

The Joy of Calvary.

A Sermon to City Business Men.

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"And when they had sung a hymn, they went out into the Mount of Olives."—Matt. 26:30.

Moses turned aside out of the beaten track in order to see the bush that burned with fire, and was repaid for that turning aside by hearing a new voice from God, and by receiving a new message from him. There are aspects of truth of which we catch glimpses in the New Testament, which seem to call us aside out of the ordinary track of divine truth, and when we notice the voice, and listen to it, we are always well repaid for paying attention to that particular suggestion. And it is to something of that kind that I want to invite your attention today. The Cross of Christ bears for our thought generally an aspect of almost unbroken tragedy; it is the place of sorrows, the place of darkness, the place of night, the place of pain, the place of awful desolation; and that is true. No mistake has been made by Christian teaching in representing Calvary as sounding the depth of all possible darkness and pain of the human spirit, the human spirit even when coming into this work as God incarnate. There our sins were laid, there the Son of Man alone in the darkness of his soul found a desolation unutterable; it is the tragedy of tragedy, the darkness of night, the night of night, the pain of pain. That is true. I do not want to lessen your apprehension of that in the slightest degree; never a word has been said too much about the desolation, about the tragedy and horror of that place of sacrifice, but I want this afternoon, while not forgetting that, to turn to a truth that is more neglected than that truth.

The greatest truths come to us as paradoxes. I am not going to deal in logical demonstration this afternoon; I shall want to appeal very simply to your spiritual feeling, which always contradicts logic. To be glad and sorrowful at the same time is illogical; to be storm-beaten, tempest-tossed, and yet have perfect peace at the same time, is illogical, but it is true all the same. You cannot demonstrate it, but you can realize it. "The peace of God which passeth all understanding." "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but in Me ye shall have peace." So do not try to be logical this afternoon. If you have tendencies and temptations that way, make an effort this afternoon just to come down to the deeper points of spiritual experience, because what I want to draw your attention to this afternoon is not the sorrow of Calvary, but the joy of Calvary. I want to take you to that unusual standpoint. I want you to look with me reverently—but I am sure, before the end, praisefully—not at the measureless darkness and sorrow of the Cross, but at its infinite, eternal joy. That is why I have taken my text from this verse; a little verse, but one that points a shining finger of suggestion to us; and yet we miss so often these little points of suggestion, because they come and flash upon us, and then they are gone.

It is a Passover, the Passover, the last of the smaller Passovers, the first of the great Passovers, and at the Passover those who thought of their redemption, and praised God for being redeemed and saved by the blood, were filled with joy, so that they sang. They sang the old Jewish Hallelujah chorus that was sung at the Passover, they sang together of redeeming power and love while the victim bled, the Lamb was slaughtered; but here there comes an entirely new song. They are gathered together for the Passover, and the Lamb slain is there in the midst of them, but the strange thing about this Passover is that the Lamb joins in the singing. That is what I want to call your attention to. For the first time in the history of the Passover of the Lamb, the victim joins in the joy, sings the praise of it along with those that are being redeemed by his sacrifice. When they had sung a hymn—the redeemed ones, and the Lamb about to be slain, already under the shadow of the Cross. He sang, while the broken bread in which his sacrifice and sorrow and death were mirrored, was there before him; he sang even while the red wine was there which was the emblem of the blood to be shed; already Calvary was upon him, already it was around him. He himself had drawn its picture in the bread and the wine, and there in the very shadow of the Cross, already in the midst of the representation of it, he sings the great Hallelujah Chorus of the old time. I want to take you to that today. Joy, the joy of the Lamb, the joy of Calvary, the joy that was there right in the heart of that. And I think we can understand a little of it if we look intently upon that place of night. We shall catch some glimpse of the light, and if we listen intently for that cry of pain and desolation we shall catch some glimpse somewhere in it of the music of divine triumph and joy. Let us try to listen. This joy which we find here right in the very heart of Calvary is first of all the joy of the most glorious and perfect self-realization of the life of the Son of God. Remember that Jesus always represented his death as his supreme act of power. You remember what he himself said, and included himself in the saying, "He that saveth his life shall lose it, but he that loseth his life, giveth it, shall find it." In the lowest

deep of that infinite, his giving of himself, he touched the lowest deep of his glory. There never can be a step in the path of eternal light where the music dies away for men or God. And remember that this tremendous Paradox in the Cross is true in human life everywhere.

