

Devotional Service.

By REV. T. J. PARR, M.A.

JUNE 16.—"REVERENCE FOR SACRED THINGS."

Ex. 3, 1-6.

HOME READINGS.

Mon., June 10.	Reverencing God. Exod. 20, 1-6
Tues., June 11.	Love prompts reverence. Ps. 89, 1-9
Wed., June 12.	Regarding God's day.
Thurs., June 13.	Deut. 5, 12-14; Isa. 58, 13, 14
Fri., June 14.	Hallowing God's truth. John 8, 30-47
Sat., June 15.	Keeping the temple pure. 1 Cor. 6, 19, 20
	The rewards of reverence.
	Ps. 91, 14-16; Eph. 6, 1-3

Much harm has been done by drawing too sharp a distinction between sacred and secular. When such a distinction is made, the inference is that if the sacred is holy, then the secular need not be holy. And this inference is false. The fact is, that all places and things and relations are sacred. Yet some places and things and relations are especially sacred owing to particular moral and spiritual associations. It is important that young people should learn this great lesson early in their career, so that it may be to them a life-influence, changing and beautifying the whole complexion of their earthly experience.

NO COMMON THINGS.

There are no common places, nor places, nor times, nor lives. To realize this, we must view things as Christ views them, and take this world as he took it. We need him as a guide, philosopher, and friend along the journey of life in order to see the charming sacredness of everything. He is the supreme interpreter. If in going through the art gallery of the Louvre, one had Ruskin for his guide, what a world of meaning would be revealed from the masterpieces of art, which the untrained eye and brain would never conceive. In going through the world, we may have Jesus of Nazareth for an interpreter of men and things and events, and the word "holy" may thus be written everywhere.

1. *There are no common places.*—The home, the school, the office, the shop, the factory, the playground—all are sacred. Some think they would see the power of God and the sacredness of his presence, if they stood before the Alps and said with Coleridge, "Hast thou a charm to stay the morning star in his steep course? So long he seems to pause on thy bald, awful head, O Sovereign Blanc." But if we cannot see the sacredness of the common places with which we are familiar every day, there is little hope of having the sense of reverence stirred in us by a scene in nature.

2. *There are no common times.*—Some appear to think that certain days are common because of the kind of work done in them, while there is only one uncommon day, and that is Sunday. It is probable that the majority of Christian people entertain such a view. And how it robs life of its charm! While it is true that the Lord's day is an uncommon day, being especially set apart for purposes of rest and worship, and we should remember it to keep it holy, yet every day is a sacred day, and every act is a sacred act, and even life is a sacred life, and all humanity is sacred, and the universe is sacred.

3. *There are no common men.*—There are men who are sinful and ignorant and vulgar, and it is difficult to love them. But Christ saw such men, and he sees them now, and he sees them sons of God, and not children of the devil. The

lowest of men have a divine origin, and have in them a spark of divinity. And in this sense all men are sacred, and all souls are holy. What a sacred work it is to save one's soul, to help others into a like experience, and to regard every occupation, every place, every activity, every man, and every man as sacred. This will not decrease, but rather increase the joy of life, and lead humanity into the privilege and freedom of children of the Highest.

THINGS ESPECIALLY SACRED.

The topic Scripture teaches the lesson that there are some things especially sacred. We shall see how this is taught in the narrative of Moses and the Burning Bush.

1. *The sacred and our daily calling.*—"Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro." Very often in the pursuit of daily work, good and heroic men witness great sights and see heavenly visions which inspire them and help them in their toil, and assist them in solving life's problems. One's calling may be humble, may be simply like that of a shepherd, as in the case of Moses, yet that humble calling may be glorified with the presence of God, as in the burning bush. God rewards diligent and faithful men, gives them clear and hopeful views of truth, calls them to a higher service, and makes them conscious of a divine companionship.

