

HOLY WEEK.

(From the "Evergreen.")

Indeed this is a holy week, a week speaking to us of most holy truths, speaking to us of the passion and sufferings of our most dear Lord, speaking to us of the wonderful and unsearchable love of Christ, speaking to us of that blessed work of redemption which He finished upon the cross, speaking to us of that precious blood-shedding by which the scarlet and crimson souls of men are washed white as snow.

O brother in Christ, who hast a high calling in Christ Jesus, who hast a good hope of resurrection to eternal life, shall we not now put away earthly things and walk in the House of God as friends? Shall we not now turn aside from the busy restless ways of the world, and snatch at least some parts and spaces of this solemn week for a closer study of our saviour's redeeming love? As disciples of the cross let us fix our eyes, yea, our whole souls, upon the cross, and upon those steps which led our Lord to the place of death and to the grave.

PALM SUNDAY.

Come then and see the first things of this holy week as Holy Scripture has revealed them for our good. See our Blessed Saviour first of all calling for the colt, the foal of an ass, and riding forth towards Jerusalem, the royal city, the city in which He as Son of David should have been acknowledged King and Prince. This first act seems to be a step to the confession of His kingly power; the sun of popular favor shines; the clouds of reproach clear away; the mists of rebuke are suddenly dispersed; the despised Nazarene finds honor in Israel; there is no shadow of the cross to be seen; no sound of rejection; nay, there is the sound of welcome; He rides on, as if to take possession of His own; and His own seems about to receive Him with great joy; there is an outburst of joy; great and sudden gladness spreading from heart to heart. "A very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strewed them in the way. And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David: blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord, Hosanna in the highest. And when He was come into Jerusalem the whole city was moved, saying, Who is this? And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee."

Hear this Scripture; it was even thus that Christ entered the holy city on the first day of that week in which He was to be cast out of that city, condemned, rejected, crowned with thorns, crucified without the gates. "Hosanna," was this day's greeting; soon was it to be "Crucify Him, crucify Him."

O Lord Jesus, who didst look beyond that short hour of triumph to the hour of Thy rejection by Thine own people whom Thou hadst loved, those shouts of welcome were but sad sounds in Thine ear, for Thou didst know how soon the bright day-spring of that week would be darkened over with very heavy clouds. Thou wast indeed meek, and in meekness passed into the beloved city which Thou wouldst have saved. O teach us, good Lord, after Thy example, to make little of earthly praise, and lightly to esteem earthly honor, so changeable and fickle, so soon withdrawn. Grant, O Lord, that Thou mayest be our King, ruling and reigning in our hearts, we ever bowing down ourselves before Thee, and in great steadfastness confessing Thee to be the Son of David, ever receiving Thee into the very centre and citadel of our hearts with great joy, loving Thee without change and without decay of love, never casting Thee out of our souls, but trusting in Thee more and more unto our life's end.

Even as our Lord came near to the city, sorrow filled His soul. He sorrowed not for Himself, but for those whom He would have gathered under His wings but who would not be gathered, for those who were about to reject Him, and in rejecting Him to seal their final rejection as the enemies of God, as the Cains who were to wander over the earth with the mark upon them of the blood of the better Abel, an accursed seed, cast out for this slaughter of the Lamb.

"When He was come near, He beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the

things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes."

Thus was it after all a day of tears to the Son of Man; for though He did of His love desire to offer Himself for mankind, yet it was to Him great grief that his own chosen people, His beloved Israel, should be his murderers, that by them He was to be slain, by them whom He had as it were carried in His bosom. For them He wept. Thus to Jerusalem He exclaimed, "Thou knewest not the time of thy visitation." O see in these words with what sorrow the Lord sorrows over the unbelieving, the hard in heart, the blind and deaf, who will not consider the things that belong unto their peace; how He lingers in His judgments; how He weeps when the sword is forced into His hands; how unwillingly He condemns; how long He bears with the disobedient; how often He calls, and recalls, and calls again, in hope of beholding repentance!

O Blessed Jesus, give us ears to hear, and eyes to see, and hearts to understand Thy heavenly truths. O that we may not cause Thee to weep and sorrow over us as over disobedient children, a perverse, faithless people. Yea, let us cause Thee to rejoice by beholding our love, our faith, our steadfastness, our thankful use of the means and opportunity of grace. If we have erred in times past, draw not our term of grace to an end at once, but move us by Thy Spirit to repent while it is called to-day. Teach us to call upon Thee and to walk with Thee while we have the light, now in the day of salvation, now in the accepted time, that Thy truths may not be hidden from our eyes, that we may not pass into the darkness of the everlasting night.