You and I, I am afraid, will never, never know the joy that some have known when called to surrender, those who even to the last suffered for the kingdom of God. Joy is in proportion to sacrifice, depend upon that. The deeper you go into sacrifice, the nearer you get to the heart of real bright eternal joy. There were those martyrs who went to the rack, to the dungeon, to the fire; they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, they were clad in skins of goats, they were made the prey of wild beasts, they were tortured until every nerve was an agony. It is equally true, whether you believe it or not, that in the deepest spot of their unutterable sacrifice they found the purest and divinest joy. I have told you to put off your logical dress; these are things of the spirit, they are not to be got at from text books, either in college or out of it. You must get them through the experience of the human heart. So our Saviour says in a sentence preserved by Paul:—"It is more blessed to give than to receive." You set that sentence in Calvary. Paul is very careful to let us know that that was a saying of Jesus himself, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Well, then, the height and the depth of blessedness was found when he gave himself, when he wrote that giving in letters of Atonement. Mystery as it is, I do not want you to forget it; while we are speaking of the sorrow of Christ, remember that Christ touched at one and the same moment the measureless depth of sorrow and the measureless depth of joy. They sang a hymn and the Lamb sang, in the very shadow of the Cross.

There was further in this joy of Calvary a joy of redemptive achievement. You will notice how the Saviour loves to speak about bringing back the lost. That word "lost" had a wonderful fascination for his heart. "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost," and he can never think of anything that can resemble in joy, the joy of getting the lost back. "What man of you," he said, "having a hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, if he lose—ah! that word had got it—doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness and go after that which is lost until he finds it, and when he hath found it he bringeth it home on his shoulder rejoicing, and he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost;' likewise there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." The joy he felt for the redemption of the world must have been—I cannot find a name for it—measureless, boundless; and when he went down to Calvary, even in the hour when he cried, "My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" surely there was not a moment when he forgot that around him the lost were waiting to be redeemed.

"I, if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto me." That is how he sang about his death. Do you think that ever faded out of his soul in the darkest moment? Never; never. The Lamb could sing out of his infinite love for those he came to redeem, and our Saviour set an infinite value upon the redemption of our race. He regarded it as not a thing to be measured by man's value. He said about the little children, "Their angles do always behold the face of my father which is in heaven," and when he looked forward to the final gathering of created beings in their brightness, he said; concerning the sons of men, "They shall shine like the sun in the kingdom of my Father." And when he went down into the darkness, when he was there in the place of us all, was there not, must there not have been, deep as his sorrow, boundless as his agony, wonderful as his joy, must there not have been an infinite joy as he could see around the Cross the surging millions rising out of sin and woe and night into righteousness and gladness and purity of the Father? Aye, Calvary was dark, there was the trembling of sorrow, there was the sound of pain; there was also the cry of those who were being redeemed and made white through the blood of the Lamb, and there was the music of the anthem of God's redeemed ones ringing around the Cross pealing their glad notes away into the far distance. We can understand in some measure why the Christ of the Cross could sing the Hallelujah Chorus in the very midst of the shadows of that awful hour.

Father, and this is my last thought, the joy of Calvary was the joy of creating a new kingdom of love. You notice how as Jesus got nearer the end of his last discourse to his disciples, he is all the while coming back to this. He can see the growing of a new kingdom of love. Love one another, he says, as I have loved you, and he knows that in that hour he is bringing a loveless world back into the purity of holy love, to the God of love. He is making the wilderness to blossom as the rose, he is making the desert sing for joy, he is recreating a world that has been tossed by pain and enmity and strife, and he is going to make it beautiful with love like the love of the skies. Yes, and there shall be no want there. He is founding his universal kingdom of love on a deeper basis than ever it had been founded before. God's love was never, never understood so profoundly

