

Ninth Sunday after Trinity.

PETER ON THE SEA.

The disciples in the boat on the stormy sea. You remember the story of last Sunday. But there is one bit of the story we did not touch upon; in fact, it is a little story in itself.

It is about Simon Peter. How well we seem to know Peter! In every picture of the Apostles, how strongly one gray-headed, eager figure stands out. And in all the stories in which the Apostles are mentioned, Peter is generally the first to speak, the first to *do*. Haven't you noticed that?

I think we rather like him for this sort of boldness. Nobody can admire a man who is always waiting for some one else to lead the way; who hesitates, and can't make up his mind, and perhaps while he is hesitating a golden opportunity slips by.

No, we all like people who are bold and prompt, even if they are a little over-hasty sometimes.

Peter was one of these quick, bold spirits. Of course if he had been quite perfect he would have been bold and yet not over-hasty. But as nobody is perfect (if he is a real person, and not merely a figure in a story-book), so Peter isn't perfect either. I think we feel as though we knew him all the better, on that very account.

When Jesus came near His disciples, walking on the sea, and spoke to them, we do not find that any one answered Him except Peter. The other disciples huddled together in the boat, and whispered to one another it was a spirit, a ghost, and not a living person at all. But if Peter was afraid too, he soon recovered himself, and called out boldly across the boisterous sea,

"Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the water."

Yes, he spoke out in a fearless, manly way. The sea seemed terrible enough just then; but Peter felt he could brave it, and go to Jesus, if only his Master would let him.

What does Jesus say? One word, and it is—"Come."

Was it foolhardy then of Peter to step down out of the boat and touch the waves with his feet? (Foolhardy means doing something that is pretty sure to be dangerous.) It seems so, perhaps, just at first sight. And yet it was not foolhardy in reality, when Jesus Himself had said "Come."

Don't you think there is something even grand in the sight of the Apostle on that raging sea simply obeying his Master's call? And at first all went well. Peter found he could walk on the water; but in a minute or two a great gust of wind came, a strong wind, that buffeted him and took away his breath. Ah! that is too much for him. He is afraid. And being afraid is fatal. His power ends; he begins to sink.

"Afraid!" you say. "That is natural; surely it can't be wrong. Anybody would have been afraid in Peter's place."

Yes, but it is wrong in *him*. Jesus had bidden him come, and that was enough. Nobody need be afraid who is obeying Christ's voice. If He says "Come," we may do the hardest things in the world—things quite as hard in their way as walking on the sea. It is *fear* that stops us, *fear* that spoils our work. Yet you hear people say, "I am afraid," pretty often.

Here is a teacher with a class. He says, "My boys are very idle and inattentive; I'm afraid they'll never be any better."

"Of course not one is inclined to answer. They never will if you are afraid. Suppose you say instead—"With God's help I will make them better." Would not that be a wiser plan? Do you suppose that God called you to that work of teaching, and means you to fail? Certainly not. It is you that are afraid, like Peter, and, like him, you are beginning to sink.

But there is still the end of the story. Peter began to sink. What then? Did he give himself up for lost? Some people would, as they felt the cold waters closing round them. But Peter is not the sort of man to despair. He cries out—"Lord, save me."

Only three words! But they hardly could have been more to the purpose. People don't waste words when they're in danger, but say the first that come, and it generally happens that those are just the ones to express best what they want. "Lord,

save me." They were quite enough. Jesus put forth His hand, and caught him, saying, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" And so Peter was safe after all.

What was it that saved him? It was his faith. It wasn't the strong faith it ought to have been, but then faith in Jesus is faith, even if it is not strong, but poor and feeble, remember that.

Will faith in Jesus save a man now-a-days? Oh, yes. Get those three words into your mind, for I believe saying them in good earnest has saved many a one in danger.

A lad in a strange big town. Let us think of him for a minute. All is new to him, and though he is strange and dull at first, he soon makes friends of his own age, and they seem to him twice as jolly and chatty as the folks in the old village at home. He drifts on, going out a little most evenings, for they say, "One must have a little pleasure," and by and by there comes a night when he finds himself in actually bad company, where—ah me!—he would not like his mother to see him!

And then something whispers, "You're in for it now; you must go through with it." Is that true? is it ever true? No, a thousand times no. He has slipped, but he can recover himself. Or rather, there is a Hand that can recover him, pull him back, if he only calls.

A half-doubting, faint call is all he can manage. "Lord, save me." But it is enough. Something helps him to turn his back on the evil place; and though it seems very flat to give up a pleasure he has hardly tasted, still there comes the feeling of safety and peace which every one has who allows the Mighty One to hold him up.

How many times a-day do we slip? Or (to be quite correct) *begin* to slip? *begin* to be sulky? *begin* to be teasing? *begin* to be idle? Ah! a great many times. But why do I lay such a stress on "*begin*." Because *beginning* isn't the same as *going on*. Never let yourself think that because you have begun you must go on. There is no worse mistake. If you had no Saviour, if there were no such words in the Bible as "Lord, save me," it might be true. But as things are, it is utterly and totally false.