When our Lord came into the city He went up to the temple, to the holy place, the House of prayer. He went to that which was especially His own.

Even then those who had faith were received; the blind and the lame who came to Him were healed. If the blind in heart had even then known and confessed their blindness they also would have received sight to behold and confess the Lord of glory and the Prince of life. Some Greeks also desire to see Him, and at this time a voice came from heaven in answer to the prayer of Christ, "Father glorify Thy Name," saying, "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again."

After these things our Lord left the city, bringing to a close a day that seemed to open with unusual light, but which soon was overcast, first causing the Saviour to weep, and then to burn with holy indignation. He went then to Bethany for the night, withdrawing His presence during the calm hours of night from those who in the day had provoked or grieved Him, making it night indeed, a type and token of that darker night that was soon to come, that more complete withdrawal of His presence from the temple and the city of the Church of Israel.

MONDAY.

On Monday our Blessed Lord returned to Jerusalem. On his way thither He found an emblem of the people whom He had planted with His own right hand, but whom He was about in anger and in sorrow to pluck up by the roots and to cast away. Though it was early He was an hungered; it may be that He had spent hours of the night in prayer; it may be that He had prepared Himself by fasting for the hour of the prince of darkness. "And when He saw a fig-tree in the way, He came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever."

Not as in His other miracles was there mercy here, but wrath. Not by a miracle did He provide Himself with fruit. He cursed the tree for its barrenness; and in that tree the curse was spoken against His people, His barren fruitless people, full of leaves, yet lacking fruit, full of professions, wanting in holy works. The words of yesterday were repeated, and in that act "many like words" even of lamentation and mourning and woe. Yesterday He wept over the city as not knowing the time; to-day He pronounced the doom. Yesterday He exclaimed, "O that thou hadst known!" To-day "thou hast not known; it is too late to know; the decree is fixed; thou art doomed; the time of thy fruit-bearing is past; let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever."

O holy Jesus, if thou didst thus curse the

unfruitful tree, how much more will Thine anger burn towards Thy faithless children whom Thou hast planted in the new creation, the Church built upon Thyself. O teach us to think of the awfulness of that day, when our account will be made up, when no more fruit will be added, when, if we be fruitless, we must remain fruitless forever. As Thou didst speak words of condemnation against unbelieving Israel, how much more wilt Thou be wroth with us who have been brought into a better covenant, who have been washed and sanctified, who have been grafted into Thy Holy Church and had many renewings of the Holy Ghost. Fearful will be the doom of the faithless and the fruitless who have been called after Thy Name. O grant that we may bear fruit in good time, before Thou comest; grant that we may hunger and thirst after righteousness and may be filled; then, when Thou comest hungering after fruit in us, we may have fruit to give Thee, not leaves only, but fruit acceptable to Thee according to Thy divine mercy.

Our Lord then went into the temple.

Alas, there was nought there to heal His sorrow, much to raise His just wrath; there was nought there to prove that His people even at the eleventh hour were turning from their sins; there was much to testify that the city was polluted in its holiest place, that the whole heart was sick, even the sanctuary defiled. If the holiest place had become unholy, in what condition was the rest? So it was on that day, that not knowing the Lord of the Temple was to be there, it was found to be a house of merchandise; there was marketing, trading, buying and selling even in God's House. What wrath was this people hurrying upon their heads! Could the Lord bear this, to see a den of thieves where there should be a fellowship of worshippers!

He went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold therein and them that bought; saying unto them, "It is written, My house is the house of prayer: but ye have made it a den of thieves."

How soon was He Himself to be cast out, not only from the temple, but from the city, having never been received into His people's hearts by faith! How soon did they do despite to the temple of His body, having first practiced and learnt profaneness upon that made by men's hands! The lesser sacrilege led to the greater; and soon were they trafficking about the Sacrifice and the Temple, about the Lord Jesus Christ the Sacrifice, about the living stones of the Temple of His body, buying and selling the Lord of glory, whom they knew not.

O Holy Jesus, who now drawest near to us in the House of prayer, grant that with pure hearts we may approach Thee there, putting off all worldly imaginations, and worshipping Thee in spirit and in truth. Grant that we may always most reverentially remember Thy presence, and delight to dwell with Thee in these perishing sanctuaries, until Thou shalt call us into Thy more glorious presence in the life to come. Make us also to preserve in all holiness and purity these our bodies, which by Baptism have become temples of the Holy Ghost, that we may not sell ourselves to do evil, nor follow sensual pleasure, to the grieving of the Holy Spirit, whom in Thy mercy Thou now sendest into these sanctuaries of flesh.

Our Lord returned to Bethany for the night.

(To be continued.)

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