by any creature before Calvary came. "These things the angels desire to look into," the angels never knew God's love before Calvary as they knew it after. He was digging deeper for the foundations of love to build God's universal love-empire upon. God had never redeemed the angels. He had clothed them with brightness, he had made their wings whiter than snow, he had put wonderful music into their lips, he had taught them glorious harmonies of the sky, but he had never taught them redemption like that; they had not learned that, they did not see the depth of the divine pity or the divine tenderness, the wonders of the divine heart, until the Son of God redeemed our race through the sacrifice of himself. And the angels are learning a deeper music; the angels stand, I believe, near to God through the new comprehension of his love through that hour of darkness upon this earth of ours. Do you think, then, that the joy existed, do you believe with me that that Hallelujah at the communion was an indication of the deep current of divine joy that passed right through the darkness of the Cross, and its woe, to the glory of the blessed beyond?

What hast this to do with us? What is the practical lesson for you and me this afternoon? It is this, and if I can get you to take it away with you I shall be satisfied. It is this—that sorrow, and pain, and disappointment, and the heavy cross are not necessarily the death of joy and the destruction of peace. Real joy does not depend upon your being free from sorrows or difficulties or burdens of the earth. There are some people who say, "Ah, I could be very happy were it not for this trouble, were it not for this cross, were it not for this calamity which has come upon me." Friend, the joy bells of divine bliss pealed in the night of Calvary, and surely they can peal in your darkness. Take the sorrow of Calvary for your atonement, and take the joy of Calvary for your encouragement and inspiration. That is the first practical lesson for us; and the second is this. If you want to find a power to conquer sorrow and maintain your life in the night in joy and peace, then take your life to the shadow of Calvary, and there bring your cross underneath the shadow of his, bring the darkness of your night into contact with the darkness of his night, bring your hour of desolation into association with the hour of his desolation, and out of his great heart there shall come to you a music that shall never die, and a joy that can never fade. For this is the summing up of the whole matter, "He that saveth his life shall lose it; he that giveth his life for God and his truth shall save it unto life eternal." God help us to do this!—London Baptist.

The Holy Ghost as Leader.

Do we not all agree (1) that the one great necessity in Christian work is the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit. (2) That the Holy Spirit makes no mistakes. (3) That when a suitable person is thus called to go to India or elsewhere, it is quite certain to be our duty to send him, and it is equally certain that we are able to send him; otherwise the Holy Spirit would not have called him. Assuming what is self-evident, that the above thesis are correct, how sad is our record as a denomination. In 1891 at the Convention held at Moncton there was the usual emphatic evidence that ten men were called by the Holy Spirit to go to India for us. The representatives of the denomination assembled in effect said to them: "We fear that the Holy Spirit has made a mistake in calling you to go to India, we do not see how the money can be raised to send you." Having thus declined to be led by the Holy Spirit, what should we as a denomination expect but defeat, want of success both at home and abroad. Do not other year books since 1891 tell of no addition to the membership in a large proportion of our churches, which simply means a process of death or dying exists. In the remainder of the 400 churches how few the additions? How few! In India our mission churches have had manifold greater success relatively than our home churches, yet the absence of blessing is keenly felt by them. Say, brethren—Has it paid us these eleven years to have been found refusing the leadership of the Holy Spirit? Has not the way of transgression been hard thus far. I hear the question—Is our condition as a denomination any worse than it was previous to 1891? Perhaps not—May not our disobedience of the Holy Spirit since 1891 be in a large degree a continuation of the policy of former years, and thus we have had but a small experience of the great showers of blessing that come upon those that obey the Spirit's leading.

Was it not grand, the prompt and royal way in which the church at Antioch obeyed the command of the Holy Ghost? "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." It would seem as though within ten days they were sent away with the benediction of the church. Shall we not believe that the Christian Endeavor Society, the W. C. T. U., and the B. Y. P. U. in their origin are the direct inspiration and plan of the Holy Spirit? In like manner within a few years the support of missionaries by single churches, and also by individuals has become common. At the Ecumenical Missionary Conference, at New York, two years ago, it