2. *The sacred and our education.*—This sacred vision which Moses experienced, taught him the solemnity of life, the crisis of suffering through which his nation was passing, the solution of his own past history, and the divine administration of his personal affairs. The significance of the sight was most impressive—he was in personal contact with God. This would bring awe and reverence into his soul. He was made aware of a divine commission to his future work, and this was a source of strength, comfort, and inspiration to him. The communion he had with the mystery of the burning bush gave a new impetus to his being, awakened new thoughts, emotions and prayers which never died away from the temple of his soul. The vision was an education to him, affecting his entire future life. A great principle is herein taught—that no education is complete without the vision of the divine, which changes the motives and purposes of the soul, and makes the soul God-centred. No character has even approached its best development that has not cultivated a reverence for things sacred, and learned to bow in humility and submission before the divine presence.

3. *The sacred is associated with ordinary things.*—"Out of the midst of the bush." Here the sacred is associated with a bush of the desert. Oh, how the returning spring-time life in tree, and flower, and grassblade speaks of the divine, and make nature holy—

"Earth's crammed with heaven,
And every common bush
Affire with God."

The flame did not rush along the great mountains near the lonely shepherd, lighting up the desert with a startling grandeur—it was simply a bush burning, yet unconsumed. It was not the wild, the imposing, the tragic. It was the calmly sacred. It was full of the heavenly. It made him peaceful and reverent. It elevated his spirit to sublimity. The voice directed him how to approach, and the indwelling divinity was revealed. So it is now. The smallest, the most trivial, the apparently unmeaning things and events of life bear the marks of the sacred, contain a heavenly presence and are vocal with heavenly harmonies. The bushes of life are holy, and will lead the reflective spirit to a higher life. This

old world is a great secret, but she opens her heart and whispers messages of peace and freedom to listening souls.

4. *The sacred should be revered.*—"Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." Such was the command of God to Moses, showing the reverence of God with which he was to approach the divine presence—the place especially sacred. All nature about him was, in a true sense, sacred; yet the place where God particularly revealed himself was sacred beyond all other places, and strict reverence was there to be observed. No levity, no curiosity, no indifference was tolerated, but humility, devotion, godly fear, was enjoined. It was holy ground. The divine indwelling was manifested, and with authority, which the true soul recognizes tokens of wisdom, deep and sincere, were demanded. This lesson of the fifteenth century before Christ is needed in the twentieth century after Christ. There is not sufficient reverence for sacred things these days. One thing, among others, which the Epworth League may do for the church is to cultivate in its members a reverence for sacred things.

(a) *There should be reverence for God Himself first.* "We must bow down before him who is the fountain of all life, the life of all who live. This adoration of the soul is the central point of the grace of reverence, and its influence pervades and adjusts all our other relations, both toward himself and toward the other creatures of his hands."

(b) *There should be reverence for the Church,* to enter which a preparation of mind should be made, as is within which respectful and reverent decorum should be practised. The mind should be subdued and receptive to heavenly impressions, and an effort should be made to exclude everything that would detract from the joyous solemnity of the peace of worship. It is helpful things to do at church five minutes before the hour of service, and in the midst of the sacred surroundings of God's house, meditate upon him.

(c) *There should be reverence for the Sunday-school and League rooms.* How often are these rooms desecrated by becoming conduct! In some places, boys and girls come early to Sunday-school, and are allowed to romp about the room as if it were a playground. No wonder that it is difficult to keep order in that school, and that the scholars fail to be impressed with the teaching of the Bible lesson. In the League Room, too, in some instances, improper levity and boisterous behavior take place, which mar the spiritual effect of subsequent meetings, if they do not destroy it altogether. Let every one carefully cultivate a respect for the places where religious exercises are held, for here we expect God especially to reveal himself, and these places are in that sense sacred.

(d) *There should be reverence for the Bible and sacred literature.* The Bible itself as a book should be regarded as no other book in the way we use it. It should be handled with care and thoughtful reverence. It should not be bent back nor sat upon, nor tossed about like a newspaper, nor defaced by writing or drawing, nor should the leaves be turned down. It should be treated as God's book. Its contents should command our honor and esteem. It should not be quoted to give point to a joke, nor for purposes of humor, as many do. It should ever be remembered—

"This is the book that God has given
To show our souls the way to heaven."

And we should regard it as the heavenly messenger leading us to character and eternal life.