fear and faltering by the way.

This is the man who at Caesarea Philippi uttered the confession which brought our Lord to the culmination of the first stage of His mission. He was more than a Hebrew, he was a human. He was a type of all men in his elemental forces and experimental failures.

We now turn to the central matter, the confession which Peter made, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." There are very spacious values in these words. I believe that Simon said far more than he understood; in the thing he said there were values far beyond his comprehension, and the context proves it. I shall ask you, then, in considering this confession first to observe its structure, and from that observation to attempt to gather its value.

Evidently there are two parts to the confession. The unifying words are the first, "Thou art." After them the confession divides into two parts. First, "Thou art the Messiah"; second, "Thou art... the Son of the living God." The first was a confession on the part of Peter, of what he understood concerning the office of Jesus; the second was a confession on the part of Peter as to what he understood concerning the nature of Jesus.

"Thou art the Messiah." I use the Hebrew form of the word in order to interpret the thought of it. It becomes emphatic when we place it in contrast with other things that had just been said to Jesus. He had asked His disciples, "Who do men say that the Son of man is?"; and they had replied, "Some say John the Baptist; some, Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets." Now we are immediately arrested by the fact that our Lord was not satisfied with these confessions, and that He proceeded to discover whether His own immediate disciples had formed the same conclusions—not to discover for Himself, but to discover to them—as He said, "Who say ye that I am?" Then came the answer, "Thou art the Messiah."

The multitudes had detected in the teaching of Jesus the prophetic note, the supernatural note; they imagined that He was a prophet of the olden times returned. Peter confessed that He was the One to Whom all the prophets had given witness. John had only foretold His coming. Elijah had been a prophet of reform; but he was not able to establish the Kingdom. He passed, having failed, having only borne witness to righteousness and truth. Jeremiah had uttered his lamentations over the failure of his own ministry, and in the dungeon had sung the songs of hope that told of Another Who should accomplish that in which he had failed.

But the deeper note of the confession, and the more surprising one, was that in which Peter declared his conviction concerning the nature of the One Who had come to fulfil the prophetic outlook and aspiration: "the Son of the living God."

This confession reveals three conceptions in the mind of Peter: first, the Messiah; second, the Son; finally, "the living God." We shall appreciate the value of the confession a little more perfectly if we take these three conceptions in the other order, for in the confession Peter moved backwards, from that final fact of which he was then convinced, through that which lay behind it, giving it light and power and glory, to the fundamental truth of his religion. Let us begin where he ended. First, "The living God"; second, "the Son of the living God"; finally, "the Messiah." Thus the whole confession becomes far more glorious and wonderful.

Peter expressed in one brief phrase—which seems to be incidental, which passed his lips at the close of a confession—the central fact and truth of Hebraism, "the living God." That was the fundamental fact in the faith of Abraham, and in the law of Moses. The belief in one God was the very rock foundation of the national life. That this God was living was the message of all the prophets. With fine scorn, one of them had said of the idols which men worshiped, "There is no breath in them!" The God of Israel was "the living God," not a mere abstraction, not a mere force permeating the universe, having no personal consciousness, and therefore of no help to man in his personal life; but God, personal, alive, active—the living God. That was the fundamental religious conception of the Hebrew nation, and the ministry of Christ in the case of Peter had not destroyed it, but had emphasized it, set the seal of authority on it.

We now come to the central matter in the words, "the Son of the living God." Without staying to refer to the general teaching of the Gospel stories and the Epistles in detail, let me ask you to observe that the whole of the New Testament teaching concerning Jesus is that He was, in a lonely, unique, specific sense, the Son of God, not a son, but the Son; not one among a company of sons, but alone, different, separate from all others in the mystic relationship which He bore to God. This confession of Peter harmonizes with the whole teaching and attitude of Jesus toward this subject. He never spoke of Himself as on a level with other men in this respect, but maintained an attitude of separation whenever He approached the subject of His relationship to His Father. Even after resurrection He did not say, Our God and Father, but My God, and your God, My Father, and your Father. He did not identify Himself with men in His relationship to God. We have no account, for example, in any of the gospels that He prayed with His disciples. He prayed in their presence, but when He prayed He prayed on a different level. You will remember one remarkable word that seems contradictory, "As He was praying alone, the disciples were with Him." Have you ever observed that carefully? He was praying alone, away from them, while yet they were present. He never used the words to describe His own praying that He used to describe the praying of His disciples. When He told men to pray the word He used indicated an attitude which He never used of His own praying. When He spoke of His own praying He spoke of inquiring of a Father. When His mother came to him and said, "Thy father and I sought Thee sorrowing," using the word that had been current in Nazareth to describe his relationship to Joseph, He replied, "Wist ye not that I must be in My Father's house?" In the first recorded words that fell from His lips He assumed separate and lonely

relationship to God.

At Caesarea Philippi Peter looked into His face and said, "Thou art the Messiah, the Son of the living God." The confession spoke of the revelation of the Father through the Son, and indicated a conviction of the closest relationship between the Father and the Son. Let us flash on the confession of Peter another confession to be found in the writings of another disciple, whom Peter never understood until after Pentecost, and of whom he then became the close friend. John says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.... And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth." That is the same thought of identity with the Father, revelation of the Father, co-operation with the Father. Thus in loneliness and separation, unique, special, specific, never repeated and never to be repeated, Jesus was "The Son of the living God."

So we come to the last conception, which was first in order of statement in the confession of Peter. This One was the Messiah, the Administrator in human history of the Kingdom of God, the One Who came for the fulfilment of all aspiration, hope, confidence, and, consequently, the One Whose authority over the affairs of men is ultimate and final.

Having thus considered the confessor, and his confession, let us inquire what was the value of the confession? Peter had arrived at a conclusion, in harmony with the declaration with which God commenced the propaganda of His Son. As our Lord was setting His face toward His public ministry the Divine Voice declared, "This is My beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased." That was the Divine thought of the King. At Caesarea Philippi Peter had come to the conviction that this was true; he had arrived at a conclusion in harmony with the Divine conception.

There were limits to the meaning of this confession in the case of Peter. Jesus was Messiah, King, Head of the Kingdom; but Peter had no true conception yet of the nature of the Kingdom. Jesus was the Son of God, and therefore was Administrator of the Kingdom of God; but Peter did not comprehend the method by which the King would enter into His Kingdom. Such was the scope, and such were the limits of the confession. Here was a man, human as we are, with all our elemental forces manifest in him, with all our failures also, looking into the face of Jesus of Nazareth and saying, "Thou art the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

How did he arrive at the conclusion? Here we are not left to speculation; we have the clear statement of our Lord. Jesus looked back into the eyes of Peter and said, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven." In that word of Jesus we have a threefold revelation concerning the method by which Peter had arrived at that conclusion. First, a negative word, "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee." Second, a positive word, "My Father which is in heaven" hath revealed it unto thee. Third, a mediatorial word, a word indicating the method by which God had done it, the word revealed.

First, the negative statement, "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee." Flesh and blood was a common phrase in Hebrew speech, which, in this connection, simply meant that the confession was not the result of human discovery, either his own or that of any other man. In the twentieth verse I read, "Then charged He the disciples that they should tell no man that He was the Christ." Why? Because flesh and blood cannot reveal it; no disciple can carry conviction to another man. Christian workers cannot convince men that Jesus is the Son of God. Our business is to introduce men to Christ, that through Himself they may come to know Him by Divine revelation. The attempt of "flesh and blood" to reveal Him is the secret of all heresy concerning Him. Therefore He said to His disciples: You are not called to prove to men Who I am. They have their opinions; you know me by Divine revelation, and your business is to take Me to men, and to bring men to Me; let Me be the intermediate One between My Father and men; let the Father show them Who I am, that I may show them Who the Father is. That is the meaning of the charge to the disciples.

The positive word, "My Father which is in heaven," is a clear declaration that the conviction which resulted in the confession was the result of Divine revelation.

That brings us to the central word, revealed. It is derived from the word *apokalupto*, which means to disclose, to unveil. My Father hath unveiled this to thee, hath disclosed this to thee. How had God done it? I want to suggest to your most earnest consideration that I do not believe that our Lord meant that in some sudden illumination direct from God, as apart from Himself, the revelation had come. Not in the whisper of the morning, or by the thunder of the noonday, or through the voices of the night, had God told Peter the secret. How, then, am I to understand this word "revealed"?

I turn to another passage of Scripture, not that it has any direct connection with our theme, but that there is light in it which will help us. Take the opening sentence of the book that bears the name, *Apocalypse*, *Revelation*, and mark the construction of it carefully, "The revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave Him to show." The unveiling of Jesus Christ—that is the key to the Book of Revelation. However much we may differ in detailed interpretation of the book of Revelation, we shall agree that it contains three great movements: Christ unveiled in His personal glory to John, Christ unveiled in the mysteries of His grace, walking amid the candlesticks, unifying the Church; Christ unveiled in the process of His government by which He will ultimately set up the Kingdom. Now, how was He thus unveiled? God gave Him, Jesus, to show Himself; God, through Jesus, made Jesus known, as Jesus,

through Himself, did make God known.

When Jesus at Cæsarea Philippi said, My Father hath revealed it unto thee, hath given thee this apocalyptic, inspiring confession, He claimed a victory for Himself. God had revealed to Peter the truth about Jesus through Himself, and so had ratified his fundamental convictions concerning God Himself. "Thou art the Messiah, the Son of the living God." How did he arrive at that conclusion? By listening to Jesus, by following Him, by the processes of His ministry, until, at last, everything culminated in the conviction which expressed itself in the confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

I repeat, it was not the result of any whisper of the morning, thunder of noontide, or voice of the night, but the victory of the Word of God made flesh, and so revealing the truth about Himself and about God to man, that man through that revelation should come to conviction concerning Jesus, and confess Him as to office, Messiah, and as to nature, Son of the living God.

Let us glance over the whole process. How did it begin? It began in that wonder which John alone tells, of how one day Andrew found Simon and took him to Jesus, and Simon and Jesus stood face to face for the first time. Then Jesus said, "Thou art Simon the son of John: thou shalt be called Rock." In that moment the living God spoke to Simon through His Son, though Simon did not know it. There was music in the word; there was in it the revelation of a perfect understanding, as though the One had said, I know you, your name, your father, you are Simon, the son of John; and there was in it a prophecy, you shall be Rock. No one had ever said that of Simon before. It was the one thing no one ever expected him to become. What did he do? He surrendered, and went after the Speaker. Now, about two and a half years had passed away. Simon had listened to Jesus teaching, had heard the great ideals He had presented; he had watched His ability, had seen Him Master in every department of human life, material, mental, moral; he had seen all evil forces yielding to Jesus' word and banished from human life. He had watched Him, and had come into close personal touch with the supreme facts of the personality of Jesus. What were they? Let John tell us, "Full of grace and truth," that is, full of tenderness and thunder, full of love and light, full of compassion and passion for righteousness. Through the years Peter had followed and observed.

Now mark the crisis. The circumstances were those of apparent failure. The religious teachers were refusing Him, the political leaders were against Him; yet there came to the soul of this man the overwhelming sense that his Master was superior to all the forces against Him, and all the experiences of the years crystallized into a master conviction and he said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." God had been speaking to Simon through the Son, and when Simon came, apparently by this human and utterly natural process to conviction, Jesus said,—let me say it reverently as in His holy presence—I have won a victory in one human soul. God through Me has spoken, so that this soul is illuminated concerning Me, and consequently is admitted to an understanding of the Father; My Father hath revealed it.

Finally, what did this mean to Peter subsequently? I observe in the first place that this great confession of Peter at Cæsarea Philippi constituted an irrevocable committal to Jesus. I know what is in your mind! You are saying, not irrevocable: Peter denied Jesus! I say again, an irrevocable committal. Through all the failing experience that apocalypse remained with him, and that confession held him. He was constantly recalled to it. Almost immediately Christ was rebuking him, and calling him the adversary, "Get thee behind Me, Satan, for thou art an offence unto Me." Then there were six days of silence, in which no disciple seems to have spoken to Jesus at all; they were so amazed because He had spoken of the Cross. Then followed the holy mount and the Lord in a new and mystic glory, and Peter said, It is good to be here, let us build tabernacles! By a voice from heaven he was recalled to Caesarea Philippi, "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him." Didst thou not say at Caesarea Philippi, "Thou art the Messiah, the Son of the living God?" "This is My beloved Son... hear ye Him." Thus he was recalled to his committal.

Presently in the judgment hall, when in answer to the flippant mocking of a serving maid, Peter denied his Master, the Lord looked at him, and that look recalled the committal, recalled the confession, and Peter went out broken-hearted to weep bitterly.

Then in the days that followed, days of darkness and despair—when he was saying within himself, The last words He heard me utter were words of denial, and my Lord is dead—suddenly, somewhere, no one knows where, some when, no one can tell exactly when, the same Son of God met him, and talked to him; and when long afterward he sat down to write a letter he wrote, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who according to His great mercy begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." When Jesus came to him and had a private interview with him, he was taken back to his confession that Jesus stood related to God as Son to Father, and the resurrection was the new birth of the old hope that had seemed to perish by the way of the Cross. I repeat, it was in irrevocable committal, and the power of the apocalypse and the consequent confession never departed from him.

Further, that confession resulted in his having to tread a new pathway of teaching and of testing. That confession was followed by the immediate glory of our Lord's confession to him, "I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church." That was the result of his confession.

Then followed the first explicit mention of the Cross. The shadow of the Cross had never fallen on the lives of these men before. Our

Lord never told them about the Cross until after that great confession. Having made it, it was necessary that they should know not only the King, but the method by which He must come into His Kingdom.

And yet another result was the appalling discovery to Peter of himself. Jesus took the man who had made so high a confession as that, and showed him himself. You will all forsake Me, you will all deny Me, you will do it even after this crisis! Never, Lord; if all others do, I will not! It was indeed necessary that Peter should discover himself; even by the way of denial he must come to an understanding of his own weakness.

And still once more. There was a new finding of the Lord in resurrection glory. To that we have already referred.

The ultimate confirmation of the confession is found in Peter's letters. Let me read the opening doxology of his first letter, and the closing injunction of his last letter: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who according to His great mercy begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.... Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

Let me close with the word to which I have already drawn your attention. "Then charged He His disciples that they should tell no man that He was the Christ." That conviction can come only by Divine revelation, and that Divine revelation can come only from the Father through the Christ Himself. What, then, is our business? To bring men to Him, to lead men to consider Him for themselves, to present Him as He is, not affirming thus or so, or attempting to compel men to accept our view, but to let them see the Lord. In proportion as we do that in life and in ministry, in that proportion we are bringing men to the place where they will know Him by the Divine apocalypse.

If there be some man listening to me who asks how he is to arrive at that ultimate conclusion, I say to him, You must begin exactly where Simon began. Where did he begin? He met Jesus. You have done that already. Hear me, I am not talking in a country called heathen, but in this church. You have met Him. You say, I am not sure of the doctrines concerning Him. I reply, you have nothing to do with them yet. He has made appeal to your will, shamed your sin, troubled your conscience, revealed a new ideal of life, suggested to you the possibility of a nobler life. But I want to be quite sure about all the doctrines, you say! No, you do not; and you never will be until you know the Lord!

