

VALUE OF THE WORLD AND THE HUMAN SOUL CONTRASTED

Man's Light Tenure of the Former--Exquisite Organisation of the Latter--A Question For Bargain-Hunters.

Washington, D.C., Aug. 26, 1900.—From Berlin, where he preached in the American church to a great congregation, comprising many of his countrymen who are traveling through Europe, Dr. Talmage sends this discourse, in which, by original methods he calculates spiritual values and urges higher appreciation of things religious. The text is Mark viii, 26: "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

Men of all occupations are to be found in the assemblies of the house of God, but in these days of extensive business operations, a large proportion are engaged from Monday morning to Saturday night in bargain-making. In many of the families, across the breakfast table and the tea table are discussed questions of loss and gain. You are every day asking yourself: "What is the value of this? What is the value of that?" You would not think of giving something of greater value for that which is of lesser value. You would not think of selling that which cost you ten dollars for five dollars. If you had a property that was worth fifteen thousand dollars, you would not sell it for four thousand dollars. You are intelligent in all matters of bargain-making. Are you as wise in the things that pertain to the matters of the soul? Christ adapted his instructions to the circumstances of those to whom he spoke. When he talked to fishermen, he spoke of the Gospel net. When he talked to the farmers, he said, "A sower went forth to sow." When he talked to the shepherds, he told the parable of the lost sheep. And am I not right when speaking to an audience made up of bargain-makers, that I address them in the words of my text, asking, "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

I propose, as far as possible, to estimate and compare the value of the two properties.

First, I have to say that the world is a very grand property. Its flowers are God's thoughts in bloom. Its rocks are God's thoughts in stone. Its dew-drops are God's thoughts in pearl. This world is God's child—a wayward child, indeed, it has wandered off through the heavens. But about 1900 years ago, one Christmas night, God sent out a sister world to call that wanderer back, and it hung over Bethlehem only long enough to get the promise of the wanderer's return, and now that lost world, with soft feet of light, comes treading back through the heavens. The hills, how beautiful they billow up, the edge of the wave white with the foam of crocuses! How beautiful the rainbow, the arched bridge on which heaven and earth come and talk to each other in tears, after the storm is over! How nimble the feet of the lamp-lighters that in a few minutes set all the dome of the night ablaze with brackets of fire! How bright the oar of the saffron cloud that rows across the deep sea of heaven! How beautiful the spring, with bridal-blossoms in her hair! I wonder who it is that beats time on a June morning for the bird orchestra. How gently the harebell tolls its fragrance on the air! There may be grander worlds, swarthier worlds, larger worlds than this; but I think that this is a most exquisite world—a miguetonette on the bosom of immensity! "Oh," you say, "take my soul give me that world; I am willing to take it in exchange; I am ready now for the bargain. It is so beautiful a world, so sweet a world, so grand a world!"

But let us look more minutely into the value of this world. You will not buy property unless you can get a good title to it. After you have looked at the property and found out that it suits you, you send an attorney to the public office, and he examines the book of deeds and the book of mortgages and the book of judgments and the book of liens, and he decides whether the title is good before you will have anything to do with it. There might be a splendid property, and in every way exactly suited to your want; but if you cannot get a good title, you will not take it. Now, I am here to say that it is impossible to get a good title to this world. If I settle down upon it, in the very year I so settle down upon it as a permanent possession, I may be driven away from it. Ay, in five minutes after I give up my soul for the world, I may have to part with the world; and what kind of a title do you call that? There is only one way in which I can hold an earthly possession, and that is through the senses. All beautiful sights through the eye, but the eye may be blotted out; all captivating sounds through the ear, but the ear may be deafened; all lusciousness of fruits and viands through my taste, but my taste may be destroyed; all appreciation of culture and of art through my mind, but I may lose my mind. What a frail hold, then, I have upon any earthly possession!

