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Quiet Hour Meditation

By May Field McKean.

Readings in John.

John 4: 16. "Go—call—come." I believe that Jesus does not mean to save any soul alone. Zacharias knew that "the day spring from on high hath visited us to give light to them that sit in darkness." That was true as it had been sent. If we have not already let us go, call some one else, and together learn of Jesus.

John 4: 23. "The true worshiper shall worship the Father, in spirit and in truth." I wonder then looking down through the forms, through the rituals, through the conventionalities, through the cares, through the weariness and weaknesses, through the disappointments and worries and pettiness of life, how many true worshipers he finds? Nay, rather, I wonder if he always finds me a true worshiper? It makes little difference where the body is—whether in this mountain or in Jerusalem—what the Father cares for is the spirit of his child. There is a wonderful thought, too, in that word "seeketh." Does God seek worshippers? So Jesus clearly declares. Does he seek the worship of my heart? Does it really make a difference to him? We may say he knows it is for our highest good that we worship him, but there is more than that implied here. There is a deep truth which only he who loves can understand, and God's love is beyond the most exalted conception of human love. Ah! careless soul, wrapped in thine own sorrow, or busy with the world's care, attend this thought! "The Father seeketh such to worship Him."

John 4: 26. "I that speak with thee am." The "he" is wanting in the original. Did Jesus, then, in saying, "I am" proclaim in direct words his partnership with the wonderful, self-existent presence of the Old Testament? Upon two other occasions recorded in this same Gospel he used a similar expression—8: 58 and 18: 5, 6. When spoken to the angry Pharisees, they took up stones to cast at him, and when spoken to the officers of the chief priests, they went backward and fell to the ground. Perhaps they understood a meaning which was not wholly apparent to this Samaritan woman, but which was nevertheless contained in his words here as well as there. He does not declare, "I was," or "I will be," but "I am"—continually, and we are told that the original has in it also the force of "I cause to be." Not only an intelligent self-existent presence, but that which renders every other intelligent self-existent presence possible at any time in eternity's history. He was present when he spoke to Moses. He was present in the incarnate Son of God and Son of man when he spoke to the Samaritan woman, and he is present with us at this moment—present in his eternal self-existence and in his gift of life to me. What wonderful truths to speak to an ignorant woman at a well-side! And as for myself also, "such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I can not attain unto it," except through the name of him who is called "Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace."

John 4: 27. "His disciples came and marvelled." Often yet do we marvel at the doing of our Lord and sometimes we are impatient enough to ask "Why doest thou this?" Jesus reveals himself to the receptive heart without regard to the distinctions upon which conventionality and orthodoxy would insist. He sees the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, the weak things to confound the mighty, the base things, and things which are despised, veiled, and things that are not to bring to naught things that are, that no flesh should glory in his presence. Not even to his disciples had he made known in direct words the wonderful truths he had told this unnamed woman. And often today he reveals the most precious and mysterious of His secrets to some simple but receptive soul whom, perhaps the world honors not. But He does other things that we do not understand. There are things in your life and mine—things which

we cannot doubt are of his doing—at which we marvel. Let us know that his purpose is wiser than our view of it. Let us "trust him where we can not trace."

John 4: 29. "A man which told me all things that ever I did." Evidently this woman was conscious of some, or her report of that high and significant conversation would not have been regarding only that part of it which referred to herself. He had told her much more, but she realized that her own life needed to be set straight before she could put herself in right relation to these great ones. To her now the important part was that he knew her, through and through. We sometimes think of the secrets of all hearts being revealed at the judgment, but they are known now. And even now he tells us, if we listen to him in the stillness of our own souls, all things that ever we did. There is a poem which tells us not to go anywhere or do anything, or read any book that we would not like to have Christ discover if he were to return to earth suddenly. But he does not have to come thus in person in order to know. Already all things that ever I did are known to the Christ.

Ministerial Courtesy

A week or two ago we commented on the proper relations of an ex-pastor to his successor and to his former parish. There is also something to be said on the proper attitude of a pastor to his predecessors in the pulpit he occupies. There is no reason why the most hearty good should not exist between the two men. On the contrary, there is every reason for supposing that the relations of these exemplary Christians will be ideal. In most instances we believe that they are so, but the position of the two men is, to quote Mr. James Russell Lowell, "tremulous with difficulty." Misunderstandings easily arise.