What did Simon do when he met Jesus? He listened to Jesus, he followed Jesus, and came at last to conviction and confession; and beyond the confession he passed through processes of discipline and of testing, of growth and development, until at last in true communion with his Lord he died for Jesus—as he had said he could in the days of feebleness—and glorified his Lord in that dying. So must we begin if we ourselves at last would make the great confession.

089 - Matthew 16:21-22; John 21:18-19 - The Turning Again of Peter

The Turning Again of Peter

From that time began Jesus to show unto His disciples that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised up. And Peter took Him, and began to rebuke Him, saying, Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall never be unto Thee.

Matthew 16:21-22

Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself and walkedst whither thou wouldst; but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not. Now this He spake, signifying by what manner of death he should glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He saith unto him, Follow Me.

John 21:18-19

Let us read these passages again, omitting all save the actual words of Peter as recorded in the first, and those of Jesus as recorded in the second. "Be it far from Thee, Lord; this shall never be unto Thee." "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, when thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldst: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not.... Follow Me."

Last Sunday evening I spoke to you on the subject of the sifting of Peter. This evening we turn our attention to our Lord's method in restoring him. Ere we trace the stages in his turning again, I would notice the significance of the two passages we have read. The one reveals the first movement of Peter out of harmony with his Lord, when for the first time Jesus definitely told His disciples that He must needs go to Jerusalem and suffer and be killed, and the third day be raised up. Peter stood in the presence of the announcement astonished and afraid, and instead of following his Lord, though unable to understand Him, he said, "Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall never be unto Thee." The Master immediately rebuked him in the sternest terms, "Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art a stumbling-block unto me: for thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men." When I come to the scene at the

seashore, and to the final movement in it, I hear Jesus saying to him, "When thou wast young thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldst; but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not.... Follow Me." Thus Jesus brought Peter back to the cross, to his own cross. Peter failed in following when his Lord's cross was presented to him. He was restored to following when his own cross overshadowed his life. Yet there are many stages between that movement out of fellowship and that perfect restoration. This evening, to magnify His grace and to attempt to set forth the patience and persistence of the Lord in seeking after and restoring His wandering ones, I shall ask you to follow me as I attempt to trace the stages of the restoration, for the man turning his back upon the cross is not immediately transformed into a man who consents to the cross and comes presently to glory in the fact that he is counted worthy to suffer shame for his Master's Name. There was much—I speak it very reverently, although the much of human speech is an awkward word to use of the Divine activity—there was very much for the Master to do for this man. While we shall see Peter all through our study tonight, I pray you attempt to fix your eyes, not on him, but on the Lord, marking the method of His mercy and His patience, how He commenced to make a highway home for this Peter, and how He went after Peter persistently until He set his feet once more upon the broad highway of His commandment, and commissioned him to all the toil of the coming years.

Last Sunday evening we were able to trace the downward steps of Peter in the first chapter of Mark 14. In order to follow consecutively the method of the Master's restoration we cannot confine ourselves to one chapter, but shall attempt to follow it by turning to different passages in the Gospel writings. The first to which I shall draw your attention is to be found in Luk_22:31-32. Here the Master is speaking to Peter, and says to him (and here I very deliberately use the marginal rendering), "Simon, Simon, Satan hath obtained you by asking, that he might sift you as wheat: but I made supplication for thee, that thy faith fail not: and do thou, when once thou hast turned again, stablish thy brethren." That is the first step in Peter's restoration. The "you" is plural and the reference is to all the disciples: "but I made supplication for thee, that thy faith fail not." That is singular and personal and immediate. This does not mean that Jesus did not pray for the rest, but it is a special word for Peter. While He tells Peter that he, in common with all the rest, has been obtained by Satan for sifting, He singles Peter out because he is especially in peril.

The first step our Lord took toward the restoration of this man then was that of storing up in his mind words which would be of service to him in the days to come. In one flash of light He revealed a most startling situation. A human soul stands between two forces, the forces of evil and of good. "Satan hath obtained thee by asking... but I made supplication for thee." Satan has been asking about this man. Jesus has been asking about him. Over against the asking of Satan, Jesus has put His own asking. All that will pay for further consideration, and we postpone it. What I now want you to notice is that Jesus told Peter He had prayed for him that his faith should not fail. Was that prayer answered? Certainly. You say, "But his faith did fail." Never. He denied his Lord. Yes, and believed in Him all the time. What did fail? His courage, his hope, his obedience, not his faith in the Person. The faith of the disciples of Jesus never failed. The two men walking to Emmaus had lost hope and courage and confidence, but not faith in Him. They had lost faith, in the sense of having certain convictions about Him weakened, but they had not lost their faith in Him personally. They thought He had been mistaken. They thought He had failed. They said, "We hoped that it was He which should redeem Israel." Their use of the verb "to hope" was in the past tense. They had lost their hope, but they said He "was a prophet mighty in deed and word," and that suggests that they still believed in Him. The faith which saves is not faith in anything heard about Jesus, but faith in Jesus. Peter's faith never failed. His courage failed, his obedience failed, his hope died out; but he never lost his faith in Jesus. I think the hour came when he thought his faith had failed. A great many people come there. But Jesus had prayed for Peter before his denial, before the outward and evident manifestation of the inner heart backsliding. He had taken an advance march against the enemy, had garrisoned the soul of His child against all the sifting of hell. Thank God, that is my Saviour. I hope He is your Saviour, dear heart. So He begins His method of restoration.

In this same 22nd chapter of Luke we find the next step in verse 61. "And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter." Just a look. I cannot interpret it. There was no theology in it. There were tears in it. Have you ever asked yourself quietly when you were alone how Jesus looked at Peter? I think I know how I would have looked at him. I am very much afraid, from what I know of my own heart, that if my bosom friend had denied me in answer to the give and take of a servant girl and the mockery of brutal soldiers just when I most needed him, when my life was being sworn away, my look might have been one of anger. Jesus did not look that way. I know He did not. If there be anything of His grace in my heart I might not have looked in anger, but I think the highest thing that could ever have been said of my looking would be that I looked reproachfully at Peter. Do you think Jesus did that? Do you think that day in the judgment hall He looked back where Peter stood by the fire cursing and swearing, and there was something in his look which said, "Peter, is that you? Can you add to my sorrow? Can you help to break my heart?" I do not think He looked like that. I think He was too self-emptied. I do not think there entered into the thinking of Jesus the sorrow caused to Him by His friend's denial. I think His was a look aflame with the pity of God. I think it was a look ineffable in its tenderness, which said to Peter, not, "What sorrow art thou causing Me," but "What sorrow art thou causing thyself?" I think it was a great look of compassion, full of tenderness divine. Overwhelmed with personal sorrow, He forgot His sorrow in pity for the grief which this foolish man was bringing to his own heart. That interpretation may not be correct. Therefore I simply remind you of what happened and ask you to find out when you are alone what the look meant. Of this at least I am sure, that look broke Peter's heart. I do not think a look of anger would have done that. I almost question whether a look of reproach would have done it. But, oh, the pity of those eyes! The unveiling of God's compassion

in those eyes! Peter hurried out into the night. He is coming home. A man is always coming home when he quits the world's fire for the dark night in penitence. There are many tears and sighs and dark hours to go through, but he is coming home. My dear man, are you broken-hearted because you have denied your Lord? Have you quit the world's fires? Are you very dark and desolate and lonely in this house tonight? You are on the way home.

What is the next thing? We turn to chapter 16 of Mark's Gospel and find it in the 7th verse. An angel is speaking to the women, and in the midst of his speaking we hear these words: "Go, tell His disciples... He goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see Him, as He said unto you." I am so glad you have Bibles and have noticed the omission. "Go, tell His disciples and Peter." I do not know how much that means to you. Have you ever thought how much it meant to Peter? The message was all wrapped up in two words, one of which was his own name, and the other the little conjunction which linked him to the other disciples—"and Peter." Imagine for a moment, if you can, what Peter had been passing through. Think of the judgment hall where they swore His Lord's life away, and condemned Him to the brutal death on the cross. Think reverently how they had buffeted Jesus and bruised Him: and think all the while, if you would understand it, from Peter's standpoint. Think how they nailed Jesus to the cross, how they watched Him die, and remember that Peter was saying in his heart, "He is dead, and the last thing He ever heard me say was that I did not know Him." May God deliver every man and woman in this house from the unutterable sorrow of losing a loved one, which loved one last heard you say an unkind thing. If you said an unkind word as you left home tonight, get up and go home and put it right. It may become the agony of your life. Think of it in Peter's case. Cannot you hear him saying, "I denied Him with curses, and swore I did not know Him, and He heard me, and He looked, and I have never had a chance to say another word. He is gone. He is dead. Those eyes cannot look at me now. Those lips cannot speak to me. The hand that leaned on me as we walked will never rest on my shoulder again. He is dead." I have sometimes tried to go with Peter through those days and nights after the Lord looked at him, and I cannot help feeling that they were days and nights of unutterable sorrow.

It is the resurrection morning. The women are early there. They have seen a vision of angels, and are coming with swift steps to the disciples. Peter is somewhere among them, on the outskirts. He felt he did not belong to them. They had all run away, but he alone had denied his Lord. The women are delivering their message and Peter is listening with the rest. Suppose the women had said, "We have seen an angel who told us to tell His disciples that He has gone into Galilee, and we shall see Him there." Peter would have said, "That is not for me. He wants to meet the disciples, but I have denied Him. I have cut myself off from the disciples. I have put myself outside." The Lord knew it. The Master of angels, while yet in the spirit world, charges His angel to tell the women to deliver His message to the disciples and Peter. The women come to the disciples and say, "The angel said we were to tell His disciples and Peter." Immediately there is new hope in the heart of that man, or I do not know human nature. I am not sure that the sorrow did not grow. There is nothing breaks a man's heart like the sign of forgiveness. If I have wronged you and you are hard with me, I shall be sorry; but if you are kind to me you will break my heart. Peter is saying, "He has something to say to me. I wonder what." So the Lord has taken another step towards bringing him home. He has sent him a message.

The next step in the restoration is found in Luk_24:33-34, "And they rose up that very hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, saying, The Lord is risen, and hath appeared to Simon." The Lord had revealed Himself to the two men walking to Emmaus, and they hastened back to Jerusalem with the news that they had seen Him, and found the eleven gathered together, and it was the eleven who said, "The Lord is risen, and hath appeared to Simon." I do not know how you are going to place that chronologically. I am not sure whether He appeared to Simon before He walked to Emmaus with the two men, or somewhere in the interim between His breaking of bread with them and their getting back again to Jerusalem. I think probably it was before the walk to Emmaus. When the two men from Emmaus got back to Jerusalem to tell what they had seen they found all the disciples filled with wonder and saying, "The Lord is risen, and hath appeared to Simon." Where He appeared to Simon I do not know. What He said to Simon, I dare not tell you dogmatically. There is no record of it. The fact that He appeared to Simon is chronicled, and it was so important that Paul knew about it, and when he mentioned the appearances which demonstrate resurrection, he included this, "He appeared to Cephas." This is the Lord's next step in bringing Peter home, a private, lonely interview. I am so glad I do not know where it happened. I am so thankful there is no record of what passed between them. There are things which pass between a penitent soul and Christ which no third man ought to hear. When Jesus is restoring a soul He is sure to get that soul alone somewhere, and when all others—apostles, prophets, and teachers—are outside, He will talk with that soul face to face. So He talked with Peter. I wonder if you will be patient while I try to imagine one thing He said to Peter. I am almost reluctant to do it. I would not do it if I had not had some such experience myself. I think, among other things, there would be something like this: "Peter, I told you I must go to the cross." Only you must not imagine that Christ said it as you say to people, "I told you so." It was not said in a triumphant tone, to rebuke him. "You did not want me to go to the cross; but, Peter, I have been to the cross, and by My blood your sins are forgiven." I think He said something like that. I think Peter learned in that private interview the meaning of the cross. I think he felt the virtue of the cleansing blood. I think in that hour Peter found out the folly of his own mistake and the wisdom of his Master's method.

Thus finally we come back to John 21, in which we have the last movement in the restoration of this man. May I remind you of the steps already taken? First, Jesus prayed for Peter. Second, He looked at Peter. Third, He sent Peter a message. Fourth, He had a

private interview with Peter; and now, in the story of the events which took place on the shore of the lake, you will find the fifth, sixth, and seventh steps. What is the fifth? He challenges Peter's love. The sixth, He gives Peter back his work and commissions him. The seventh, He puts the cross in front of Peter and says, "Follow Me."

First, He challenges Peter's love. There is such wonderful fitness in all our Lord does, and in all His ways. I know it is an old story. We have often read it, but it will not harm us to look at it once more. There are contrasts and similarities in this story which I think are very wonderful. Peter had denied the Lord in the city. Jesus takes him away from the city, with its rush and roar and all its seductions, to the sea. Peter had denied Him just past midnight. Jesus meets Peter there by the sea in the early morning hour, just when men are beginning to see clearly, and from the boat they looked and saw a stranger on the shore. Peter had denied Him by a fire which Jesus' enemies had built. Jesus builds a fire now for Peter, and calls him to confess Him over that fire. Peter had thrice denied Him. Thrice our Lord calls him to confess. Is there any picture in all the Bible more full of beauty? How does Christ begin? Is this a formal court to which He brings Peter? No. It is an informal breakfast. No ecclesiastical commissioners these before whom Peter is arraigned, but fishermen with the tang of the sea and the weariness of the night upon them, and the hunger of robust physical health. The risen Christ has built a fire, and cooked fish and prepared bread, and He said to them, "Come and break your fast." He waited on them. You did not miss that, did you? He made them sit down and He waited on them. When they had broken their fast, and the light of the morning was all about them, the fire glowing there, and no sense of chilliness, Jesus looked at His servant and said, "Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me?" It is somewhat wearisome and academic, yet one must point out the difference between these words translated love. When Jesus asked that question He used a high word, which indicates love upon an intellectual plane. "Lovest thou Me with the love of illuminated intelligence?" That is not what He said, but that is what is in the word. Peter did not use that word but took a lower word, a warmer word, an emotional word. "Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I fondly love Thee." Immediately Jesus said to him, "Feed My lambs." Then once again He said, "Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me?" And still the word is the high word with all the light of God upon it. Peter again got down to his lower word, a very beautiful word nevertheless. "Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I fondly love Thee." Peter dared not climb to Christ's high word. Then listen, the third time the Lord came down in great grace to Peter's lower word, and said, "Simon, son of John, fondly lovest thou Me?" That is why Simon was grieved. Not because Jesus asked him three times if he loved Him, but because the third time He descended to the lower word. He did not like His Lord to come down, but he had learned such a lesson that he dared not climb to the high word. "Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I fondly love Thee." Did Peter ever climb to the high word? Yes. Read his Epistles. He never uses the lower word, always the high word of Jesus. That morning by the lake he just kept on the level of the love he knew he possessed. Mark the contrast in this man. A little while ago he had said to Jesus, "Thou dost not understand me. Though all should forsake Thee, I will not." Now he says, "Lord, Thou knowest all about me. Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee." A little while ago, over the fire the enemies of Jesus had built, Peter had denied Him thrice. Now, in the sunlight of the morning, in the warmth of the fire Christ had built, Peter thrice confessed Him, and every time Jesus restored him to his work, and so brought him back into full and perfect fellowship and communion.

