

The Quiet Hour.

The Death of Joseph.

S. S. LESSON.—3rd Nov; Genesis 50; 15-26

GOLDEN TEXT—Psa. 90; 12. So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.

BY REV. J. MACD. DUNCAN, B. D.

They said, Joseph will certainly requite us all the evil which we did unto him, v. 15. It is not easy to forgive. What is called forgiveness often does not deserve the name. We do not forgive when we merely abstain from injuring those who have injured us. Forgiveness goes further. It treats the offender as if the offence had never been, and restores him to his old place in our confidence. There are two things that will enable us to forgive: One is a deep sense of gratitude to God for His forgiveness extended to us. The other is the assurance that the offender has truly repented. Joseph was ready to forgive his brethren because he had walked with God so closely that he had caught the spirit of divine forgiveness; and he had convinced himself that the repentance of his brethren was genuine.

It is even more difficult to accept forgiveness than to bestow it. It is hard for the offender to realize that the injured person is sincere in offering to forgive. We are apt to measure others by ourselves, and are slow to believe that they can have kinder feelings toward us than we have toward them. This is the reason why the one who has done the wrong is harder to reconcile than the one who has suffered the wrong, and this is the reason why men are often so slow to accept the forgiveness of God.

And they sent a messenger unto Joseph, v. 16. Afraid to venture into the presence of Joseph themselves, the brethren sent one to act as their advocate.

Even so we have in Jesus one who "ever liveth to make intercession" for us (Heb. 7: 25), who is our "Advocate with the Father" (1 John 2: 1). He is our representative. It is a solemn as well as joyful thought that Christ represents us. Can light represent darkness? or love, hatred? or purity, impurity? or truth, falsehood? Can Christ be our representative if we are unkind and uncharitable in word, in manner, in thought, in heart? Can He represent us if we never work or give or pray for the perishing heathen millions?

Joseph wept, v. 17. He was touched to the quick by the misunderstanding of his brethren. His tears were his only rebuke. It was as if he had said, "Have you been so long time with me, the sharers of my prosperity, and the objects of my constant care, and yet do you not know me better than to have such unworthy thoughts concerning me? When have I given you any ground for cherishing such unworthy sentiments regarding me?"

So Jesus said to the disciple who had failed to understand Him, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?" (John 14: 9.)

Ye thought evil . . . but God meant it unto good, v. 20. Think how many human wills—all of them free—were set to hunt and destroy the life of Joseph; his brethren, who plotted to kill him and ended by selling him as a slave; the Midianitish merchants who carried him into Egypt; Potiphar's wife, with her false and cruel accusation; Potiphar, with

his imprisonment of an innocent man. But Joseph neither quailed nor swerved. Behind all these human wills, he saw the will of God. He knew that God was permitting all these agencies to do their part in relation to him, and that no one of them could go one step beyond that divine permission. The worst enemy could do against him only what God permitted, and God would permit only what He meant for good. It is the same assurance that alone can give calmness and strength to our lives.

"One adequate support
For the calamities of mortal life
Exists—one only; an assured belief
That the procession of our fate, however
Sad or disturbed, is ordered by a Being
Of infinite benevolence and power;
Whose everlasting purposes embrace
All accidents, converting them to good."

I die: and God will surely visit you, v. 26. The great prime minister, who had kept the vast population of Egypt, could not keep death away from his own door. But over against this thought of man's mortality place this fact: His servants die, but God lives. And because God lives, no honest, faithful work done for Him will ever fail. In the Highlands of Scotland there is a place where a village once stood, which has now completely vanished. But the grass on that spot is greener than on any other place around. For years the villagers had cultivated their gardens there, and the grass is greener because of their work. So, if we are kind and true and faithful, God will see that the world will be the better after we are gone, for our having lived in it. When we are called away, we do not leave our loved ones alone in the world. We leave them in a world in which God lives.

And he was put in a coffin in Egypt, v. 26. "Joseph here left his confined body to his people that by its presence among them, and preservation by them, they might never forget that Egypt was not their final resting place." (Taylor) Instead of a coffin, we have the empty grave of Jesus to remind us that He has risen and that believers also shall rise to a higher and more blessed life.

The Way of Power.

The straitened way is the way of power, and the way of power is often the way to achievement. Niagara, with its marvelous strength to turn machinery, to generate electricity, to shine from millions of lamps hundreds of miles distant, can be weakened into uselessness by widening its pathway and spreading out its flowing waters. It is not enough to enter upon life with an objective point clearly in view and driven by a set purpose. It is also necessary to choose the straitened way of renunciation in order to accomplish that one definite mission. The straitened way is the way of concentration; but concentration is just the positive aspect of renunciation. No man can succeed in fulfilling his life's mission who allows himself to be called hither and yon by every alluring, siren voice within and without him that clamors for his time and strength and interest.—Alexander McGaffin.

He who has a pure heart will never cease to pray; and he who will be constant in prayer shall know what it is to have a pure heart.—William Annot.

Forgiveness.

BY PASTOR W. J. MOSIER.

Peter once came to the Lord and said, "Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Till seven times?" Doubtless he thought he was exceedingly charitable, for the Rabbis said that they might forgive an enemy three times, but not the fourth. "Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee until seven times, but until seventy times seven." This means, there should be no limit to our forgiveness. And then follows the forcible parable of the wicked servant. He had been forgiven a debt of ten thousand talents—about ten million dollars—and was unwilling to forgive a fellow-servant a small debt of one hundred pence—about twenty-five dollars. "And his Lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors till he should pay all that was due unto him." No wonder the apostles exclaimed, "Increase our faith."

Dr. Duff was once reading to a band of Hindu youth from the sermon on the mount, "But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you," and one of them exclaimed, "How beautiful! How divine! This is truth. Love your enemies; love your enemies." And for weeks he repeated these heaven born words. At last the Spirit revealed to him God's forgiveness. He embraced it, and abandoned his false gods, and became a faithful follower of Jesus Christ.

Luther was once very bitter against Calvin and maligned him most grievously. Calvin only replied, "Well, let Luther hate me and call me devil a thousand times, yet I will love him and acknowledge him as a precious servant of God."

A Christian girl in South America was seized by a savage enemy of her father, who cut off both her hands, and said, "I have had my revenge." Many years passed away, and one day there came to her father's door a poor man asking alms. The girl recognized him as the one who had so cruelly treated her. She ordered the servant to give him food, and sat down and watched him with pity. When through with his meal, she dropped the covering that had hid her handless wrists from view and held them up, exclaiming in tender love, "I have had my revenge." That was the very spirit of Christ, which led Him to pray on the cross in the very presence of His enemies, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do." That was the spirit of the first Christian martyr, who prayed in the midst of his sufferings at the hands of his cruel murderers, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." That is the spirit that God desires to give to every one of His children.

This is the mark of the highest Christian life. This brings the greatest happiness to its possessor, and greatest blessing to loved ones and to the world. It may not always be possible to have personal victory. We are only commanded, "As much as in you lies, live peacefully with all men."

... What is prayer for? Not to inform God nor to move Him, unwillingly, to have mercy, as if, like some proud prince, He required a certain amount of recognition of His greatness as the price of His favor, but to fit our own hearts by conscious need and true desire and dependence, to receive the gift which He is ever willing to give, but we are not always ready to receive.—Alexander MacLaren.