So make those words your own. Use them whenever you are in need of help. They saved Peter, they saved many a man, they will save you.

Sorrow.

Sorrow came to him with a pleading face;

He would not rise and bid her enter in;

She seemed to claim in him too large a space,

And he was careless, full of mirth and sin.

So passed she onward. Then it chanced one day,

When Autumn winds in woods were making moan,

Again did gentle sorrow fare that way,

And heard him mourning, for his love had flown.

So once again she sought him. Reckless, rude,

He bade her enter. Then with stately mien

She passed, and took possession like a queen,

And seemed not sorrow, but a joy subdued:

Bringing a shadow, yet, as shadows are,

A blessing, cast from some great light afar.

A. G. B.

The First Thing in the Morning.

Cleanliness, not only next to godliness, is a part of coolness, and the woman who understands how to bathe and dress herself is the one who is going to be comfortable all day. If you can have a plunge bath, take it, letting the water be tepid and giving yourself a cold shower afterwards; for just a little while this may make you warmer, but after you have carefully powdered yourself, and are dressed, you will be surprised to find how delightfully cool your entire body is. Don't be afraid of the powder-puff, using with it a fine infant powder, such as is sold in packages and is not expensive. Then arrange your hair, not in too much haste, for haste makes heat; arrange it smoothly, so that annoying little curls and flying tendrils may not come about your face and neck. Do not, on any account, wear clothes in which there is much starch. Indeed, if you follow my plan, you will instruct your laundress to omit starch altogether from your summer frocks and underwear. A gingham, or cotton gown of any kind, is much cooler, much more comfortable to assume, and much prettier to look at when it is entirely unacquainted with the stiff compound. A full glass of cold water immediately after your bath, may be

pleasant, but I should not advise you to drink much water during the day, as it induces perspiration and seems to keep you continually thirsty. Eat a light breakfast. Greasy food, or a great quantity of it, taken in the morning, will most certainly heat your stomach for the entire day. The experience of a woman who had to spend the summer in the city, and who said she was always cool, was that a cup of coffee in the morning, with a bit of bread and butter; a luncheon at which she had cold beef and a baked potato, with a glass of lemonade, and a dinner after sunset, where a little soup, a bit of meat, and one hot vegetable, a cool, green salad, a cold dessert, and a small cup of black coffee constituted her bill of fare, is worth knowing about. Remember, you will not be cool all day long unless you govern that little fiend called ill-temper. You can make the thermometer go up to 196° in the shade if you are fretful and irritable. There is no better preventive against heat than good-temper, when you combine good bathing, proper food, and evenness of disposition with it.—*Ladies' Home Journal*.

They Loved Cats.

Many eminent men in European countries have been very fond of cats. The famous Dr. Johnson of England seemed to think quite as much of his cat as of any human friends. The famous Cardinal Wolsey of England used to receive the nobles of the land with his favourite cat perched on the arm of his state chair, or at the back of his throne. The great statesman of France, Richelieu, once excused himself from rising to receive a foreign ambassador because his favourite cat and her kittens were lying on his robes.

In Eastern countries cats have been more highly esteemed than in Europe or America. In Egypt, where it is supposed tame cats were first used, they were considered sacred, and, when they died, they were embalmed and placed in niches in the catacombs.

It is said that a Persian king once, before going into battle with the Egyptians, gave each of his soldiers in the front ranks a live cat to carry before him; and the Egyptians surrendered to the Persians rather than injure the cats, which they considered sacred. It is related that the Eastern prophet, Mohammed, was so fond of his favourite cat that, when it fell asleep on the sleeve of his robe one day, he cut off the sleeve rather than disturb the slumber of the cat; and to this day almost every Mohammedan in those Eastern countries has a cat in his house, which he loves and makes to share all his comforts.

It is said that the great Italian poet, Dante, trained his cat to hold a candle in her paw for him to read; but one night a friend turned a mouse out of a box on to his table, when the cat at once dropped the candle, and rushed for the mouse.

Keep Life Pure.

An Arabian princess was presented by her teacher with an ivory casket, exquisitely wrought, with the instruction not to open it until a year had rolled round. Many were the speculations as to what it contained, and the time impatiently waited for when the jeweled key should disclose the mysterious contents. It came at last, and the maiden went away alone and with trembling haste unlocked the treasure; and, lo! reposing on delicate satin linings, lay nothing but a shroud of rust: the form of something beautiful could be discerned, but the beauty had gone forever. Tearful with disappointment, she did not at first see a slip of parchment containing these words: "Dear pupil—May you learn from this a lesson for your life. This trinket, when enclosed, had upon it a single spot of rust; by neglect it has become the useless thing you now behold; only a blot on its pure surroundings. So a little stain on your character will by inattention and neglect, mar a bright and useful life, and in time will leave only the dark record of what might have been. If you now place within a jewel of gold, and after many years seek the result, you will find it as sparkling as ever. So with yourself; treasure up only the pure, the good, and you will ever be an ornament to society, and a source of true pleasure to yourself and your friends."