I am bound to stop for a moment to say, in God's name get away from the fires Christ's enemies are building for warmth. He knows how to build fires. There is in your nature no demand that He cannot supply. You want enthusiasm, passion, fire? Let Him build it and kindle it and inspire it. Man, if you go to the world's fires, you will burn your passion out until it is nothing but ashes and dust upon the world's highway. Go to Christ's fires and He will take your passion and make it flame and burn. That seems to me to be the value of this fire which Jesus built. He is saying to men for all time, "If the morning is chill and you want warmth I can build your fire." So He has called for His child's confession, and has given him back his work by the fire which He Himself has built.

There is one other step. He looked at Peter once more and said, "Follow Me." "When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not." I think we may interpret that, "When you were young you were your own master, and had your own way, and went whither you would. You made your own choices and decisions. Presently, when you are old, when you most need comfort and help, there is a desolating experience waiting for you, Peter. You will stretch out your hands and another will gird you and carry you whither you would not." John listened, and he understood these mystic sentences better than any other man, so he put in a parenthesis, "Now this He spake, signifying by what manner of death he should glorify God." Accepting that word of John as true, when Jesus said these words to Peter He meant to say to him, "When you were young you had your own way. You have been impulsive, girding yourself in great independence; but there is an hour coming when someone else will gird you, and bind you and crucify you." It is as clear a picture of the cross as came to Peter at Caesarea Philippi. But that is not all Christ says. Do not go away and think that is all. "Follow Me." What does that mean? "Peter, you were afraid of my cross. I have endured the cross. I have despised the shame. I have risen from among the dead. I am your Lord and Master. Peter, you are coming to the cross. Follow Me. Come My way. My cross leads to My crowning. Your cross will lead to your crowning. My dark day of shame issued in My glad Easter morning of glory. All the perils of your pathway and its pain but lead you out to the Kingdom and to life. Follow Me." And Peter followed Him. He was not changed into an angel, for the very next thing he tried to do was to interfere about John. "What shall this man do?" He is still the same impetuous, impulsive Peter, but he has heard the supreme word. I take his Epistles up presently and read them and find in all of them the glory of his knowledge of his Lord. I find in all of them his consciousness of the infinite meaning

of the cross. I find in all of them his consent to the cross and his abandonment to its claims, and I find in all of them his triumphant, glorious victory.

The Saviour who brought Peter back is waiting for you. How shall I say it? Now the crowd hinders me as it always does. I cannot say it, but thank God that while I am witness of these things so also is the Holy Ghost. Listen now to the voice of the Spirit Who is speaking in your heart. Far away are you? Broken-hearted, disappointed with yourself? You have denied Him and He has looked at you. He sends you a message, He is at your side. He wants to talk to you all alone. Let Him. There has been no cooling of His love, no failure in His faithfulness. Where are you, man? Wandering yet? Are you broken-hearted and disappointed? You have gone very far from Him. You have been very mean toward Him. You have dragged His name in the dust, but still His arm is about you. His hand is on your head, and it is a pierced hand. He presses you to His heart, against His wounded side. Trust Him. God help you to trust Him. At last, by the way of the cross, He will bring you also to the crowning. Is there distance between you and your Lord? Cancel the distance. Get back to Him. His love is stronger than death, mightier than the grave. No waters can quench it, and He loves you. I have no other word to say. God help you to see it for yourself, and to obey it by returning to Him now.

090 - Matthew 16:21 - The Pathway of the Passion

The Pathway of the Passion

From that time began Jesus to show unto His disciples, how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised up.

Matthew 16:21

The ultimate things in the earthly mission of our Lord were implicit in His doing and teaching from the commencement of His public ministry. They became explicit after the confession of Peter at Caesarea Philippi. This is very clearly revealed in the synoptic gospels. Matthew and Mark distinctly say so, "From that time began Jesus to show unto His disciples..."; and Luke's narrative by its method corroborates Matthew and Mark. Until this moment He had said nothing concerning His Cross. In many a deed He wrought, and in many a word that passed His lips, there is evidence that He knew of His Cross from the beginning; but there was no definite statement, no clear word spoken.

In the words of our text we have a careful summary of the teaching of the dark days between Caesarea Philippi and Calvary. The statement of Matthew here is characterized by simplicity, definiteness, and clarity; and enables us to approach our Master as did those first disciples, in order to consider what He Himself thought of the final things of His earthly mission.

As we reverently attempt to do this, let us remember that these men failed to apprehend His teaching until after Pentecost; and, recognizing that the promised Interpreter is with us, let us reverently and confidently depend on His guidance as we attempt to consider this revelation of the Master's conception of the meaning of the last things in His earthly mission.

Before considering the statement itself, let us observe the Speaker, the occasion, and the hearers. In proportion as we can get back into the very atmosphere of that hour at Caesarea Philippi, and the days that followed, and are led to the Cross, we shall be able to understand the Master's statement better.

Let us first look at the Speaker, Jesus, and attempt to see Him as they, to whom He gave this teaching first, saw Him. What did they know about Him at that time? They knew much concerning His personal perfections, for I have no hesitation in saying that the supreme attraction to the early disciples was that of the Lord Himself. They knew Him as One characterized at once by majesty and meekness, as One—if I may use so simple and colloquial a form of speech—with Whom no one might take liberties: full of dignity, characterized in one sense by an aloofness even from His nearest disciples, so that they never came into very close fellowship with Him. Yet He was characterized by meekness in the broadest, largest sense of the great and wonderful word, being perfectly familiar with His disciples, and treating them as His own close personal friends. Thus they could tell Him any secret, even though they knew they could not discover His profoundest secrets, and could come to Him with all their sorrows, even though they must always have been haunted by the sense of sorrows in His heart which they could not fathom. Paradoxically, He attracted them at once by the appalling severity of His terms and the infinite compassion of His method.

They had also caught something of the glory of His great ideals. If I believe they were first attracted by the personal charm of Jesus, I also believe that they were held near to Him by these great ideals and spiritual conceptions, His reverent and yet apparent familiarity with eternity and with God, that touch of His spirit on all things material in answer to which the material things flamed with the light and glory of the spiritual and abiding realities. They were held, too, by His conceptions of God and His conceptions of man, and His ideals as to the material conditions of life, as He had revealed them in the great Manifesto, and in many incidental words—that strange and wonderful picture He had given them of the Kingdom in which the King is Father, in which men will have no further anxiety for the luxuries of life, but will have a new joy in the possession of the necessary simplicities. There, He taught them, the carking care about what men shall eat and what they shall wear will pass away forever, there the passion for righteousness will be

supreme, and the realization of the law of love will come to its great and gracious fulfillment.

They knew Him also in the strange activities of His ministry, a ministry of pity and of power. Unable to understand Him, they had nevertheless seen Him Master in every sphere of life: in the material realm, in the moral realm, in the mental realm, so that with apparent ease he wrought wonders that amazed them and always in answer to the surging pity of His own heart.

Thus they followed Him until He led them to Caesarea Philippi; and it was this One Who now began to tell them that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer, and be killed, and be raised again on the third day.

The occasion of the commencement of this teaching was that of the hour of triumphant foretelling following on the great confession of Peter. Peter had said to Him, "Thou art the Messiah, the Son of the living God," and in answer to that Jesus had made His great confession to Peter and His disciples, "On this rock I will build My Church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." In that confession we detect the note of assured triumph: no doubt, no tremor, no conditions; certain, positive, complete: "I will build... and the gates of Hades shall not... I will give unto thee the keys."

"From that time Jesus began to show unto His disciples, how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priest and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised up."

The confidants to whom He told this hitherto unrevealed secret loved Him. They were those—I dare not have said this if He had not said it a little further on, under the very shadow of the Cross—who had continued with Him in all His temptations. They were those who were appointed to share His toil and His travail. They were, as at last, in infinite love and appreciation, He termed them, His friends.

We turn now from these preliminary matters to the teaching itself. The method I propose to adopt is that of examination and application. Our principal business is that of examination. By way of application, I shall only suggest some possible lines of inquiry.

As I have said, Matthew summarizes all the teaching from Caesarea Philippi to Calvary in these words: "He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised up."

In that summary there are three matters which demand our attention. The first is that of the compulsion: "He must go unto Jerusalem." The second is that of the course marked out: "suffer... and be killed." The third is that of the consummation: "and the third day be raised up."

We begin with the compulsion, for that is the supreme note: "From that time began Jesus to show unto His disciples, how that He must." He did not from that time begin to show them that He was going to suffer and be killed, and be raised again. That is true; but to read the text so is to entirely miss the supreme note and emphasis, that which must occupy our attention, the declaration that He must. The idea of the word is quite simply that He was bound, that He was in bonds; the thought is that of compulsion.

We are immediately at the very heart of our meditation as we ask the question, Why must He go to Jerusalem? I desire, as quickly as may be, to deal with certain insufficient reasons which have been advanced as explaining this declaration of compulsion.

It has been said that the "Must" is simply a revelation of the fact that He was in the grip of circumstances, that we should interpret the "must" by the inevitability of the circumstances into which He had now come as the result of His own ministry. A careful reading of the story will show that this was not so. If He go to Jerusalem He must suffer, He must be killed, there will be no escape. But why go? Why need He go to Jerusalem? His loved ones attempted to dissuade Him most earnestly during the months that followed. Let it be remembered that escape was quite possible at that time. There was no material necessity for Him to walk back into the trap men were laying for Him. Then why could He not escape? It would have been quite easy for Him to leave the region. We have not found the meaning of the "must" when we think of the circumstances in the midst of which He found Himself.

Once again, it has been said that the "must" of Jesus was simply the declaration on His part of devotion to a great ideal, that He had preached the Kingdom of God, and men had refused the Kingdom, and that now He said to His disciples in effect: I have preached the Kingdom, I have enunciated its principles, I have revealed its laws, I have given illustrations of its benefits in the works I have wrought; men will not have it; I cannot depart from My ideal; consequently, I may as well go to Jerusalem, even though I die in the going.

According to that view, there was the suggestion of a touch of hopelessness in the words of Jesus, loyalty to the ideal, but hopelessness as to its ultimate victory. No, that is not it; that is Elijah under the juniper tree saying, Let me die and not live, because this people will not have my preaching; that is Jeremiah cursing the day he was born, because his ministry was an apparent failure; but that is not Jesus, as He set His face toward Jerusalem. That would have been to have abandoned His ideal. If all that He came to give the world was an ideal, a suggestive vision, a few principles of life, then I ask you to remember that such an ideal could best be realized, such a vision be interpreted, such principles be started in their mighty working career, not by death but by life. I quote

again the preacher of the olden time, "A living dog is better than a dead lion." Moreover, that method would have contradicted His perpetual habit throughout His public ministry. Over and over again when hostility was stirred against Him He withdrew Himself, hid Himself. More than once He said, sometimes directly to His critics, sometimes by messengers, that He would continue His work in spite of all opposition until the hour should come which they could neither hasten or postpone, and to which He was moving with full knowledge of the issue. To declare that He simply meant that He must be true to an ideal and die for it, shuts out of view entirely the last part of the teaching, the fact of resurrection. We have not yet discovered the meaning of His "must."

Let us now attempt to find it. Here I say solemnly that speculation is not to be permitted. Mere opinion is untrustworthy. Unless the Lord explained Himself we are without explanation. Did He explain Himself? Is there anything that will help us to understand the real meaning of the "must"? Did He ever say anything like this before? If I tax your patience a little I am sure you will bear with me. I am going back chronologically, and I turn first to Luke's gospel.

"I must preach the good tidings of the Kingdom of God to the other cities also: for therefore was I sent" (Luk_4:43).

There seems to be very little connection between the two, but I have found my word again, and on this occasion Jesus gave the reason for the "must"—"for therefore was I sent." I go back in the same Chapter of Luke and find the story of how at the commencement of His public ministry, He read concerning Himself from the ancient prophecy;

The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me,
Because He anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor:
He hath sent Me to proclaim release to the captives,
And recovering of sight to the blind (Luk_4:18-19).

That is the first light I have on my text. "I must preach the good tidings of the Kingdom of God to the other cities also." Why? "For therefore was I sent."

I pass a little further back in the chronological order and I find the next incident in John. Jesus was talking to Nicodemus, in the stillness of the night, and once more in this connection the word seems to be incidental, and somewhat separated from our present consideration, but you will immediately see how near it is to the thought that occupies us: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up" (Joh_3:14).

But why the "must"? We are seeking the reason of it.

"God sent not the Son into the world to judge the world; but that the world should be saved through Him" (Joh_3:17).

One other reference only, this to a very familiar passage. We have gone back now over more than eighteen years, and we hear the voice of the boy Jesus uttering the first words recorded of Him: "Wist ye not that I must be in My Father's house?"

I interpret the "must" at Caesarea Philippi by the "must" as it recurred in the previous history of the Lord from the first uttering of it, and I discover that the compulsion which was laid on Him was that of the will of God, the fact that He was in the world for a purpose, for the accomplishment of a mission which God had marked out for Him.

From that glance back we look ahead for a moment. Turn to the second Chapter of Acts, and listen to this very man Peter in the power of the Pentecostal effusion. What does he say about the Cross? "Him, being delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye by the hand of lawless men did crucify and slay" (Act_2:23). Just a little further on in the New Testament, in the letter to the Hebrews, the writer quotes from an ancient psalm in application to Jesus and declares this to have been the keynote of all His life of ministry: "Lo, I am come (in the roll of the book it is written of Me) to do Thy will, O God" (Heb_10:7). "We have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Heb_10:10).

He takes away ceremonial and ritualistic offerings that He may establish the final offering.

Gather up these passages in order that the light which comes from other portions of Scripture—that interpretation from the actual words of our Lord, that interpretation of the Holy Spirit on The Day of Pentecost and through the winter of the letter to the Hebrews—may help us to understand the meaning of the "must" of Jesus. Why must? Because He was cooperating with the will of God in order to achieve human redemption. That was the compulsion. Not the force of circumstances drove Him to Jerusalem. Not a heroic devotion to an ideal compelled Him to that last journey. The compelling power was the will of God and His devotion to that will. The compulsion was that of His volitional surrender to the purpose of that will in order to redeem the race. Because that was the compulsion, no friend could dissuade Him, no fear of coming pain could deter Him, no devil could deflect Him. He "must," because that was the will of God for the redemption of man.

Granted this compulsion, we are brought to the consideration of the course. If He will go to Jerusalem He will place Himself within the reach of the power of His enemies. Do you see Him going? Do not be afraid to let imagination help you. That One Whose

radiant, gracious personality had wooed and won His disciples, that One Whose ideals had been so high and wonderful, that One Whose ministry had been full of pity and of power, resolutely setting His face toward Jerusalem, He is passing now into the very realm where His foes will be able to wreak their vengeance on Him. But He is not passing outside the will of God. He is walking right into danger, but into danger with God. That is the picture. Do not forget it as you watch the process.

The constituent elements in the life of Jerusalem were all represented in the Sanhedrin. That is, I think, why Matthew was careful to name all the forces that were represented. He must "suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes." The elders were the civic rulers, the chief priests were the spiritual rulers, the scribes were the moral rulers.