In courts of law, if you want to get a man off a property, you must serve upon him a writ of ejectment, giving him a certain time to vacate the prem-

ises; but when death comes to us and serves a writ of ejectment, he does not give us one second of forewarning. He says, "Off this place! You have no right any longer to the possession." We might cry out, "I gave you a hundred thousand dollars for that property;" the plea would be of no avail. We might say, "We have a warranty deed for that property;" the plea would be of no avail. We might say, "We have a lien on that store-house;" that would do us no good. Death is blind, and he cannot see a seal and cannot read an indenture. So that, first and last, I want to tell you that when you propose to give me the soul for the world, you cannot give me the first item of title.

Having examined the title of a property, your next question is about insurance. You would not be silly enough to buy a large warehouse that could not possibly be insured. You would not have anything to do with such a property. Now, I ask you what assurance you can give me that this world is not going to be burned up? Absolutely none. Geologists tell us that it is already on fire; that the heart of the world is one great living coal; that it is just like a ship on fire at sea, the flames not bursting out because the hatches are kept down. And yet you propose to palm off on me, in return for my soul, a world for which, in the first place, you give no title, and in the second place, for which you give no insurance. "Oh," you say, "the water of the oceans will wash over all the land and put out the fire." Oh, no. There are inflammable elements in the water, hydrogen and oxygen. Call off the hydrogen, and then the Atlantic and the Pacific oceans would blaze like heaps of shavings. You want to take this world, for which you can give no possible insurance.

Astronomers have swept their telescopes through the sky and have found out that there have been fifteen worlds, in the last two centuries, that have disappeared. At first, they looked just like other worlds. Then they got deeply red—they were on fire. Then they got ashen, showing they were burned down. Then they disappeared, showing that even the ashes were scattered. And if the geologist be right in his prophecy, then our world is to go in the same way. And yet you want me to exchange my soul for it. Ah, no; it is a world that is burning now. Suppose you brought an insurance agent to look at your property for the purpose of giving you a policy upon it, and while he stood in front of the house, he should say: "That house is on fire now in the basement;" you could not get any insurance upon it. Yet you talk about this world as though it were a safe investment, as though you could get some insurance upon it, when down in the basement it is on fire.

I remark, also, that this world is a property, with which everybody who has taken it as a possession has had trouble. Now, between my house and my church in Brooklyn, there was a reach of land which was not built on. I asked what was the matter, and they replied that everybody who had anything to do with that property got into trouble about it. It is just so with this world; everybody that has had anything to do with it, as a possession, has been in perplexity. How was it with Lord Byron? Did he not sell his immortal soul for the purpose of getting the world? Was he satisfied with the possession? Alas! alas! the poem graphically describes his case when it says:

Drank every cup of joy,
Heard every tramp of fame;
Drank early, deeply drank,
Drank draughts which common millions might have quenched,
Then died of thirst, because there was no more to drink.

Oh, yes; he had trouble with it; and so did Napoleon. After conquering nations by force of the sword, the victor lies down to die, his entire possession the military boots that he insisted on having upon his feet while he was dying. So it has been with men who had better ambition. Thackeray, one of the most genial and lovable souls, after he had won the applause of all intelligent lands through his wonderful genius, sits down in a restaurant in Paris, looks to the other end of the room and wonders whose is that forlorn and wretched face; rising up after a while, he finds that it is Thackeray in the mirror. Oh, yes! this world is a cheat. Talk about a man gaining the world! Who ever gained half of the world? Who ever owned a hemisphere? Who ever gained a continent? Who ever owned Asia? Who ever gained a city? Talk about gaining the world. No man ever gained it, or the thousandth part of it. You are demanding that I sell my soul, not for the world, but for a fragment of it.

Here is a man who has had a large estate for forty or fifty years. He lies down to die. You say: "That man is worth millions and millions of dollars." Is he? You call up a surveyor, with his compass and chains, and you say: "There is a property extending three miles in one direction, and three miles in another direction." Is that the way

to measure that man's property? No! You do not want any surveyor, with compass and chains. That is not the way to measure that man's property now. It is an undertaker you need, who will come and put his finger in his vest pocket, and take out a tape-line, and he will measure five feet nine inches one way, and two feet and a half the other. That is the man's property. Oh, no; I forgot; not so much as that, for he does not own even the place in which he lies in the cemetery. The deed to that belongs to the executors and heirs. Oh, what a property you propose to give me for my soul! If you sell a bill of goods, you go into the counting room, and say to your partner: "Do you think that man is good for this bill? Can he give proper security? Will he meet this payment?" Now, when you are offered this world as a possession, I want you to test the matter. I do not want you to go into this bargain blindly. I want you to ask about the title, about the insurance, about whether men have ever had any trouble with it, about whether you can keep it, about whether you can get all, or the ten thousandth, or one hundred thousandth part of it.

