

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

BY REV. WILLIAM DEMOY, D. D.

TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE EFFICACY OF PRAYER

Jesus said to him "Go thy way, thy son liveth. The man believed the word which Jesus said to him and went his way." (John 11:42)

Have we not a clear picture in this text of the way God rewards prayer with confidence? The prayer of this man was certainly a petition from his heart and from his lips; but perhaps the most striking feature of it is the confidence with which he asked the favor of Jesus.

It required confidence, indeed, for this man to turn immediately homeward, leaving the great Healer, Christ, behind, and to believe that his son was cured. It showed also his great faith in Christ. Such a prayer and such a faith could not fail to have been rewarded by Christ.

There is a great lesson for us in this incident. We must all pray. Physically, we require help from God; morally we need it also. To overcome many of our physical deficiencies, we require God's help; to become and to remain morally good, we need God's help.

The incident in the Gospel shows us that God often gives us more than is necessary for our eternal welfare. It was not vitally necessary to this man that his son should live, neither was it absolutely essential to the son himself.

of sickness that unusual facts have happened and that apparent miracles have been worked. How many wonders in other spheres have been wrought through prayer? Has not many a hardened sinner been recalled to the performance of his duty through prayer? Have not thousands, even millions, of impending dangers been averted through prayer? Have not what appeared as impossibilities if left to natural power and ordinary means, or even extraordinary means, been rendered possible and feasible and brought into execution through prayer?

It is certain, too, that he who prays, receives more favors than he who neglects to pray. Who will doubt this? Prayer is a duty. Will not he who does his duty receive a reward? Will not recompense be wanting, and a punishment due, in the case of the one who neglects his duty? And do we not see in the Gospel that those who prayed, or who asked Jesus for favors, received more, and were more abundantly blessed, than those who did not ask? Compare the case of Magdalen with that of other women of her class, who did not come to Jesus. View the two thieves dying on crosses on either side of Jesus. He who prayed to Jesus was saved; the other scoffed at Him, and there is no assurance that he died repentant, rather there is great probability that he left the world without having made peace with his Maker.

But we need not turn to the pages of the Gospel. Do we not see similar instances about us continually? Can not Christians of today relate as many and almost as convincing examples of the efficacy of prayer as are recorded in the Bible? Christ is the same, "yesterday, today and forever," and with regard to prayer He makes no exception.

THE PASSION PLAY

For some unknown reason, the Passion Play has furnished occasion for most bitter attacks which have been appearing regularly in British and American prints. The pretext for these articles is clearly stated in this excerpt from a metropolitan paper:

"The play and its surroundings have become a veritable scandal of profiteering and the village has been transformed into a world's fair of curious tourists. In a word, Oberammergau has become the greatest money-changing mart in Europe. Wild speculation is going on in the dollar, the pound sterling, the mark and the Austrian kronen. On all sides there is talk only of money and bargaining. A vast circle of profiteering tourists and exchange agencies dominate affairs there, and the visitor must bid for seats at the performances which greedy speculators have already cornered."

"Besides, all manner of new taxes and extra charges are made, opportunely, as the mark drops steadily. The whole atmosphere surrounding the play has become poisoned by post-war profiteering, and all tinge of sacred sentiment about it has vanished. It was the last straw when a group of tourist girls clamored for admission to the pension presided over by Anton Lang, who takes the part of Christ in the play, a part which once was looked upon as one of the greatest earthly honors."

"The girls declared they had been swindled and that they would not have come to Oberammergau but for the privilege of being billeted in Lang's house. Similar scenes staged by disgruntled visitors occur daily, and many of them in which Americans figure are justified to the hilt by the disgraceful overcharging and dual sale of seats at the performances and of reservations at the hotels."

"One may be permitted the reverent thought that if Christ came to Oberammergau His wrath would be greater by far than that which He displayed when He drove the money-changers from the Temple. This, then, is the charge and even though it were not half as scathing as it is, it would be serious were it true. But fortunately it is a tissue of the grossest misrepresentation."

exalted honesty and would not stoop to fleece a guest. Moreover, the writer's bill goes before him as he writes. It reads as follows: Ticket for play, 100 marks; less than thirty American cents at the then rate of exchange; lodging and food, government tax, service tax and so on, 870 marks, in American money about two dollars and seventy five cents for a stay of three days. The rest of the article is on a par with the parts just examined. Judgment is in order.