What were their conditions? Let us begin with the chief priests. At that time, when Jesus was moving toward Jerusalem, the chief priests were Sadducean, and that meant a devitalized religion, as rationalistic religion always is. The scribes were externalists—how He had condemned them!—and that meant degraded conceptions of morality. The elders were timeservers, place seekers and that meant degraded authority.

The Lord was now moving toward Jerusalem. Conflict was now inevitable. There could be no escape. Ideals were in direct opposition. There must be what James Russell Lowell described as

One death-grapple in the darkness
'Twixt old systems and the Word."

As He passed into the region where these men ruled, Jesus went deliberately back to the place where He had denounced the priest, the scribe, and the ruler, denounced them because their rule had issued in the destruction of the city of God. Moved with compassion for the multitudes because they were as sheep not having a shepherd, angry with the rulers because of the suffering of the multitudes, He walked back into their sphere of influence. Now He must "suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes."

I do not believe that Christ was referring in those words to any material pain that was coming to Him, or even to any anguish of Spirit that was in any sense self-centered. I think the suffering to which He went was sorrow of heart caused by the attitude these men were taking against Him, which attitude meant their own destruction. If you challenge me for a reason for that interpretation I take you to the letter to the Hebrews, and ask you to ponder most carefully the significant change in the Revised Version which I maintain is necessary to a right understanding of the sorrows of the Lord. The writer says, He "endured such gainsaying of sinners against themselves!" The Authorized Version reads "against Himself," There was textual reason for that, but other renderings of the manuscripts read differently, "against themselves." That was the nature of His sorrow, not that men were wounding Him, but that in their wounding of Him they were harming themselves, in their rejection of the ideals that He had presented they were making impossible the realization of their own lives. He must suffer at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and the sorrows of the Spirit of infinite love and compassion are created when men refuse the call of His love.

But there is another and final step in the course: "and be killed." The death of Jesus was sin in its final manifestation. It can do no other than crucify, for that is itself. That is sin in the heart and essence of it. Once more, it could do no more, for all is done. That is the crime of all crimes. That was the ultimate sin against love. That was the ultimate sin against life. It was the sin of all sins—they killed Him. In that killing, human sin said its last word, had its last day. It was the ultimate in evil; it was the murder of the Son of God.

Look again. Why did He die? He need not have died. He might have abandoned His great ideals; and He might have wiped the dust of the region that would not have His ideals from off His shoes. Or, like Socrates, He might have drunk the hemlock because men would not have Him. But that was not the meaning of His dying. We have seen that the compulsion was not that of circumstances. We have seen that our Lord died within the will of God, delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. In His death He was not trying to persuade God to love men. He was God, loving men to the very end and to the very death. In the death of Jesus grace is seen in its ultimate mystery and manifestation. Here we stand in awe. That is the course of the "must": inevitable and unutterable sorrows and death, the death in which sin is compelled to its ultimate outworking, its last word, its final act.

Is that all? If there be nothing else, I have misinterpreted the story. If there be nothing else, Jesus was indeed as a son of man who died high and noble in his aspirations, but beaten, defeated. If there be nothing more, then sin has won, the last word of sin is the ultimate doom of goodness, the last deed of sin is victory over every aspiration that is high and noble. If there be nothing other than Jesus' death, then God have mercy on me, I am of all men the most miserable.

There is more! There is the consummation: "and the third day be raised up." The overwhelming importance of that word cannot be insisted on too often or too earnestly. I want you carefully to remember that this is not an accidental word, it is not an occasional word. It was persistent through all the teaching of the shadowed days. Take the New Testament and read carefully the Lord's references to the Cross from Caesarea Philippi until it was an accomplished fact, and you will find He never referred to His Cross without also referring to His resurrection. Of course, if some man say to me, I question the truth of the records, I have only to say

that such an attitude affects the whole story. It is not honest to make a selection of things that square with a view, and to reject a matter so persistent as this. There is no occasion when the Lord foretold the Cross that He did not also foretell the resurrection.

In view of that foretelling of the consummation what was His estimate of His own death? How difficult it is to answer that question! Let me try. When Jesus died death died; sin ended itself when it grappled with God; God in the unfathomable mystery of pain destroyed the works of the devil.

That is the final note in the must of Jesus. Geographically, Jerusalem; processional, suffering and death; ultimately, the resurrection and life; spiritually, God willeth not the death of the sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live. God made a way by which His banished ones may return to Him again.

In a few sentences let me suggest some lines of application. There is an immediate illustration in the protest: of a disciple: Not that; that be far from Thee, that shall never be unto Thee! Not what? Peter was talking about the course, about suffering and death. The things he did not understand, which were not in his mind when he made the protest, were the first thing and the last thing: the compulsion and the consummation. The "must" he did not understand; the raising the third day he did not understand. How was he answered? By one of the severest sentences that ever passed the lips of our Lord, "Get thee behind Me, Satan." Why? "Thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men." What are the things of men? The course, the suffering and death at the hands of lawless men! What are the things of God? The compulsion of redeeming love, the consummation of redeeming victory. Let that illustration be pondered and we have a line of application.

Is this ancient history? What of religion today? What of morality today? What of authority today? Are we in our national or civic life approximating to the ideals of Jesus? Is not much of our religion Sadducean, rationalistic? Is not much of our morality that of externalism? Is not very much of our authority that of office-seeking, place-seeking, selfishness, forgetfulness of all the shepherd qualities which are necessary to the exercise of true authority?

Are we not coming to an hour in which the Church of Christ has earnestly to ask herself whether indeed she really understands her Lord, whether she indeed is representing Him in the life of today?

I am not criticizing the Prime Minister, not for a moment, but when he had to make his appeal to two sides in the coal strike, which I am not now discussing, he pointed out to the owners that if this dispute went far they would suffer loss of property; he pointed out to the men that if this dispute went far they would suffer most from hunger. It was an appeal to selfishness on both sides, necessarily so, because we are so far from realization of the high principles and promises of Jesus. How are they to be established? The first thing is that the Church of God shall act under the compulsion which sent her Lord to Jerusalem, the must of the will of God, and the must of the will of God in order to redeem and remake individual men and the whole race.

Is that the master passion that drives us, consumes us, inspires us? If it is, the world will provide the Cross, believe me! And believe me, God will take care of the resurrection! Oh that it may be given to us to see the meaning of the "must," and in some measure to enter into fellowship with God's sufferings and make up that which is behindhand in His affliction.

091 - Matthew 16:21-24 - "Spare Thyself!"

"Spare Thyself!"

From that time began Jesus to show unto His disciples, how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised up. And Peter took Him, and began to rebuke Him, saying, Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall never be unto Thee. But He turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind Me, Satan: thou art a stumbling-block unto Me: for thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men. Then said Jesus unto His disciples, if any man would come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.

Matthew 16:21-24

This chapter contains a most startling contrast between the two conversations of Jesus with Peter. The first is full of light and revelation and gladness. The second is full of darkness and misery and sadness. The first part of the King's mission, so far as the disciples were concerned, was accomplished. The second part was about to begin. He had first of all to teach them that He was the Christ, and at last one of their number had looked into His face and made the great confession. He now had to teach them that the Christ must suffer in order to accomplish the deepest purpose of His mission.

They had thought of the Christ, the Messiah, as of a King who would correct all that was wrong in the externality of things. They had to learn that the method of Christ was not that of beginning at the circumference, but at the center; not of dealing first with the issues of the sins, but with the sin itself, and that in order to this the process must be one of suffering. He began immediately upon the confession of Peter to tell them that He must suffer and be killed, and be raised again the third day.

I think it is of great importance that we should pay special attention to this statement of Jesus concerning His coming passion. The Son of man must "suffer... and be killed... and the third day be raised up." Had He simply said He must "suffer... and be killed," I might have been inclined to imagine that He spoke as one who merely foresaw the natural issue of what He had been teaching and doing. But He said more than that. He said, first of all, the Son of man "must go unto Jerusalem." He said, finally, the Son of man must rise again. If the foretelling of what His enemies would do to Him was merely the statement of what He knew of them, why must He go to Jerusalem? Why not escape them? That is what Peter asked Him to do. The "must go unto Jerusalem" has in it something deeper and profounder than Jesus' foresight of what His enemies desired to do to Him, for He might have escaped them. The "must go unto Jerusalem" was the result of His loyalty to the will of God, and the impossibility of His deviating from it by a hair's breadth.

Yet it may be said that the "must go unto Jerusalem" leaning back upon the will of God, followed by the must "suffer and be killed," merely meant, I must be true to the will of God, and I now see what the issue will be, these men will kill Me. But when He looks through the blinding mists of the coming passion to the blazing glory of resurrection morning, declaring—"the third day be raised up"—I know He is more than a man submitting Himself to fate. He is a Conqueror moving through battle to victory, through the crisis inevitable, not merely by the will of sinning man, but in the economy of God, to the great and final issue of resurrection and triumph.

The very first recorded word of the Master was, "I must be about My Father's business." He never changed and never deviated. Through teaching and through work, through rebuke and through tenderness, in long journeys and lonely vigils, was always the keynote, "I must be about My Father's business," and as He approached the end, it was the same "must" still. "I must be about My Father's business," and that takes Me to Jerusalem, and that takes Me to suffering, and that takes Me to death, and that takes Me to resurrection.

This morning our attention is to be centered supremely upon Peter, and the effect this new declaration had upon him. Peter taking Him aside, said, "Be it far from Thee, Lord." One wonders whether those words carry to our hearts the real meaning of the thing he said. It was, as a matter of fact, an ejaculation. It has been variously translated. Dr. Young translates it thus—Spare Thyself. I personally think that gets nearer to the heart of Peter's meaning than any other. In the Emphasized Bible, Mr. Rotherham has translated it thus—Mercy on Thee, Lord! It has been translated, God pity Thee, Master! My own feeling is that the introduction of the word God there spoils the real thought and intention. I go back to the word as Young gives it to us, Spare Thyself, Lord! One is almost startled by the vehemence of the Master's reply, "Get thee behind Me, Satan: thou art a stumbling-block unto Me," an offense, something in the way, hindering My progress. I must go to Jerusalem and suffer, and be killed and rise again; thou art in the way, a stumbling-block to My going to Jerusalem, to My suffering, to My dying and My rising. "Get thee behind Me, Satan!"

May I now attempt to fix your attention on these two men, Jesus and Peter. We will allow all the other things in this wonderful chapter to stand on one side, in order to see these two. They stand facing each other, representatives of two opposing ideals, one representing humanity according to God's intention, the other representing humanity in the heart and essence of its failure. Both speak in the presence of the eternities, with hearts strangely moved within them. Both speak the deepest thing that is in them. All the surface things are out of sight.

Peter was absolutely honest and poured out in the word he spoke to his Lord his own thought and conception of life and the way it should be lived. Jesus, in His first declaration, and then in His answer to Peter, as clearly revealed His thought and His conception of life, and what it ought to be.

This is a permanent antagonism. So this morning, as I try to take you back to that scene at Cæsarea Philippi, I want you, if you will, gradually to forget the rocky fastnesses amid which these things happened, and the different robing of these men of the past, and the different circumstances in the midst of which they lived, and God help you, and God help me, to bring ourselves to the test of this revelation. I am standing this morning with Peter or with Christ. Which? I shall make no confession, but I pray God to find out for me and to show me ere this service be over. May He do so also for you.

First, what is this that Peter said, and what is this that Peter meant? The language of Peter was the language of angry and short-sighted affection. I am very anxious to insist upon it that it was affection. If you are going to put into absolute contrast realizations rather than ideals of life, you must contrast Judas with Jesus. Peter had come far upon the way. He had seen the Lord, and Jesus had said to Him, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee." I want you to see how the highest and the best in humanity, other than Christ, is leagues away from Him. It is Peter who stands in contrast with Christ, the one disciple who had made the confession, the one who had seen the most clearly, and spoken most accurately the truth concerning his Master. It is in this man I find the contrast. His language was that of affection. Lord, pity Thyself. Have mercy upon Thyself. Spare Thyself. And there is infinite pathos in the second part of what he said. Sometimes you may gather a whole tragedy into a word. As Peter said "this," he saw his beloved Master in the hands of the brutal men who had been plotting to take His life. He saw in imagination, keen, awful, accurate imagination, that sacred form battered and bruised, and mauled by the hands of brutal and lawless men. "This shall never be unto Thee." I am inclined to think there were tears in the man's voice, that in that moment his love

—and how he did love his Lord—was driving him. This going to Jerusalem to suffer and be killed, this be far from Thee. Peter would not see his Master suffer. That is love, but love intermixed with other things, is paralyzed, blinded, and makes mistakes. Doubt very much, I beseech you, any philosophy which declares to you that love is all, unless that philosophy also declares that God's love contains within it not merely pity and mercy, but holiness and rightness and justness. This word was a word of love, but love mistaken, love not understanding perfectly.

If I have said there were tears in the voice of Peter as he said "this," let me add to that at once: it was indeed the language of anger. The word means to chide. He took Him aside and began to chide Him, to rebuke Him. This does not contradict the other. Love can be angry. Love can speak in tones of bitterness, sometimes when it ought so to do, sometimes when it ought not so to do. Here is a man rebuking His Lord. Pity Thyself. This be far from Thee. This was the language, not of love only, not merely of angry love; it was also the language of short-sighted love. Is it not remarkable that all through the story of those last days, Christ never spoke to His disciples about the Cross without also speaking of the resurrection. Yet how evident it is that the men who listened never heard, or never understood. When Peter said to Him, Pity Thyself, this be far from Thee, what did he mean? The third-day resurrection? No, the suffering and the Cross. Why did he thus ignore the resurrection? Because he did not perfectly understand, or because he did not take time to think and understand, and because in his own heart's thinking nothing could be considered sufficient to balance suffering and death. It was so all the way through. These men never seem to have heard about the resurrection. It was shortsighted affection. Affection blinded in blood. It was affection which could not see far enough. I am almost loth to take an illustration here, for the subject is high and sacred, yet I think I will. Here is a little child suffering from some form of disease which can be healed and cured by a painful operation. The mother says, Yes; but a friend says, Oh, no. It is a shame the child should suffer. They both love the child, but which loves the child the most? The mother who sees through the pain to the redemption and freedom, and to the lack of pain that lies beyond. Peter loved his Lord. He was angry with his Lord. He was short-sighted. He did not see through to the end of the suffering.

This language of Peter, which was the language of angry, short-sighted affection, expresses the common philosophy of fallen human nature. First of all, the language of Peter indicates man's misconception of the first duty of man. What did Peter mean when he said, Spare Thyself? He meant, Master, your first duty is to yourself. Please forgive me putting Peter's word into so up-to-date a form as that. You have often heard that. You have often said that. A man's first duty is to himself. How constantly we hear it. You hear it inside the Church, among the saints. When you get outside the Church they express the same philosophy in a more brutal way. Each for himself, and the devil take the hindmost. That is a great mistake. The devil generally gets the foremost in that race. That is the philosophy. Master, your first duty is to yourself. Jesus knew that was a lie born in hell. He knew that His first duty was to God. "I must be about My Father's business." That is the first duty.