For example, a minister leaves a church because he has lost favor with a small but noisy minority. He does not want to go, but he feels that he cannot stay. His successor is probably the candidate and choice of the same minority that made things so uncomfortable for the previous pastor. He will hear much about his shortcomings. Sometimes he will hear his predecessor's fidelity to his work, and even his character impeached. Now it is very easy for the new pastor to look upon his predecessor with suspicion, and to think, if not to say, that his conduct was injudicious and tactless, of course, in comparison with his own.

Now the presumption is enormously against the truth of these representations. The former minister was probably just as good a preacher, just as faithful a pastor, and just as wise and consecrated a man as his successor. And one of the things that a sensible and just pastor always does is to stand up for his predecessor, not criticizing his work, or reflecting on anything he has done.

Still further, a pastor should entertain no sort of jealousy of his predecessor. He should welcome him to his pulpit; he should fraternize with him in all good ways. Not a little of the trouble that some ex-pastors are accused of making really lies at the door of the pastors themselves. They are suspicious, selfish, and over-sensitive. Frequently they resent the former minister's being invited to a funeral or wedding. They are glum, or short, or on their dignity about it.

Now that is all wrong. We can understand perfectly how a young woman should desire to have the pastor marry her who years before baptized her. There are occasions when only one

voice ought to be heard. It may be worn and feeble, but its accents suggest the most precious associations. A pastor who does not realize this and does not welcome the return of the old minister and honor him and enter into the sentiment of the hour is simply a fool. His feelings and perception are so false that he ought to be doing something else besides preaching the Gospel.

The net outcome of this whole matter is that ministers in their relation to each other should be Christians and gentlemen. The jealousies and backbitings that are common between the members of other professions should have no place among ministers. The Golden Rule affords an excellent standard for the conduct of ministers. Following it they will not be apt to go far astray.

A Rule for Happiness.

Make a rule, and pray to God to help you keep it, never, if possible, to lie down at night without being able to say, "I have made one human being at least a little wiser or a little happier or a little better this day." You will find it easier than you think and pleasanter. Easier, because if you wish to do God's work God will surely find you work to do; and pleasanter, because in return for the little trouble it may cost you or the little choking of foolish, vulgar pride it may cost you, you will have a peace of mind, a quiet of temper, a cheerfulness and hopefulness about yourself and all around you, such as you never felt before; and, over and above that, if you look for a reward in the life to come, recollect this: What we have to hope for in the life to come is to enter into the joy of our Lord. And how did he fulfill that joy but by humbling Himself and taking the form of a slave and coming, not to be ministered to, but to minister and give His whole life, even unto the death upon the cross, a ransom for many. Be sure that unless you take up His cross you will never share His crown; be sure that unless you follow in His footsteps you will never reach the place where He is. If you wish to enter into the joy of your Lord be sure that His joy is now, as it was in the Judea of old, over every sinner that repenteth, every mourner that is comforted, every hungry mouth that is fed, every poor soul, sick or in prison, who is visited.—Charles Kingsley.

The Home

In spite of all that is said and written about advantages of a vacation when accustomed tasks are laid aside and one goes back to nature or out to grass, it remains true that the best refreshment of strength does not come from the seashore or the mountains, but from joy. What people need more than a change of air or of diet is simple happiness—a good time. The great trouble is that happiness is something you cannot command. You may make every provision for it, and it will not come. In fact the more you do to gain it the less apt you will be to have it. Like Goethe's singing birds, it comes into your heart, saying "Here I am." But though we may not be able to do much to make ourselves happier, we can do a great deal to bring joy and its refreshment to others. Everybody's happiness is bound up in the conduct of someone else. And the little son or daughter who would like to send the mother away for a vacation that she cannot take, can give her something that will do her as much good perhaps as an outing—the heart-delight that comes from affection and appreciation. There are more people going down to premature graves from a lack of joy than for want of any other sort of stimulant or refreshment.