

Messenger and Visitor

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Thanksgiving Day.

Thursday, Nov. 25, has been duly proclaimed by the Governor-General of Canada as a day of public thanksgiving to Almighty God for the blessings which the year has brought to this Dominion and its people. Nothing could be more fitting than that, in response to this proclamation and in recognition of the unnumbered blessings of the year, the people of this broad land, stretching from ocean to ocean, should devoutly and heartily unite in thanking and praising the Giver of all good for the bounty of the harvest and all the blessing that has crowned the year. Surely it would be well if in every Canadian home there should be a devout recognition of God's goodness, and if in every hamlet, village and town there should be a gathering of the people in great assemblies to give united and hearty expression to a devout sense of dependence upon God, to recount His benefits, declare the memory of His great goodness and magnify His name. Such a devout lifting up of the heart of the people—as the heart of one man, to Heaven would be not only fitting, in view of the relations which men sustain to God and the gifts of His bountiful hand, it would be also an assurance of national health and prosperity such as no mere wealth of material resources and no political system, however excellent, can give. It is just as true now as it was in the age in which the Hebrew prophets uttered their warnings—little heeded—in the ears of Israel and Judah, that national prosperity is conditioned upon the religious life of the people, and that the nations that forget God are turned into hell. How far our Canadian Thanksgiving day is a day of thanksgiving to God, is an enquiry which probably will not yield a great deal of satisfaction to the devout. We fear that the tendency is to permit pleasure rather than devotion to give character to the day. And if the day is to be regarded, even by the majority of our church-going people, as a mere holiday, a day devoted to feasting and amusement, rather than any serious religious purpose, it is a fair question, as one of our daily papers suggests, whether it were not better to give the day a name fitting the character in which it is kept, and let the various religious bodies appoint at their own convenience, if they think it wise, a day which would be observed by them in the spirit of devout and glad thanksgiving. Still we believe that the ministers and leading brethren in the churches can do much to save our thanksgiving day from degenerating into a day devoted to the things of the flesh, in which every man shall do that which is right in his own eyes. The thanksgiving service, if it is worth holding at all, is worthy of special thought and preparation. It affords a grand opportunity for the minister to call attention to national blessings, duties and failures, and to direct the minds of the people to the Divine Source of all national as well as all spiritual blessing. These are subjects not too frequently presented from the pulpit, and they certainly might fittingly form the theme of thanksgiving-day sermons and addresses. Their importance is surely sufficiently great to call forth the best thought that any preacher is able to give to them, and to command the profound attention of any congregation. If pastors and churches will give attention to this subject they will conclude, we believe, that thanksgiving day presents an opportunity for something far more edifying than the holding of a supper for the replenishing of the church's funds.

The God of Our Fathers.

From time to time we are called on to review in these columns the life work of our ministers who fall asleep in Jesus. The years bring their losses as well as their gains by ordination of young men. By every loss of this kind various emotions are stirred and thoughts suggested.

There is a deep pathos about the closing scenes of the life of an aged minister of Christ. When eighty years have passed since God visited a man's soul with His abundant grace how vast the range or experience, how deep the conviction of God's presence and mercy have become. How God writes His name and nature on the man's character so that his servant becomes a witness for Christ by what he is as well as by what he does. The servant bears his credentials always with him; he is an angel, a messenger indeed. Such a man bears "the signature and stamp of power divine," and needs no pedigree of historic episcopacy to commend him to men's consciences. He is a living witness of a risen Christ, and when this man, whose history embraces many years of a past unknown to us, presently is called away, we seem to lose in some degree the life of the generation to which he belonged. The ministers of his early days are gone and now he rests with them. Their candle is gone out except in the results of their work, and there is sadness.

But a little reflection gives strength. For our fathers' God is our God. What He was to them He will be to us if we follow their examples. He has made Himself known through them and our faith takes hold on Him because of what He is shown to be by them.

But still more; as a friend of our father's seems dear to us on that account, so God seems more real, more precious, because for so many years He kept our beloved. In keeping the father, so to speak, He kept us, and His present care of us is only the fulfilment of His work in years long past.

The elder ministers of our body are being gathered to their fathers. Those who as pioneers labored in word and doctrine when all circumstances were against them, in the state of the country and the provision for their support, are becoming few. But their devoted labors bind us anew to the God they loved and His services on earth. To really admire and follow them will require us to follow the best that was in them,—to follow the God who made them what they were. As our fathers are dearer to us because they are God's, so God is also dearer to us because of what He has been to our fathers.