In the next place, Peter's language, this common expression of the false philosophy of humanity, was a misconception of the value of sacrifice. Peter meant to say to Him, Master, this will be failure, the direst and most disastrous failure. Nothing can be gained by dying. How often you will hear that said. People say, You will kill yourself, and what then? Resurrection and heaven, according to Christ! Defeat, direst failure, and death, according to Peter! Master, I have just confessed Thee Christ, and Thou hast approved my great confession. Master, Thou hast spoken about building a great ecclesia, a Church, and about keys. How are you going to do this if you die? Sacrifice means failure. To hand Yourself over to Your foes, and let them maul, and brutally ill-treat, and murder You, is to fail. I need not argue the other side. Nineteen centuries have proved that by that defeat He won.

He death by dying slew,
He hell in hell laid low.

Peter meant that sacrifice was a mistake.

Once again, this common philosophy of fallen man is a misconception of the value of men. I do not think I do any violence to what Peter meant when I say that in his heart he was thinking something like this—It is the kind of sentiment we applaud. It is the kind of sentiment that still obtains.—I think in Peter's word to Christ this inner thought finds expression, These men are not worth Thy suffering. These men. have wronged Thee, they have persecuted Thee, and if they but can, they will lay their hands upon Thee, and put Thee to death. Spare Thyself. I think in the heart of Peter there was some underlying conception that his Master had some purpose of love in being determined to go to Jerusalem, and he said to Him, They are not worth it. Men are not worth suffering for in this way. How much Thou hast suffered, how much of misinterpretation and misunderstanding Thou hast suffered in these days of ministry. Give it up. Pity Thyself. Deliver Thyself from all this. Men are not worth it. Jesus Christ's answer is, that however black the deed of His murder, however dastardly the sin that finds expression in His dying, the men who put Him to death are worth dying for. "I must." It is the "must" of God's will, and the "must" of God's love, and the "must" of God's determination to make it possible that the men who put Him to death should find their way into life.

Now turn to the other side. How will Christ deal with this philosophy and this suggestion? My heart and mind are every day more and more amazed at the Master's method and His wisdom. He first named the origin of the philosophy. "Get thee behind Me, Satan."

James Garfield said that what the age supremely needed was men who would dare to look into the face of the devil and call him devil. There was a time when I was somehow hurt, or anxious, that Christ should call Peter, Satan, but I have come to see that His naming of Satan here was out of the compassion of His heart. Peter, I know that voice. I know that philosophy. I have heard that suggestion, not once or twice, but through all the years, and supremely once, in the lonely vigil with which My ministry commenced. In the awful loneliness of the wilderness I heard the voice which said, Pity Thyself, and take the kingdoms of the world by giving me one moment's homage. "Get thee behind Me, Satan." So the real enemy who had been speaking to the King, through Peter, was unmasked.

In the next place, our Lord revealed the true character of the suggestion. "Thou art a stumbling-block," an obstacle to progress, something which will not help, but will hinder. Peter, desirous of helping, was hindering.

Finally, the Master analyzed the motive. "Thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men." Will you put these things into contrast as they stand revealed here for a moment? The things of men, as I see them at Cæsarea Philippi, are not vulgar things, not things against which men conduct missions, and institute the signing of pledges. What are the things of men which Peter was minding? Ease, fame, wealth and pomp. These were the things in Peter's view. A king with keys upon his girdle, and his high officers of state. A king more occupied with his own dignity than with the welfare of his people. A king seeking his own ease, his own safety, his own comfort. The things of men, false ideals of human greatness and human royalty. What are the things of God? Peace based upon purity. Rest only after the conflict which destroys the things which create restlessness. Joy lifting itself into song because the fountains of sorrow have been dried up. Glory and honor, not won by the way of compromise, but by the way of fidelity to the eternal principles of right. These are the things of God. If a man is minding the things of men and seeking ease, and earthly pomp, and glory, living a self-cen-tered life, he is against Christ. If he is minding the things of God, the Kingdom of God which cannot be established save as the forces and evil things which have been against it are dealt with and destroyed, he must go to the Cross. By all of which I desire to say that when Jesus said "I must," it was not merely that He yielded Himself unintelligently to the will of God, but that He knew full well that the will of God which marked his pathway through Jerusalem, and suffering, and the Cross to Resurrection, was the good and perfect and acceptable will. We tell each other, and rightly so, that we are to submit ourselves wholly and absolutely to the will of God without questioning. Yea, verily, but why? Because His will must always be will impelled by love, and by light, and therefore will be of the highest and noblest and best. It is not mere blind submission to mechanical force, this yielding to the will of God. It is reason linked with faith handing the life over to what must be the highest and noblest and best. So it was with Christ. He minded the things of God. We all know the figure of the Potter and the clay. Have we not often done violence to the great figure by looking more at the clay and the principle than at the Person? If you tell me this is the principle of life, that I am the clay and God is the Potter, and you tell me nothing about God, but only that I am to submit myself wholly, absolutely to Him without regard to what He is in Himself, I cannot obey. But I watch the Potter at work on the clay. I know the Potter. I know the thought in the mind of the Potter is a thought of love, a thought of beauty and of purity, and I yield, not to the mechanism of a superior force, but to the love that can make no mistake. Peter had not seen this. He had not yet learned it. Presently he will, and I shall see him rejoicing that he is considered worthy to suffer. For the moment he has not seen this, but Christ has. "I must," because I mind the things of God, not merely the purpose and program of God, but the heart and character of God.

As at the beginning, so at the close let me say to you that these two conceptions of life divide us as a congregation into separate camps. I would God that it might be that we are all in Christ's camp; but I am going to find no verdict, to pass no sentence. Hear me: you are living and I am living, answering one of two master principles, either, Spare thyself, or Do the will of God. The first is devilish. "Get thee behind Me, Satan." When Christ has put His measurement upon a thing, I have no appeal, and desire to make no appeal. The other is Christian in the deep, true, profound sense of the word. I must obey the will of God and that always means suffering in a world where sin is. In the presence of sin and in the presence of wrong, those who put the "must" of the Divine will at the center of their lives and answer it must come after Him, must know something of fellowship with His suffering. You can know nothing of fellowship with His suffering until you have put the will of God as the master passion of your life. You may suffer, but your suffering is not in fellowship with Him while you are persisting in sin. No man living in answer to lust and desire, suffer as he will, is in fellowship with Christ. Let us beware of specious blasphemy. When a man has yielded himself to Christ, when the will of God has become the master passion of a man's life, then if His will means passing down to Jerusalem, and suffering, and death, so be it. I want to make a distinction carefully here. Jesus did not deliberately choose suffering. He did not deliberately choose sacrifice. He chose the will of God, and because suffering and sacrifice lay in that will He chose them; but He did not imagine that He had to seek for the most unpleasant thing and do it. How many Christian people have that idea. How many people have the idea that they must do the thing that is most objectionable in order that they may be in the will of God. That is not Christ's idea. There are some people who carry that to the last extreme, and I hear of hair shirts and tortures for the flesh. Jesus Christ never scourged Himself. Jesus Christ never inflicted pain upon His own physical being. Jesus Christ never deliberately chose mental anguish. He chose the will of God, and when the will of God led Him through infinite and intolerable suffering, then He went. That is the master passion of life.

It is perfectly true that no man has any right to commit suicide. It is perfectly true that no man has any right to use the strength which is God's strength outside God's will; but no other man has any right to come in and interfere between the servant's loyalty and his

Master's command. A man must be very careful that it is God's will when he is in the way of suffering. A man must search himself in the midst of suffering as well as in the midst of joy, as to whether it is God's will.

We need supremely today a Church of Jesus Christ, reformed to the pattern of Jesus Christ. I admit that I have said it is not right to choose suffering simply because it is suffering. A man must choose only the will of God; then if it lead through suffering or joy, he must rejoice alike in joy or pain if it be God's sweet will. Yet surely this voice of Peter is heard on every hand today in the Church. Oh that the Church could be brought to the high level of abandoning her comfortable ease and vulgarity, and come after her Lord with the "must" of God driving, then the world would see that the wounded Bridegroom has a wounded Bride, that the suffering King has a suffering army, that the Head wounded and heaped with abuse has in sympathy with Himself the souls that follow Him to do the will of God, even through suffering.

What then? On every cross there shines the light of Easter day. If you will not have the cross, you will never reach the Easter day. If you shun this rugged road of the will of God, you will never come into the far-reaching magnificence of the King's own great new country.

Someone here is suffering in the will of God. My last word to you is this: We come to the green hill. I have not brought you to the green hill as men who need salvation, but as a company of the children of God. You are in the midst of suffering. You might have missed it if you had been disloyal to truth and to your Lord. You might, young man, have had promotion in the world, but you were true, and you are poorer, and you will be all your life. Already upon that life of yours, limited perhaps, and bruised and broken in the will of God, the light of Easter day is shining, and flowers—not the flowers of earth, the grass that today is and tomorrow is cast into the oven—but the flowers of immortality that bloom from the blood of the Cross are in your pathway and upon your brow. So when we get to the Cross we are at the center of the universe, and all its measurements are the measurements of God. May He help us to see and understand.

092 - Matthew 16:24; Luke 14:33 - The Terms of Discipleship

The Terms of Discipleship

If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.

Matthew 16:24

So therefore whosoever he be of you that renounceth not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple.

Luke 14:33

In the words of Jesus, preserved for us in the records, there are two elements perpetually noticeable. There is that with which, perhaps, we are most familiar—the element of tenderness, of gentleness, or, as it has been very often recently described, the wooing note. But there is also manifest another element—that of severity, the element which sometimes seems almost to amount to harshness of expression, or, in contrast with the phrase already referred to, the element which may be described as the warning note.

These are also to be found in the story of the influence He exerted upon His own age, and in the influence He has exerted on every successive age, as well as in the influence which He is exerting today.

Jesus was and is the most attractive personality that the world has ever known. Yet, both when He was in our world in earthly form, and by His spiritual presence in every successive century, He has repelled the men He attracted—whispering, on the one hand, to the sorrow-burdened heart of humanity words so full of mother love and father love as to make men crowd and press round Him, and then, on the other hand, suddenly speaking words that flash and scorch and burn until men draw back in astonishment.

Let us think of this apparent contradiction a little more closely. The fact of the attractiveness of Jesus needs no argument today. The story of the life of Jesus as set forth in the four Gospels is the story of One Who was constantly drawing men to Him. I do not say for the moment with what issue; neither do I now deal with the motive which prompted the men that came. It was not always the same so far as their consciousness was concerned. I simply insist upon the fact that He drew men to Him. I think that perhaps the whole story may best be told in the somewhat rough and ready way of saying that the one thing the men of his age could not do with Jesus was to let Him alone. There was a strange attractiveness about Him in the early years. Luke has opened for us one or two windows through which we may see some of the facts about those hidden years. Among those windows there is one through which I love to look. It is the statement which Luke makes that He went down to His own home and that there "He grew in favor with God and man." Taking only one half of that double window, we have a declaration that Jesus as a boy, youth, and young man, grew in favor with men. May I not be allowed to put that in another form and say that Jesus, the boy, the youth, the young man, was a favorite in Nazareth. I am not sure that this is not almost startling put in this form. We have, somehow, come to imagine that real Christian character is not popular among men. We have come to imagine that some of the traits of Christianity are awkwardness, and such

peculiarity as repels men. It was not so in the case of Jesus. He was a favorite in Nazareth, that little town far up from the great high roads of the nations, one of those little towns where everyone knew everyone; there the boy was known, the young man was known and loved, and was a favorite. That is one of the windows looking through which a man is tempted to let his imagination run away with him. I think Jesus the carpenter was such a carpenter that children went to see Him, and took their broken toys to Him, and He mended them. If you do not understand that sentiment be sorry for yourself. Some of you are men whom no child would bring its toy to and ask to have it mended. I think young men loved to crowd to Him and talk to Him, this sweet, strong carpenter, about their difficulties and problems. I am not sure that the old men did not love to gather around the door of the carpenter's shop and listen to Him and talk with him about the Father's house of many mansions, and the rest that followed the turmoil and strife. Be that as it may, "He grew in favor"—they loved Him, they believed in Him in Nazareth. I know perfectly well that presently they tried to murder Him, that the day came when they took Him to the brow of the hill and fain would have cast Him down headlong. That was the effect of His teaching, the result of His having to rebuke their sin; but while He was living His quiet, strong, heroic life in the midst of them, He was a favorite. And when He turned His back upon the workshop and came into public life, how men pressed after Him wherever He went! I need not repeat it, you know your New Testament. "Much people... much people... much people." You cannot read the Gospels without feeling that you have been in the midst of the crowds. There are great, solemn, silent moments, midnight moments, but most of the time you are in the midst of the multitude, and men of all classes and castes are crowding after Him. I read that "the common people heard Him gladly"—which does not mean the poor people. The phrase translated "common people" is the identical phrase elsewhere translated "much people." So far from meaning people of the lower order, it means all sorts of people, rulers and ruled, learned and illiterate, rich and poor, privileged and oppressed.

In the early part of His ministry, the rulers were deeply interested in Him, and, more than interested, they hoped that they might have made something out of Him. They even went to the length of asking Him to dinner, and I never read the story of His going but I worship His strength, for more prophets have been spoiled by dining out than in any other way. This Man was able to sit at the table with the rulers, and with fine courtesy tell them the truth which scorched them. And the people followed Him out of the villages and cities. How many days' work were lost in following Him who can ever tell? How many long, dusty pilgrimages were undertaken, who can imagine? One day, tired of the throng, He entered into a boat and put across to the other shore, and then I have this wonderful declaration: when the boat had kissed its way across the water and arrived at the other side, all the multitudes were waiting for Him, for they had outrun the boat round the shore in their anxiety to be near Him. That is the first fact about the days of His ministry in the world.

Set over against it this other fact. He was constantly warning men as they came. There was the moment when they came to Him and would have made Him King, but He slipped away and hid Himself, and would not so be made King. There were moments such as those of which we read in Luke's gospel when the multitudes were following, and even His own disciples fondly believed the opportunity was at hand when He should exert His power, and by popular acclaim become King, when He suddenly said, Unless you hate your father, mother, brother, sister, you cannot be My disciple. When you read those words after nineteen centuries is it not true you are afraid? I am. Is it not true that even now in the heart of most of us there is something of questioning rebellion? What does He mean? What are those strange, severe things by which He repels the very crowds He gathers? Instead of attempting to cover all the ground, I read these two incidents because they are typical. The words I read in Matthew 16 were not spoken primarily to the crowds, but to His own disciples. It was at Caesarea Philippi, at the parting of the ways, after He had fulfilled the first part of His ministry, and one soul at least had seen and known Him for what He really was, the Christ of God. There He began to unfold the mystery of His method, to tell them the story of His cross and His suffering and resurrection, and there and then the whole company of His disciples fell back, and they never came into close fellowship again until He was dead, buried, risen, ascended, and the Holy Ghost was poured upon them. They shunned the cross. Do not be angry with them—we are shunning it still, many of us, and we have more light than they. While He talked of the keys, their faces were radiant and their following was faithful; but when He talked of the cross, their faces were shadowed and their following faltered. Then it was that, looking at the little group of men, He said: "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." And they dared not do it, and if we watch the story carefully from the beginning of His ministry to Caesarea Philippi, we see men perpetually leaving Him—rulers, scribes, Pharisees—until this little group is left alone. If you follow the story after Caesarea Philippi, you will reach its tragic last chapter and find it written in these few burning words: "They"—all the disciples—"forsook Him and fled." So that at the end I see the most attractive personality in human history absolutely alone, no one by His side, no sympathy in His dying. It is a strange story. It is a contradiction that needs careful examination. Why this repelling method of Jesus in the presence of His attractiveness?

