

but exceedingly intense. There was the public service, the class-meeting, the prayer-meeting, and the periodical protracted-meeting. These were found to be sufficient to minister to the spiritual needs of the people. To-day the activities of the Methodist Church are more diversified. New forms of church activities were found to be necessary. Thus there were introduced the Ladies' Aid, the Epworth League with its various departments, the Young Men's Club, the annual Convention, the Summer School, the Woman's Missionary Society, the Laymen's Missionary Organization, the City-Mission, the Institution of Deaconesses, etc.

Notwithstanding these diversified activities, the Church is not to-day coping successfully with the great social problems, which in their acutest form are found in the city. Such, at least, is the opinion of many of the lay leaders. To quote from Rev. Chas. Stelzle: "The Church to-day seems to have arrived at one of the most crucial periods of her history. . . . No one can successfully deny that the Church is slowly but surely losing ground in the city." This statement was made with reference to American cities; but the same tendencies are at work in our Canadian cities, and the Canadian Church has a similar situation to face and similar difficulties to contend with.

For the purpose of studying its religious problem we may roughly divide the city into three parts: (1) The "good residential" districts; (2) The downtown districts; (3) The poorer districts.

In the residential districts live the well-to-do people, mostly of the business and professional classes. They are well supplied with magnificent churches and able preachers. These people for the most part attend the public service of the Church and support it. Yet in many cases their attachment to the Church is not strong, for they will not allow their church duties to interfere with their business, nor even with their pleasure. The children, too, have other interests outside of the Church. Perhaps the programme of the Church is too limited to satisfy their growing needs.

In the down-town districts the good homes have been crowded out by the expanding business of the city. Yet people still are there living in tenement apartments, or boarding houses. The Church members who built the churches in these districts have moved to the suburbs, and in some cases they sell the old churches and rebuild in more convenient localities. The surplus money may be used to assist a mission or Sunday school in an abandoned district, where people still are swarming. Or the Church may resolve to "stay with the job," and adapt herself to the needs of a changed constituency, and through the adoption of certain institutional features endeavor to administer to the various needs of the people, physical, educational, social, and spiritual. The Rev. Charles Stelzle, Superintendent of the Department of Labor of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, calls attention to the fact that "within recent years forty Protestant churches moved out of the district below Twentieth Street in New York City, while 300,000 people moved in." Thus he declares "the Church has sounded a dismal retreat in the face of the greatest opportunity which has ever come to her." The Church in Canada as she is now entering upon a new stage in her history must not make this mistake.

We come to the poorer sections of the city with their complex population and diversified forms of life. Here are the poor, here are the slums, here are the

men with their families who have had to remain at the bottom, here is found the waste of society, those who have not "made good," here too are found our "foreign colonies," our Ghettos, Little Italys, Colored Blocks and Chinatowns. These are the people who, with their mixed population from South-Eastern Europe, with their babel of tongues. The religious problem in these poorer sections of the city is a most complicated and difficult one. The efforts of the Church to meet the conditions in these sections have been hopelessly inadequate. Neither Protestants nor Catholics nor Jews have been able to hold their own. All seem to be fighting a losing battle. These alien people with their strange languages, and foreign sentiments, and queer customs, and diverse religions have become part of our community. We cannot ignore their presence nor be indifferent to their welfare. Has the Protestant Church in Canada sufficient vitality and versatility to meet this new and complex situation? The Church is on trial as she never was before.

The Church cannot afford to be a mere class organization ministering to the needs of a certain respectable well-to-do people. She cannot afford to be indifferent to the needs of the wage-earner

and the lower classes in our communities. She must not allow the working people to become estranged from her. She must know how to apply Christian principles to industrial matters. She must get in close touch with the toiling masses. She must not pander to the wealthy classes, nor fall to rebuke wickedness in high places. She must not assume a mere negative attitude toward, but rather give sympathetic support to every proposed reform that looks to the bettering of the condition of the working classes. "The city is from one-half to one-quarter as well supplied with churches as the whole country; and, moreover, the Church, like the home, grows weaker as the city grows larger."—Strom.

"The problem of how to save the slums is no more difficult than the problem of how to save the people who have moved away from them and are living in the suburbs, indifferent to the woes of their fellow mortals. The world cannot be saved as the Church is. The question is, can the Church be saved unless it is doing all in its power to save the world?"—Graham Taylor.

The Parable of the Great Supper

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Luke 14: 15-24.

TOPIC FOR WEEK OF NOVEMBER 3.

IT will be best to read this whole chapter carefully in order to get the setting of the parable. The chapter might be entitled "The Table-Set for you will see it is a record of the conversations and discussion at a supper, which in this case was the chief meal of the day. The parable presents to us, as all of the others do, many aspects of truth. The Kingdom is large; we have not grasped its full meaning yet. Not only are many of the aspects of the Kingdom of Heaven brought into view in these parables, but we get glimpses of the character of Jesus which we could not in other ways. The general theme of the parable is, The natural indifference of men to the Kingdom of God, and the Kingdom of God for the hungry."

There was a feast in the house of one of the chief Pharisees. It was made a big event. No doubt the Pharisee thought it was very condescending and gracious on his part to invite Jesus. On the surface of things, however, this was a popular move, because the common people thought much of Jesus. Above all things the Pharisees were opportunists when that was the safe way. Jesus accepted the invitation. Knowing their personal dislike for him He might have refused to go. But Jesus did not carry any sore cheeks around and went in to the open doors as they offered opportunity to do good. Then when the Pharisee had made a "great supper" and invited Him to it, we can see that it was in keeping with the teaching of this parable that he should go. Let us learn not to be too fussy about questions of this kind. Why shouldn't Christians stand on common ground with others when it is offered them in good faith?

The Kingdom of God is set forth under the figure of a great supper. What are the points of likeness? (This might make a special topic for some member of the League to handle as a part of the programme). In the first place it is something prepared for the guests. So God has prepared a great salvation for mankind. The plan of redemption schemed in the eternal mind took ages to reveal. Paul has many references to this in the

first and third chapters of Ephesians, as well as in other places in his letters. Something prepared for us? That is what the Pharisee thought we were called to a feast and found that there had been little preparation we would feel like going away. But in this case all that a loving Heavenly Father of infinite power and wisdom could do has been done. In the second place, look at the bounty and generosity of the supper. There was nothing scant. It would compare with the feast of Ahasuerus, or Solomon's. See 1 Kings and Esther 1. Our Heavenly Father is royal in His bounty and in His provisions. The Kingdom of God provides for man's physical, mental, moral, and spiritual needs. There is something to appeal to all legitimate tastes and temperaments. Here the hosts study the preferences of the guests. So it is in the Kingdom of God. Jesus gathered twelve disciples around Him, each one different from the others. The more individualistic men are in the Kingdom the better they grow, and the more service they are capable of rendering. The more natural a figure and how closely it brings the Kingdom of God to our real life and our real needs.

The host having provided a great supper, it was natural to wish that it be appreciated. We talk of the divinity of God, have we a place for His humanity? He has yearned for appreciation as we have. All things being ready, the final announcement is made. In some parts of our country it is customary to invite people to supper or social and then send teams or conveyances for them. This will illustrate the point here. Suppose, having invited for appreciation as attending such a supper, the expected guests begged off when the conveyance came around for them. How would the hostess feel under those circumstances?

Just at this point we may appropriately deal with the pious ejaculation of the fellow guest mentioned at the beginning of the parable. He is reported as saying, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God." If you look closely you will see that it was but a vague, dreamy, sentimental expression