Armed With the Mind of Christ.

The aim of the apostle's admonition, in the passage which forms the Bible lesson for the current week, is to incite and strengthen his brethren to live lives worthy of their calling and profession as Christians. They are face to face with the fact that a life of fellowship with Christ involves suffering. They who will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer. But human nature shrinks from suffering, and as water responds to the power of gravitation, so do the hearts of men choose the primrose path of easy self-indulgence. But the desires of men, Peter teaches, run counter to the will of God. It is God's will that men should suffer here in this sinful world, and the world is to be saved through suffering. This great mystery, Peter seems to say, the Christian must not seek to ignore. Opposition to sin and sin's thralldom involves painful conflict. Everywhere God's servants have suffered according to His will. Moses suffered reproach with the people of God that he might lead them out of the house of bondage. The Son of God has suffered that He might save the world, and in the light of His cross the mystery and the ministry of suffering take on a larger and diviner meaning. Even the Christ pleased not himself, and true life for men here must conform to His. Fellowship with Jesus Christ involves fellowship in His sufferings. Christ suffered in the flesh, because obedience to the will of God and sympathy for sinful men demanded it. Fulfilment of the law of love involved for the Son of Man humiliation and pain, and what was true for

Him in this respect is true for everyone in his own measure.

The Christian is subject to many temptations to live a life that is not worthy of him, and those who, willingly ignorant of the profound meaning of life, are pursuing with careless steps the broad path of easy self-indulgence, think strange that the follower of Christ should not do as they do. The security of the believer, Peter shows, is in a closer spiritual fellowship with his Lord. His refuge is not a monastery, but Christ. His defence is not in a subscription to creeds, a submission to ordinances, a partaking of sacraments, or a performing of penances, but in being armed with the mind of Christ. Such armor makes the Christian as invulnerable as the Christ himself.

But the present condition of things, in which the godly suffer and the ungodly live according to their lusts, is not forever. The suffering Saviour is also the Supreme Judge of the world, and the day hastens when the living and the dead shall give account to God, and shall be judged according to the gospel which they have heard. If the Christian life here were all suffering—which it is not, and if the life of sin here were all joy—which it is not, it were still the supremest folly, for all that life can hold of pain or pleasure, to ignore the judgment. The believer looks forward to a day when the meaning of life shall be made clearer, when righteousness and holiness shall be vindicated, when the Lamb that was slain shall reign in the throne of God, and the mystery of suffering love shall be made plain.

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Editorial Notes.

—The Baptist congregations of St. John will unite in a Thanksgiving service in the Brussels Street church, on Thursday morning, at eleven o'clock. Rev. W. J. Halse, of the Tabernacle church, will be the preacher.

—The Baptist Year Book of the Maritime Provinces has come to hand. The fine picture of the president of the Convention, Rev. Dr. Keirstead, which meets one on opening the book, should make everyone wish to have a copy. The volume is about the same size, and, as to its makeup, follows the same general plan as the issues of previous years. It is unnecessary to say that in the minutes of the Convention and the Associations, the reports of Boards, statistical reports etc., there is comprised a great deal of valuable information with which every intelligent member of our churches should be familiar. A copy of the Year Book should find a place in every Baptist family.

—The best short story ever written, the Boston Watchman thinks, is the Book of Jonah. "Nothing that Guy de Maupassant or Kipling have done can compare with it. It contains about 2,000 words, and there is not a superfluous word in it. It is full of incident, and action progresses steadily to a climax. The account of the prophet's experience with the great fish is only an incident in the narrative. Excluding the prayer of Jonah, only 42 words are devoted to it. The climax of the story is found in its very last words. When the writer has done he stops. From a literary and artistic point of view, the Book of Jonah occupies a supreme place in the world's literature."

—We would direct attention to the notice in another column, from the officers of the Maritime Convention, in reference to a special observance of the first Sunday in December. Some years ago it was the custom to observe a day in the way suggested by the committee whose report was adopted by Convention, and we are informed that good results followed. Indeed it could not be otherwise. For prayer is answered, and we need spiritual impulses as the years pass. The work to which the body is addressing itself demands the highest motives and the greatest consecration. The equipment for this service must begin with the churches, and they can strengthen each other by uniting in prayer as requested by the Convention.

—Francis Murphy, the distinguished temperance worker, has been in St. John for some ten days, and has addressed very large congregations almost every

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