Having asked that question, it is our business to answer it, not speculatively, but in the light of the Scriptures we read, in the light of the teaching they contain. I have read these two Scriptures because I think we have the one answer delivered in two sets of circumstances—first to the disciples, in Matthew 16, and then to the crowds, in Luke 14. Let us begin with the story of Luke. Why is it that Jesus upon such an occasion should say such strangely severe things? Mark the occasion. There went with Him great multitudes, and He turned and said—and you know the words. If you follow on you will find that He explains their meaning. "For which of you desiring to build a tower, doth not first sit down and count the cost...? Or what king... will not sit down first and take counsel whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand?... So therefore whosoever

he be of you that renounceth not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple."

Here, for a moment, I must crave your very close attention and patience, because I want, if I may, to rescue this passage from popular misinterpretation. It is almost always read as though Jesus meant to say, "You must hate father, mother, wife, children, brethren and sisters, because if you are going to build a tower you must count the cost; if you are going to war you must see whether you are able to meet twenty thousand with ten thousand." One little word in the Authorized Version has given color to this interpretation. In verse 33 we read, "So likewise," but in the Revised Version we have an entirely new meaning suggested by the words, "So therefore." The difference is that, according to this rendering, what our Lord meant to say was this: You ask in your heart why I insist upon such severe terms, why I hold men away from me in this manner. And this is His answer. Which of you going to build a tower will not first count the cost, or going to battle is not careful about the quality of the men who will serve under you. So therefore, because my work is the work of building and of battle, I am bound to be careful about the men that I choose to follow me; because I am not merely asking men to come after me in order to save them, but in order to help me and help God and humanity. My business is to build—that is constructive. My business is to conduct a war, a battle—that is destructive, and I must have men I know where to find. Which of you going to build a tower doth not first count the cost, or what king going to war does not take account of the quality of the men?

Let us leave Luke for a moment and go back to Matthew and see what our Lord said there, and inquire if we find anything like the same explanation. Here the same two figures occur in the Lord's description of His work. Peter had confessed Him, and immediately He named something in the economy of His work which had never been named before. He said, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven. And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." In that statement about the Church you have Christ's revelation of the nature of His work.

First, "I will build"; secondly, "The gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." Our Lord did not here state the same thing concerning the Church in two ways. He did not mean, "I will build the Church here, on this rock foundation, and when Hades comes against it it shall not prevail." When an enemy attacks a city, it does not take its gates with it. What Christ here meant is, My Church is, first of all, my building, and consequently impregnable; but my Church is also to be an aggressive force, which I shall lead to battle against all foes of God and humanity; and then, with the far vision of a great Conqueror, He sees the last enemy, death, the gates of Hades, the last citadel which His Church will storm, and sweeping over the intervening foes, He says: "The gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." Here, then, as in Luke, there are two things—building and battle. "I will build My Church"—"Which of you going to build a tower doth not first count the cost?" "The gates of Hades shall not prevail against it"—"What king going to make war doth not count the cost?"

Thus we find the answer to our question as to the severity of Jesus. Because He is committed to the building of the Church, and is committed to battle against all the forces that are against man and God, He must have those associated with Him on whom He can depend. He not merely seeks to save individuals, but also to gather about Him men and women on whom He can depend for co-operation in building and comradeship in battle. That is why He is so severe in His terms. That is why, when multitudes gathered about Him, He seems to have been sifting them.

Behold the crowds, oh, Jesus, the day of Thy crowning is coming. In a few moments they will put the crown upon Thy brow! No, I must build and fight! If any man will come after me, if there is one man among the crowd that really will follow, let him deny himself and take up his cross. Not by popular acclaim, but by solid building and hard fighting is my victory to be won. Who is coming with me?

The Son of God goes forth to war,
A kingly crown to gain.
His blood-red banner streams afar;
Who follows in His train?
Who best can drink His cup of woe,
Triumphant over pain,
Who patient bears his cross below,
He follows in His train.

Quality is always more than quantity. We are a little slow to believe it, but we all know it. We do not like the sifting process when Christ confronts us and sends back the multitudes that we fain would keep, but we know He is right. It is in the Old Testament as well as in the New. We read that thirty-two thousand men came up to fight the battle of the Lord, but Jehovah said, They are too many, sift them; and within a few moments twenty-two thousand men tramped home. Sing the Doxology!—we are stronger the moment they are gone. But still the people are too many—test them by the water brooks, and the men who take unnecessary time over necessary things are to go home. Nine thousand seven hundred of them went away, leaving only three hundred, but infinitely

mightier the three hundred than the thirty-two thousand.

Not by popular vote, or acclaim, but by souls who can suffer and dare and die He builds the tower and fights the foe. Our Lord has not altered His method, and yet—here let me speak with great carefulness—there is not one in all this house that He does not want. There is no one that He will not enroll among His soldiers and employ in His great building enterprise—that is, if we are prepared to fulfill His conditions.

I am making my appeal tonight from perhaps a slightly different standpoint from the usual one. I am not speaking to you of the fact that you need personal salvation. In my heart is this great thought, that Jesus has need of you, not merely for your sake, but for His sake. He has not built His Church yet; He is building it, and will never finish until the top stone is brought on with shouting of, "Grace, grace unto it." He had not ended the battle yet. He has fought the Armageddon, the greatest battle is over; but battles are fought all along the line, and He it is who leads the hosts of God. He is building God's city, and He wants you if you are such a man as He can depend on. Jesus Christ in London today wants really faithful, consecrated souls far more than patronizing multitudes.

Christ confronts us all and says, "If any man would come after Me let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." Who follows? You can applaud without following. You can admire without helping. You can be near enough to touch His sacred garment in a crowd, and never lay a brick in God's city, or strike a blow for God's victory. I dare believe there are young hearts everywhere that are sighing to help Him. Oh, young man, young woman, was there ever such a King, such a Leader, such an enterprise? Was there ever anything dreamed of by angels or men so calculated to stir the pulse and drive the heart as the King's building of the city, the King's battle for the victory? Will you come after Him?

Let us hear His terms, and God help us to hear them solemnly. "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." Three things, and yet only one. The essential is the last-named, the first two are preliminary. They are necessary; you cannot reach the third save through them, but the third is the final, the essential, "Follow Me." I have been interested anew in Christ's use of the word, and have taken these Gospel stories, and have been surprised how often He said, "Follow Me." The call is so simple that any little child will tell you what it means. It is so sublime that no Christian philosopher has ever exhausted the infinite meaning of the word. If we are to help Him in His building and battle we must follow Him. What is it to follow? Two very simple things are included; to follow is, first, to trust, and, secondly, it is to obey. I cannot follow unless I trust; but I can trust in a general sense and never follow. There are many who believe Him to be the one and only King and Saviour of men, who never take His name in vain, and would not allow anyone to speak disrespectfully of Him; but they are not following Him.

"If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross." Denial of self is the hidden and internal process, the taking up of the cross is the outward and external manifestation. If I may adapt and use in this connection old and familiar words, I would say that the taking up of the cross is the outward and visible sign of the inward and spiritual grace of self-denial. What is self-denial? Jesus says everything when He speaks, and there is nothing more to be said; our danger is that we minimize when we explain. To deny self is to say no to every wish that comes out of the personal life. To deny self is radical; it goes down to the roots of things. A man may practice self-denial all his life and never deny himself. A man may practice self-denial in this and that respect, and all the while his self-centeredness is strengthened. Jesus did not say, Exercise self-denial in externalities. He said, Deny self. Have done with choosing, wishing, planning, arranging for self. Choose no more; will no more, except to will that God shall will.

Our wills are ours we know not how,
Our wills are ours to make them Thine.

I deny self when I hand over the keys of the citadel to the King and say, Enter and reign in every chamber of the being, in all the possibilities of the soul.

Is this easy? How is it to be expressed? Take up thy cross. What is that? I do not know for you, my brother. I do not know for myself tomorrow. The cross in its practice changes perpetually, in its principle it abides. The cross is the one thing that intrudes itself upon your vision at the moment of your denial of self. I am increasingly impressed with the fact that whenever a soul comes to Christ the last battle is fought out over one thing. I do not know what it is in your case, but you know exactly what you have to do if you are to follow this Christ, to build and to battle—the thing that must be set right, the friendship that must be dropped, the habit that must be abandoned, the restitution that has to be made, pride that has to be humbled, prejudice that has to be crucified. God tells us what it is, and we know. Oh for one five minutes of soul honesty! Do not indulge in subterfuges. You are asked to be true about the thing that you know is between your soul and God. For some of you it will mean a hasty return home to find the woman you insulted ere you left. For some it will mean going home and telling your children that you were wrong in your treatment of them. For some it will mean asking for the money back that you put on the plate to make restitution. It is a real cross when you begin to follow Jesus. They are Christ's terms. Nothing I have said is quite so hard as the words He uttered. Unless you hate father, mother, wife, children, brethren, sisters; unless you put every other love, every other interest in the background and Christ in the foreground, you cannot be His disciple. So help me God, I will not tone down my Master's message. I will not make this thing for my heart and yours one bit

smoother than He made it. Take up your cross—not Christ's. You cannot take up Christ's cross. He took it up alone, and in the mystery of it made it possible for you to take yours and find the virtue of His; but you must take up your own.

There is one other thing I would say. If you stand where I stand you are appalled at the tremendous claim of Jesus. How can I ever deny myself and take up my cross? I come from the negative to the positive, and say to you that the only way in which you will ever be able to deny yourself and take up your cross is by

fixing your eye upon Him and crowning Him. If I must stretch out my hands to the rugged cross in order to get to Him I can do it in only one way, that is by seeing Him and doing it for His sake. If I do it for my own sake, or for the sake of men, I shall fail, for I am such a coward; but if I may but look at His face as I come to my dying, I can say, "I am crucified with Christ, but nevertheless I live."

From the ground there blossoms red
Life that shall endless be.

The cross is but the prelude to resurrection. How often shall we say it! Let us come, those of us who will, and say to Him, Christ, Thou hast drawn us irresistibly. We are here to see Thee, to hear Thee. Thou has frightened us with Thy terms, but we also would help Thee in Thy building and in Thy battle, and we will deny self and take up the cross with our eyes fixed upon Thee. And by the way of the cross we enter the army, and enter upon the enterprise, and if we suffer with Him we shall also reign with Him. May God grant that there may be many who will join Him in His building and His battle by denying self and taking up the cross and following Him!

101 - Matthew 27:22 - The Verdict

The Verdict

What then shall I do unto Jesus which is called Christ?

Matthew 27:22

This question occurs in the story of the appearance of Jesus before the Roman Governor Pilate. If we read the story superficially, we shall declare that Jesus was arraigned before Pilate. If we read the story carefully, determining to see its true inwardness, to discover its profoundest meanings, we shall say that Pilate was arraigned before Jesus. In the facts which were merely local and incidental and historical, Jesus was a prisoner at the bar of Pilate, waiting for verdict and sentence. In all the values which were essential and spiritual and age-abiding, Pilate the Roman Governor stood at the bar of Jesus waiting for verdict and sentence.

The Governor asked, "What then shall I do with Jesus which is called Christ?" as though the disposal of Jesus were in his hands. By the answering of that question, Pilate was deciding what it would be necessary, in the fulness of time and in the perfecting of the Divine economy, for Jesus to do with him. I do not mean by that to affirm that Pilate was lost because of his action upon that occasion. It is perfectly certain, that if Pilate never repented of his vacillation, never repented of that moment in which he seared his conscience to save his position, then his destiny was sealed. But who shall dare to affirm that this was so? It may be that in after years, when he had lost the position he had purchased at the price of disloyalty to conscience, the haunting memory of the face and regal mien of the Man Who troubled him that day, may have followed him until in penitence he turned to Him in submission; and if he did, then he found His grace sufficient to meet his need.

From this moment, I have nothing more to do with that old scene or with the local setting of my text, save for purpose of illustration. I am interested in the abiding principles, in the spiritual values, in the immediate and persistent application of this old-time story.

This is the final question of the Gospel according to Matthew, which is the Gospel of Jesus as King. He is presented to us here in the purple robes of His sovereign royalty. He is presented to us in the early chapters, first, in His relation to our own world; while Jesus was of our human nature He did not enter upon our human life by the will or act of humanity, but by the mysterious and direct intervention of God: second, in relation to the world above; after the Kingliness of work well done the wreath of Divine attestation was set upon His brow, "This is My beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased"; and the holy chrism, the anointing of the Spirit fell upon Him, fitting Him for specific Kingly work; finally, in relation to the under-world of evil; passing into the wilderness as King He met the enemy of the race and mastered him at every onslaught.

There follows the story of the Kingly Propaganda. First, the great Manifesto which we speak of as the Sermon on the Mount. Then the toil amid all the limitation of human life; the King is supreme in all spheres; master of material things; victorious in the presence of mental disorder as He flung the devils out and restored men to their right mind; triumphant in the moral realm, as He forgave sins and gave men power to sin no more. The King is next seen in conflict with the false rulers of the people, the shepherds who fed themselves instead of the people, the shepherds who sought their own safety instead of that of the people; defeating them, and rising superior to them on every occasion. At Caesarea Philippi He challenged His disciples, and Peter made his confession "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." From that moment He began to talk about His cross, and with calm and Kingly dignity He

trod the Via Dolorosa that culminated in the tragedy of Calvary. The dead body of the King was laid by tender and loving hands in the grave.

On the first day of a new week the message came, the King is alive, and finally His authoritative voice is heard saying, "All authority hath been given unto Me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and disciple the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you; and lo, I am with you all the days, even unto the consummation of the age."

In that rapid survey of the gospel, the King is again presented. In the midst of the tragedy at the end, just before the flaming glory of the ultimate victory of resurrection, this question was asked, "What then shall I do with Jesus which is called Christ?" To answer that question I call you in the name of God, in the name of the King, in the name of your humanity. In the presence of the farflung splendours of the unseen world, and the vast spaciousness of human life in the economy of God, I bring you this question and I ask you to make it your own and to answer it ere the day have passed, "What then shall I do unto Jesus which is called Christ?"

My business at this hour is to appeal for a verdict. I would fain bring you, my comrades in this human life, my fellow travelers to all the mystery and wonder of the life that lies beyond, face to face with the King and I would ask your verdict, "What then shall I do unto Jesus which is called Christ?"

In order that we may be helped, in order that we may be aided in our hour of decision, I propose to ask a series of questions, all of them leading up to, and culminating in the question of Pilate.