THE PRIEST IN THE SLUMS

"The 'Novelist of Note' who dwelt in the tenement house districts of New York for four years, known to her companions as either a working-woman or a social worker, doubts that Dante pictured 'a blacker hell than the slums of New York City during the influenza epidemic.' And the chapters of her book: 'Four Years in the Underbrush,' dealing with the phase of her experience, will satisfy the reader that the oft-quoted inscription the great poet tells his readers he saw over the gate of the inferno: 'Leave all hope behind, ye who enter here!' may be applied to the tenements of New York under the conditions described by this woman. Still, 'in all those months of dread, suffering, despair, and death, we are told, 'never once in those tenement districts did I meet or hear of a Protestant minister of the Gospel."

"That is a terrible indictment, but this writer makes it clear that she is certain of her facts. In another chapter of her 'Adventures as a Working Woman in New York' she says: 'If there is a nationality on the globe not represented in that district (meaning a certain section in which she was engaged as a license inspector for the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals,) I never heard of it. It is a district in which anybody from anywhere may be met any day. Reading my diary, it would seem that I met somebody from everywhere almost every day. That is, with one exception—I never met a Protestant minister of the Gospel.' Yes, she reiterates: 'Every profession, every trade in every walk of life, but never a Protestant minister of the Gospel.'"

"This is not to be attributed to the fact that there were no Protestants in that district. The author of 'Four Years in the Underbrush' tells her readers that she met with people whom she would describe as God-fearing. 'They were loyal citizens, and doing the best they could with their opportunities.' That they were Protestants is evident, because she says: 'None of them ever more than mentioned their church, none of them spoke to me of knowing or ever meeting their minister. In order to emphasize this fact she continues by saying that she never heard a certain woman, though she lived in the same tenement with her and talked with her day after day, mention the name of her minister, nor did she in any way reveal that she so much as dreamed of his ever calling to see her. But the author of the book this is quoted from says: 'I used to see the man who preached in the church that she attended, walking down Fifth Avenue, exuding wealth and over-eating.'"

While she speaks thus with a certain bitterness of the fact that during her 'four years in the underbrush' she 'never saw or heard of a Protestant minister in the slums of New York City, nor in a hospital,' she admits, there never was a day that she did not meet at least one Catholic priest. 'During the influenza epidemic they were everywhere, at all times, day and night. They ministered to the sick, offered comfort to the living and buried the dead.' 'Many, many times while I was doing social work,' thus her statement continues, 'I had Catholic priests to go out of their way to assure me of their willingness to help, to tell me where I could locate them.' She says, they made no denominational distinction. 'Once when I was calling on a patient at the Presbyterian Hospital, there chanced to be two priests in that ward of twelve beds. On their way out both stopped and spoke to me and gave me their addresses.'"

The 'Novelist of Note' removes any doubt that this was merely done in order to create a favorable impression. 'Several times I had occasion to call on the services of a priest. The response was always immediate. I never had occasion to call on a Protestant minister, for the Protestant who finds himself or herself in the slums of New York City, soon learns that they must die as they have lived, unattended by a spiritual adviser.'

And all this is said by a woman who in other chapters of her book speaks rather unkindly of Catholics she met during the adventurous period of her life described in her book. So she cannot be accused of partiality. But let it also be said that she tells Catholics nothing new. When the plague raged in Geneva in the times of Calvin, the champion of Predestination, neither he nor any of the preachers among his immediate following could be induced to

visit the stricken of his flock. Questioned why they did not go to assist the sick and dying, the 'Reformers' answer was: 'Because God did not give them the strength to carry out this task.'—C. B. in The Echo.

"SAY IT WITH FLOWERS"

"Say it with Flowers" is a nice sentiment, only a trifle trite. But there is a suggestion of novelty in the words when they refer to prayer. The following from the London Tablet may be enlightening to some Catholics, as well as to our separated brethren:

There are many methods of prayer—a Protestant cannot understand why a person puts up a candle and lights it in broad daylight, and that is because the Protestant does not understand prayer. The Catholic Church makes everything pray as God intended it should. There is vocal prayer, and mental, and color prayer, and movement prayer. All prayers is language—it speaks and conveys the thoughts of our heart to God. The most unimaginative person understands how much meaning can be pressed into a shake of the hand. It is a language. The raising of the hat is a sign of reverence and respect. It also speaks. We kneel before the King and even salute the empty Throne, and it is all language. We send a forget-me-not to an absent, silent

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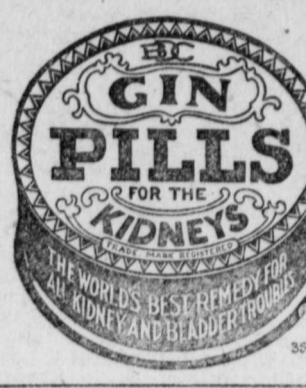
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