The first question I would suggest is this. What can I do with Jesus? I reply to that immediately. I can crown Him or crucify Him, and I can do none other than one of these two. Every one of us must give a vote for His crowning or for His crucifixion. There is no middle course because His claims are supreme, and His claims are superlative. He is either all He claims to be and all His followers have claimed for Him, or He is the most stupendous fraud that has ever been foisted upon human credulity. Have you ever really considered the words Jesus uttered as He stood in the midst of the promiscuous multitudes of men and women of all sorts and conditions; as He stood in the midst of men and women, with hearts wrung with sorrow, with spirits dejected by hope deferred; in the midst of men and women in the grip of sin and vice; in the midst of the physical pain and weariness and the dread tiredness of the multitudes? He said "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." If that were a lie, it were the most cruel of lies. If it were the truth, it is the truth that we ought to live and die for, and proclaim to men, for this is what the world supremely needs. The Man Who can stand in the midst of human pain and agony and turmoil and temptation and say, "If you will come to Me I will give you rest," ought to be crucified if His claim is untrue or He ought to be crowned if it be true! What will you do with Him? What can you do with Him? Do not take the distant look alone, think of the claim He is making in London today. It is that He is able to take hold of the worst man and the worst woman, and so to touch them with forgiveness and with healing and with life that He will give them rest and make them the best man and the best woman. He is claiming today that He can lay His hand upon the flotsam and jetsam of humanity, upon men and women flung out upon the scrap-heap by the cruel grind of human laws, and that He can make of them such men and women that presently He will present them faultless before God, so that God shall not be ashamed of them, so that they shall not fail to command the respect of God. This is a superlative claim, and the Man Who makes a claim like this is a fraud, or so help me God He is my King. I want to be rid of the voice that makes claim like that if it is mockery; or I want that it shall be multiplied until every weary and brokenhearted man and woman has heard it, if it be true. I must crown Him or crucify Him. One of the most consistent and beautiful figures upon the page of the New Testament is that of Paul. Oh yes, he wrote one day that he was the chief of sinners, but he wrote that when he was standing in the presence of Christ. When a man stands in the presence of Christ he always feels he is the greatest sinner in the world. If you will compare Paul with other men you cannot but admire him. Before he knew Jesus, he was splendidly true, magnificently consistent, tremendously earnest. Mark the difference. Before he knew Jesus, he made havoc of the Church of God. Why? Because he believed that Jesus was an impostor, that He never rose from the dead, that all that His disciples were claiming for Him was untrue; and out of the pure honesty of his heart he was determined to stamp out His name. But there came a moment of illumination, a moment when a new light broke upon him, a moment when the conviction came that the Jesus Whom he thought dead was alive. What then? With an honesty that I would God other men shared, with a splendid intensity that was wholly admirable, he began to labour and suffer toward the hour when that Jesus should be the crowned Lord of all. What can I do with Him? I must crown Him or crucify Him.

Let me ask a second question. What does it matter what I do with Him? What difference does it make whether I crown Him or crucify Him? I will answer the question in the sense in which it is asked. There are a great many men; men I know in my business house, men I meet on the market, on the street, who have not crowned Him, but they seem to be doing very well. There are a great many people, thousands of people who are rejecting Him, but they seem to be doing very well. I put it so because that thing is said to me scores of times in one year in dealing with men about spiritual things. So I ask the question, "What does it matter?"

It makes all the difference first of all, to your character. It makes all the difference in the second place, to your influence. It makes all the difference finally, to your destiny. Character, influence, destiny.

These are the things men will not think of, but they are the supreme things. A man will think of his bank book, of his house, of his diet, of his education, of his amusement. None of these things are wrong, but they are secondary, by comparison they are unimportant. They are not the final things. I do not mean to say that Christ is not interested in these things, for I know He is interested in what a man eats, what he wears, where he lives; only His way of dealing with what a man eats, what he wears, and where he lives, is that of dealing with the man himself, and when He begins to deal with a man, He deals first with character.

Understand this, your character will depend, and does depend upon your attitude toward Christ. You cannot reject the Christ of this Gospel of Matthew without suffering deterioration of character. You cannot honestly crown Him without entering upon an ennobled life. Here is a thing I need not labour. There are men and women scattered throughout this house tonight, who if this were the time and place, would rise to testify to the fact that crowning Jesus changed their outlook and conceptions and therefore reacted upon them, so that they are not what they were. Crown Jesus and character becomes characterized by purity and love, and when you have uttered those two words you have said everything. When John looked at Jesus he said he saw Grace and Truth, love and life, compassion and holiness. That is the character that is produced. Not in a moment does it come to fulness of fruitage; oh no, some of us know how long the struggle is, how much He has to bear with, how patiently He has to wait when we turn from the pure to the impure, when we turn from love to the things that contradict it; but that is the pattern of character when Jesus is King, a stern endeavour after rightness and a strong moving toward compassion and tenderness toward other men. Reject this Christ of God, and gradually the standard of your morality is lowered; gradually you depart from the high ideals and accept the lower estimates of things; gradually you descend even from the respectable which you now worship to the vulgarity you now hate. Do you think any man lying drunk in the gutter tonight ever meant to lie there? Of course he did not. He has descended. Do you suppose any man in the grip of some hellish, devilish, dirty habit meant so to be gripped? He at first felt the shame of it, but gradually the shame passed, until today there are men who can sin without a blush. Character deteriorated, ruined, is always the outcome of refusing Christ.

Not character alone, but that which is the outcome of character, influence, is determined by relationship to Christ.

Crown Him, obey Him and—I quote from His Manifesto so that there shall be no speculation on my part—then what? "Ye are the salt of the earth;" the influence you exert is an influence that prevents the spread of corruption, and gives the man struggling in weakness his chance. "Ye are the light of the world," you shall live in the office, in the business house, in professional life, wherever you are, and your life shall be a life that helps men toward God and truth. Refuse to crown Him and your influence is the opposite. Instead of salt which prevents corruption, you will corrupt society. God help me, I am always afraid of generalities when I am after a verdict. Let me take one man, a young man in this house tonight. What will you do with Jesus? Crown Him and your character is ennobled, and I care not where you work or where you live, you will help men to noble things. Refuse to crown Him and your character will degenerate and the very stories you tell will help to damn men. Your influence depends upon what you do with Jesus.

Your destiny depends upon what you do with Jesus, for this life is not all. This life is but the place of probation. Life lies beyond, higher, deeper, profounder; and when presently, I shall cross the border-line, that crossing of the border-line will not change my character, will not change the essential facts of my personality. There is destiny. What lies beyond? Who dare say. Who dare invade the stillness and silence of the secrets of eternity? Not I. But I dare affirm that as a man shall choose in these days of opportunity so shall he abide in the days that lie beyond. I am not preaching to men who have never had an opportunity, or I might have another emphasis upon that message. If I were preaching to people who had never been brought face to face with Jesus Christ, and had never heard this evangel, I might have something else to say. I am preaching to men and women who know the name, and know the story, have seen the uplifted Christ, have witnessed the transformation of other lives. What you do with Christ settles not character and influence only, but destiny. It does matter.

Let us ask another question. Who can decide for me? The answer is swift and immediate. No one can decide for you. You must decide. The friends of Jesus cannot decide that you shall crown Him. Blessed be God, the foes of Jesus cannot compel you to crucify Him. Pilate washed his hands in water, and said, I am innocent. Pilate, it will never do! It is a base and hideous mockery. Listen, Pilate, you cannot wash blood out in water! Pilate, you stand at the bar of your own conscience. You are arguing between expedience and obedience, whether you shall do the straight thing though the heavens fall, or by some trick save your own position as Roman Procurator. You are trying to shift the blame upon those priests. God knows they are to blame, those evil inspirers of an evil deed. You are trying to put the blame upon the mob, crying for His crucifixion. You cannot do it, Pilate! You have asked a question more profound than you know, "What then shall I do?" When presently thou hast handed Him over to His cross, and thou hast written the superscription to mock the priests, and dost say "What I have written I have written," then thou sayest more than thou knowest. Thou hast chosen, thou hast written, and the clamour of His foes will not excuse thine action. The persuasion of His friends cannot finally decide thy choice. So it is in this hour. I have sometimes said, If I could, I would come and compel a man to Christ. Thank God I cannot. Every man stands in the awful awe-inspiring, tremendous dignity of his own power to choose, and no man can invade it. The friends of Christ tonight would fain persuade you, we are prepared to go so far as Paul when he said, "We are ambassadors therefore on behalf of Christ, as though God were intreating by us: we beseech you on behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled to God." But, you must decide. Every man chooses for himself. Do not forget that fact when the foes of Christ are trying to prevent you by their laughter and persecution, by their suggestion that you take the glamour and glitter of the things that perish. You

must decide. This is a great congregation, but it is composed of lonely men and lonely women who within the next fifteen minutes will have decided each for himself, for herself, to crucify or crown Christ.

There is another question. When must I answer this? The answer to this is as quick and immediate as to the last. Now. Yesterday, I need not argue. Yesterday does not matter. Yesterday by your life, by your thinking, by your speaking, by your doing, you drove the nails and crucified Christ—for oh, men and women, remember that not the Jewish priests and Roman soldiers crucified Christ, but my sin and your sin. That is the deep mystery of the cross. By the sin of yesterday you crucified Him, so that there can be no further decision about yesterday. Tomorrow—you remember the saying of your childhood, more philosophic than you have thought recently—tomorrow never comes. There is no tomorrow for the activity of the soul. No man decides tomorrow. The soul is so close to God that its one hour of the clock is His now. You decide now and cannot escape it. When presently, the service over, you leave this building and walk through the streets amid the city's babel and noise, you go having given your vote for the crucifixion or the crowning of Christ. It is an immediate transaction.

One other question. What will be the result in the long issues? I have spoken of the near things of character and influence, and of destiny which may be a far thing but which begins here and now. In the long issues, what will be the result? Let me try to answer that question. There is a day coming when this same King shall appear again. He is coming into His Kingdom, blessed be God. That is the comfort of all such as work. That is the battle song that nerves us in the hour of turmoil and strife. He is coming into His Kingdom. It is not an idle song we sing, it is the profoundest thing in our souls: "Jesus shall reign where'er the sun doth his successive journeys run."

If the New Testament be true, He is to appear again. He has appeared, He has had His first advent, epiphany, appearing, which was an Advent of infinite grace. It was an Advent of awful loneliness, and pain and buffering, of prison and death; but He is coming again. There will be a second Advent as surely as there was the first Advent. There will be another epiphany, another manifestation, but how changed. The Son of man shall come in His own glory and the glory of His Father, and all the holy angels with Him. There is an hour coming when the world shall see again the King. Then this question will be reversed. The question is that awful, yet glad hour—and whether awful or glad depends entirely upon our present relationship to Him—will not be What shall I do with Jesus? but What will Jesus do with me?

He came, and they crowned Him with thorns; but He is coming with the diadems of the universe upon His brow. He came, and they put in His hand a reed, in mockery; but He is coming with the sceptre of the universe in His strong right hand; He came, and they lifted Him to die on the cross; but He is coming seated upon the throne of empire and dominion. When He comes again, He will do with men what men have done with Him when they had their opportunity to choose. If I have rejected Him, He will reject me, and that not capriciously, but by reason of the very necessity of the case. He will be compelled, in the day of the final establishment of His government in the world and through the universe, to reject those who have rejected Him, for to retain them would be to ruin the new creation and blight and blast the established Kingdom.

Now finally, back again to Pilate's question. We have only attempted to emphasize it and insist upon its importance, and persuade you to personal decision by all the questions we have suggested. This is the last. What shall I do?

Would to God that the preacher could be entirely silent, or would to God that his voice might be heard simply as the voice of heaven. Each one is quite alone with God. I cannot see, neither can I know what takes place at this moment between your soul and God, and your neighbour cannot see or know. Thank God for the sacredness of our loneliness with God. I pray you be conscious of that. In that place of loneliness with God, ask Pilate's question, and answer it. "What then shall I do unto Jesus which is called Christ?"

What shall I do? Oh soul of mine, as though thou hadst never faced Christ before, as though thou hadst never come to this bar of judgment, now soul of mine, What wilt thou do with Christ? Everything depends upon the will. There is intellectual persuasion toward His crowning. He has made the emotional appeal to my heart. The call of my conscience bids me crown Him at all costs. Shall I do it? That is the question.

Courage my soul, dare to do it. And as though never before, in the presence of heaven and eternity, I lay down all the arms of my rebellion and crown Him Lord; He shall be King of my life.

It is hardly worth Thy taking oh King! It is bruised, battered; but oh, take it, and if Thou canst make a garden out of this desert, then do so; if Thou canst make any use of what there is of me, take me oh Christ, and make me in order to use me.

Is that what you say? God help you to make this real. Do not be deceived. In two or three minutes the service will be over, and going out of the building and along the streets you will go having voted for His death and crucifixion, or will have found the verdict that compels you to crown Him. Which?

God grant there may be hundreds of us who tonight shall crown Him to the glory of His name, for the saving of our own lives, in order that we may be soldiers of the King, servants of the King, workers together with God, for His name's sake.

The Darkness of Golgotha

From the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour.

Matthew 27:45

That is a verse which we are in danger of reading hurriedly. We treat it too often as though it were merely the record of something incidental.

As a matter of fact, it is the central verse in the story of the Cross. Indeed, the Cross itself is not mentioned, no word is spoken of it or of the Christ; they are alike hidden, and yet the period was one of three hours' duration, the very central hours of the experience of the Saviour of men. Christ and the Cross are alike hidden within that verse, and that fact is most suggestive because in those hours transactions were accomplished which through all eternity defy the apprehension and explanation of finite minds.

It is not to be passed over lightly that all the Synoptists record the fact of that darkness. Three hours of darkness and of silence! All the ribald clamor was over, the material opposition utterly exhausted, the turmoil ended. Man had done his last and his worst. Beyond that period of the three hours' silence even human actions were expressive of pity. Nothing has impressed my own heart, or amazed me more in reading this story anew, and attempting to meditate upon it in view of this service, than what I shall venture to describe as the wonderful psychological conditions of those hours beyond the hours of silence. It is as though that appalling silence and that overwhelming darkness had changed the entire attitude of man to the Saviour. The very vinegar they offered Him to drink was offered Him in pity. What they said about Elijah was expressive of their desire to sympathize. The centurion's testimony was that of a man whose heart was strangely moved toward the august and dignified Saviour. When presently they found Him dead, and therefore did not break His bones, the spear thrust was one of kindness, lest perchance He might still suffer, in spite of the fact that He appeared to be dead. Multitudes dispersed from the scene at Golgotha smiting their breasts, overwhelmed with a sense of awe, and strangely moved by some new pity. And there is no picture in all the New Testament more full of pathos and of power than that of the women standing silent and amazed through all those hours of His suffering, and still standing there beyond them.

Then also the cries which passed the lips of Jesus beyond the darkness were all of them significant of accomplishment. "My God! My God, why didst Thou forsake Me?"—for that was the tense; a slight change from the tense of the actual Psalm, a question asked by One Who was emerging from the experience to which He referred. And then as John is most careful to record for us, "Knowing that all things were now finished, He said, I thirst." Beyond that came the words of the great proclamation, "It is finished." And at last the words of the final committal, full of dignity, were spoken: "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." Everything was changed beyond the hours of silence and of darkness.

Much has been written about these hours of darkness, much which is not warranted by any careful spiritual attention to the story itself. You will call to mind how, at great length many years ago, it was argued that the darkness was that of the sun's eclipse. But that is entirely impossible, for Passover was always held at full moon, when there could be no eclipse of the sun. The darkness has been described as nature's sympathy with the suffering of the Lord, but that is a pagan conception of nature, a conception of nature as having some consciousness apart from God and out of harmony with His work. It has been said that the darkness was brought about by an act of God, and was expressive of His sympathy with His Son. I immediately admit that that is an appealing idea, and has some element of truth in it, in that we may discover the overruling of His government; but to declare that that darkness was caused by God because of His sympathy with His Son is to deny the cry of Jesus which immediately followed the darkness and referred to it. The darkness was to Him a period when He experienced whatever He may have meant by the words, "Thou didst forsake Me."

If I have succeeded in these words spoken in reverent spirit, in suggesting to you the difficulty of those central three hours, then our hearts are prepared for going forward.

I submit to you thoughtfully that no interpretation of that darkness is to be trusted save that of the Lord Who experienced it. Has He flung any light on the darkness which will enable us to apprehend the meaning of the darkness? Did any word escape His lips that will help us to explain those silent hours? I think the answer is to be found in these narratives, and to that teaching of the Lord we appeal in order that we may consider the meaning of the darkness, and the passing of the darkness, and thereafter attempt reverently to look back at the transaction in the darkness.

First, then, as to the meaning of the darkness. What was this darkness? How was it caused? What did it really mean? That this question is of importance is proved by that to which I have already drawn your attention, the fact that Matthew, Mark, and Luke alike record it, and that with care, as having taken place at this very time. The reference is made by each one of them in detail. It was something to be noted, something to be remembered, something which made its impression alike on the evangelist who saw the King, and the evangelist who saw the Servant, and the evangelist who saw the Perfect Man. We cannot pass it over as though it

were merely incidental, and consequently we shall attempt to discover its meaning in the light of what our Lord Himself said ere He passed into the darkness.

Luke records for us a fact not mentioned by either of the other evangelists, that in Gethsemane Jesus said to the man who came to arrest Him, "This is your hour, and the power of darkness." That was a most suggestive word, spoken as I have reminded you, in Gethsemane ere He passed from the garden to and through those trial scenes which we have not read this evening, but with which you are familiar. Last Sunday evening we attempted in reverence to behold the High Priest casting the incense on the fire in those hallowed experiences of Gethsemane. When that was over, just as He was leaving the garden Jesus spoke to the men about Him, "This is your hour, and the power of darkness." This is your hour! More than once during these Sunday evenings in which we have been meditating in the neighborhood of the Cross it has been necessary to refer to that phrase or conception, and I go back to it again, not to tarry at length with it, but to ask you most carefully to ponder it. At the commencement of our Lord's public ministry He referred to an hour which was not yet, to an hour which was postponed, and during the course of His ministry you will find that the evangelists more than once allude to the same hour, and to that hour, whatever it might have been, as to a postponed hour. Men attempted to arrest Him, but they could not because His hour was not yet come. Men desired to encompass His death, and wrought with all their strength, all their wit so to do; but they were unable, because His hour had not yet come. And not always by the use of that particular phrase, but over and over again our Lord was looking forward toward some consummating, culminating hour which no man could hurry, and which no man could postpone, but which He did perpetually postpone until in the economy of God its set time should have come.

"We must work the works of Him that sent Me while it is day. The night cometh when no man can work," was one of the profoundest sayings of Jesus in illuminating His own immediate ministry, having larger values, I will readily admit, but often we miss the profoundest value because we fail to observe the first intention. There was an immediate application of that word, which the Revised Version helps us to appreciate by a change of number in the personal pronoun. "We"—He was speaking of Himself and His disciples—"We must work the works of Him that sent Me while it is day; the night cometh," a time of darkness and desolation, "when no man can work," when you must stand aside from co-operation and fellowship with Me. That was the consummating hour to which He looked, the night of darkness which at last would come, in which no man could work, but God alone must work.

Now, in the light of that all too rapid examination of a very definite movement manifest in the ministry of our Lord, we come to Gethsemane. They were about to lay hands on Him, and to lead Him away to Caiaphas and to Pilate and to Herod, and again to Pilate and to death. Then He said, "This is your hour, and the power of darkness." The night, the hour postponed had arrived, and this was its character. From the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land. We have no picture of the Son of God during those hours, no record of a word passing His lips. It was the period of the infinite silence, the period of the overwhelming darkness.

What, then, is this that Jesus said concerning the darkness? It was the hour of evil, it was the hour under the dominion of the powers of darkness. In those three hours we see the Saviour in the midst of all that which resulted from the action of evil. Not without remarkable suggestiveness did the great apostle speak in a letter written long afterwards of Satan as "prince of the power of the air"; and not without suggestiveness did he speak of him as presiding over the age as ruler of the darkness. Not without significance did John, the beloved apostle, when opening his Gospel and writing concerning Jesus say that in Him was life, and the life was the light of men; that the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness apprehended it not, comprehended it not. Neither the word "apprehended," nor the word "comprehended" means "understood" in this connection. The declaration is not that the darkness did not understand the light, but that the darkness did not extinguish the light. The apostle's declaration at the commencement of the Gospel is that the light was always shining, and however deep and dense the darkness, it never succeeded in entirely extinguishing the light. The darkness apprehended it not, did not put it out. In that very negative declaration of the apostle you are brought face to face with the positive purpose of evil, with the purpose of Satan. What was Satan's supreme desire? To extinguish the light. "There," said John of Jesus, "was the true light... which lighteth every man, coming into the world." Satan's purpose was to extinguish that light.

From the very beginning of the shining of that light, focused in history by the Incarnation, the one supreme purpose of the enemy was to apprehend it, to comprehend it, to extinguish it, to put it out. And in these three hours of darkness we are face to face with the time when all the force of evil was brought to bear on the soul of the Son of God, and all the unutterable intent and purpose of evil wrapped Him about in a darkness that is beyond our comprehension.

In that moment there was material darkness. It was the material symbol of the empire of sin. If the questioning of the heart shall become so material as to inquire—and I grant you it almost necessarily must—whether Satan did in some way actually produce the material darkness, I shall have to reply I cannot tell, but I believe he did. I believe that by some action of those spiritual antagonisms, the world of principalities and powers, of which the early Christians were far more conscious than we are, and therefore more ready to fight with, under the captancy and leadership of the prince of the power of the air, there was wrought out in material experience a symbol of the spiritual intention of hell.

I suggest for some quiet hour the study and examination of Biblical symbolisms, and especially the use of this figure in Biblical literature, the figure of darkness. For the purpose of illustration I confine myself entirely to this Gospel of Matthew. Listen to these phrases, and immediately you will see how darkness is indeed a symbol of spiritual evil. "The people which sat in darkness." "If thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is the darkness!" "The sons of the kingdom shall be cast forth into the outer darkness." "Cast ye out the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness."

Wherever the word occurs in this Gospel of Matthew, indeed wherever it occurs in the New Testament, or its equivalent in the Old, it is the symbol of spiritual evil in its issue and in its ultimate. Darkness is the twin sister of death. Death and darkness express the ultimate in evil. And in this hour, when the Lord Himself was passing to death, there was darkness; and that material darkness which impressed the evangelists and the multitudes, and changed their attitude of mind toward Him, was but the outward and visible sign of the more mysterious and unfathomable spiritual darkness into the midst of which He had passed. Through the channel of His earthly life all spiritual things were having material manifestation. The Incarnation itself was but the working out into human observation of the truth concerning God. And now, in the hour of the dying of the Son of God, in that infinite, awful mystery, spiritual evil had its material manifestation in the darkness that settled over all the land. The darkness was of Satan; it was coincident with the ultimate in the suffering of the Son of God.

And now, ere we ask the most difficult of all questions concerning the transaction of the darkness, in preparation for that inquiry, let us look once more at that at which we have already glanced, the passing of the darkness. In order that we may see, that we may understand, let us listen again to the four words that passed the lips of the Lord beyond the ninth hour when the darkness was passing away, and the light of material day was again breaking through on the green hill and on the Cross and on all those Judaeian lands. Notice reverently, then, the four cries that escaped His lips, and divide them, as they most certainly are divided, into two groups, the first two and the second two.

The first cry was the expression of a backward thought. "My God, My God, why didst Thou forsake Me?" It was the call of Jesus of Nazareth as He emerged from the darkness, and from all that happened therein, of which no single word is actually written. It was in itself a revelation, like a flash of light piercing the darkness. "My God, My God, why didst Thou forsake Me?"

In the next word we have the expression of His immediate experience, of that of which in His humanity He became then supremely conscious, "I thirst."

Almost immediately following it we have again an expression of His immediate experience, that of which in the essential mystery of His Being He was conscious, "It is finished."

The final word described a forward glance. As the first word beyond the darkness expressed the backward thought, "My God, My God, why didst Thou forsake Me?" the last word expressed a forward confidence, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit."

We have listened to these words simply in order that we may try to be near Him as the darkness passed, and with all reverence, by listening to Him, appreciate something of the thinking of His own mind. A backward thought, "My God, My God, why didst Thou forsake Me?" and immediate experience within human limitations, "I thirst"; then spiritual accomplishment, "It is finished"; and then the future, the glorious future, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit."

Then He died, not of a broken heart, not of human brutality, not of murder by human hands; but of His own volition He yielded up the Ghost, and His Spirit, commended to God, passed to God. The death that saves was not that physical dissolution, but the infinite spiritual mystery of the three hours and the darkness, which being passed, He Himself did say, "It is finished."

In all that remained of the story beyond the hours of darkness we have no record of any word uttered by the foes of Jesus. They were not present, or they seem not to have been, during that time. Indeed, it is something to be meditated with thankfulness of heart that no rude hand ever touched the body of the dead Christ, that after the darkness, and beyond the death, and beyond the dismissal of the spirit, they were loving disciple hands that took Him from the Cross and wrapped Him round, and buried Him, giving Him the temporary resting place of a garden tomb. In death He was wonderfully preserved from all dishonor. The foes of Jesus seem to have withdrawn. Satan seems to have been absent.

Where was Satan? There is no answer in the records of the evangelists, and so I pass on to apostolic writings, and I find this written concerning Christ: "Having put off from Himself the principalities and the powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it." In the deep darkness, and in the midst of the silence, He triumphed over the forces of evil, the principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly by the Cross, putting off from Himself all that assaulted Him in, and by, and through the darkness.

As the darkness passed, we glance once again at that at which we have already looked, the attitude of the people. They were arrested, they were touched with pity; there came illumination to them concerning the dying and the dead One, and a great fear possessed them.

So, finally, we come to the most impossible subject of all, that of the transaction within the darkness. We admit that this can have no final exposition. We admit immediately that any even partial thing that may be said is incomplete. Every aspect of the infinite whole is larger than we can know. Every theory is of value, but all theories fail. This is not the place, nor would it be within the highest purpose of our worship, to attempt to prove that statement; but at least I may be permitted to say that, so far as I know, I have been reading through five and twenty years with ever growing gratitude great books on the Cross, and from each one I have gained something and every one I have at last laid down, saying as I did so, Yes, yes! All that, but more; something not reached, something not spoken!

God cannot finally be expressed in finite terms. "The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes." It cannot be explained; it is the perpetual marvel. God must pity any man who thinks he understands this Cross completely. God have mercy on any child of God if the day comes in which he has not to sing, "Love so amazing, so divine."

When the amazement dies out, it is not that the Cross has been analyzed, but that the gazer upon it has become blind.

Yet we may gain some light from the words of the Lord as He emerged from the darkness, and the darkness itself was suggestive. We remember the word we have already read from Matthew. "The people which sat in darkness." Into that darkness the Son of God experimentally passed. "If thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" That darkness had passed into His heart, when He said, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" "The sons of the kingdom shall be cast forth into outer darkness." The Son of God passed into that outer darkness.

That does not answer the inquiry as to what happened. I have no answer for that. Only this I know, that in that hour of darkness He passed into the place of the ultimate wrestling of evil in actual experience. There is light as I hear the final word, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit," for the word is a word which declares that whatever the transaction was, it was accomplished; that whatever the dying indicated, it was done.

But let us go a little further back, before the darkness, and listen to the chief priests who joined in the hellish clamor that beat on the suffering soul of the dying Saviour. Among other things, they said this, "He saved others; Himself He cannot save." That brings me nearer than anything else. Those were wonderful hours of the transmutation of basest things to high and noble things. That was the last taunt of His enemies; it has become the most illuminative word about the Cross.

"He saved others; Himself He cannot." So they laughed at Him. But hear it again, as a truth sublime and awful: because He saved others, He cannot save Himself. In order to save others He will not save Himself. Said the rabble, and said the rabbis joining in the unholy chorus, "Let Him come down from the Cross." He did not come down from the Cross, He went up from the Cross. The great Priest Who already had burned the incense in the holiest place bore the symbolic mystery of His own shed blood into the holy place, but ere He could do so, He passed into the darkness and abode in the silence three hours—a human measurement in order that we may somehow understand—and in those three hours He could not save Himself, and that because His heart was set upon saving others.

But why, why, why could He not save Himself? My question descends to the level of common, everyday human experience and capacity at its highest and its best. He might have saved Himself. He might never have gone to Gethsemane's Garden. He might even in Gethsemane's Garden have asked for twelve legions of angels, as He Himself did say. He might with one glance of His shining glory have swept the rabble from about the Cross and descended to the deliverance of Himself. If He had spoken in terms of power He might have saved Himself. Why, then, was it that He could not save Himself?

Because He is God, and because God is love, and love is never satisfied with the destruction of a sinner, but with the saving of a sinner. Love never finds its rest with holiness and righteousness vindicated by the annihilation of the things that oppose. Love will find its rest only when those who have been swept from righteousness and holiness are restored thereto and are remade in the image of the Father, God. That is why.

Yes, but once more. If that be true, then on the ground of the mystery of the compulsion of the ineffable love of God in Christ could love find no other way? Love could find no other way because sin knows no ending save by that way. The conscience of men demands that, the experience of men demands that. I base the twofold affirmation on the testimonies of the centuries and the millenniums. I base the affirmation on what I know within my own soul of sin.

Someone may say to me, "Cannot God forgive out of pure love?" I shall answer, "If He can, I cannot." If He could forgive me for the wrongs of which I am conscious, and that have left behind them their stain and pollution—if He could forgive me by simply saying, Never mind them, then I cannot so forgive myself. My conscience cries for a cleansing that is more than a sentiment of pity. Somehow, somewhere, in order that I may have forgiveness, there must be tragedy, something mightier than the devilish sin.

I do not know what happened in the darkness, but this I know, that as I have come to the Cross and received the suggestions of its

material unveiling, I have found my heart, my spirit, my life brought into a realm of healing spices, to the consciousness of the forgiveness of sins. And there is no other way and there is no other gospel of forgiveness.

In the darkness He saved not Himself, but He saved me. He declined to move toward His own deliverance in order that He might loose me from my sin. Out of the darkness has come a light. The word spoken to Cyrus long ago has been fulfilled in the spiritual glory to the Son of God, "I will give thee the treasures of darkness." And because fulfilled to the Son of God by the Father Who loved Him, and wrought with Him through the mystery of His forsaking, the word has been fulfilled also to the sons of God who are born not of blood, nor of man, nor of the will of the flesh, but of God. He gives us the treasures of darkness.

From the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land, and from the darkness have come the treasures of pardon, and peace, of power, and of purity.