Now, let us look at the other property—the soul. We cannot make a bargain without seeing the comparative value. The soul! How shall I estimate the value of it? Well, by its exquisite organization. It is the most wonderful piece of mechanism ever put together. Machinery is of value in proportion as it is mighty and silent at the same time. You look at the engine and the machinery in the Philadelphia mint, and as you see it performing its wonderful work, you will be surprised to find how silently it goes. Machinery that roars and tears soon destroys itself; but silent machinery is often most effective. Now, so it is with the soul of man, with all its tremendous faculties—it moves in silence. Judgment, without any racket, lifting its scales; memory, without any noise, bringing down all its treasures; conscience, taking its judgment seat without any excitement; the understanding and the will all doing their work. Velocity, majesty, might, but silence—silence. You listen at the door of your heart. You can hear no sound. The soul is all quiet. It is so delicate an instrument that no human hand can touch it. You break a bone, and with splinters and bandages the surgeon sets it; the eye becomes inflamed, the apothecary's wash cools it; but a soul off the track, unbalanced, no human power can readjust it. With one sweep of its wing, it circles the universe, and overvaults the throne of God. Why, in the hour of death the soul is so mighty; it throws aside the body as though it were a toy. It drives back medical skill as impotent. It breaks through the circle of loved ones who stand around the dying couch. With one leap, it springs beyond star and moon and sun and chasms of immensity. It is superior to all material things! No fire can consume it; no floods can drown it; no rocks can crush it; no walls can impede it; no time can exhaust it. It wants no bridge on which to cross a chasm. It wants no plummet with which to sound a depth. A soul so mighty, so swift, so silent, must be a priceless soul.

I calculate the value of the soul, also, by its capacity for happiness. How much joy it can get in this world, out of friendships, out of books, out of clouds, out of the sea, out of flowers, out of ten thousand things; and yet all the joy it has here does not test its capacity. You are in a concert before the curtain hoists, and you hear the instruments preparing—the sharp snap of the broken string, the scraping of the bow across the viol. "There is no music in that," you say. It is only getting ready for the music. And all the enjoyment of the soul in this world, the enjoyment we think is real enjoyment, is only preparative; it is only anticipative; it is only the first stages of the thing; it is only the entrance, the beginning of that which shall be the orchestral harmonies and splendors of the redeemed.

You cannot test the full power of the soul for happiness in this world. How much power the soul has here to find enjoyment in friendships, but oh, the grander friendships for the soul in the skies! How sweet the flowers here! but how much sweeter they will be there! I do not think that when flowers die on earth, they die forever. In the sunny valleys of heaven, shall not the marigold creep? On the hills of heaven, will not the amaranth bloom? On the amethystine walls of heaven, will not the jasmine climb? "My beloved is come down into his garden to gather lilies." No flowers in heaven? Where, then, do they get their garlands for the brows of the righteous?

Christ is glorious to our souls now, but how much grander our appreciation after a while! A conqueror comes back after the battle. He has been fighting for us. He comes upon the platform. He has one arm in a sling and the other arm holds a crucifix. As he mounts the platform, oh, the enthusiasm of the audience! They say, "That man fought for us, and imperiled his life for us," and how wild the huzzas that follow huzzas! When the Lord Jesus Christ shall at last stand out before the multitudes of the redeemed of heaven and we meet him face to face and feel that he was wounded in the head and wounded in the hands and wounded in the feet and wounded in the side for us, we think we will be overwhelmed. We will sit some time gazing in silence, until some leader amidst the white-robed choir shall lift the baton of light, and give the signal that it is time to wake the song of jubilee; and all heaven then will break forth into "Hosanna! hosanna! Worthy is the Lamb that was slain."

Gratitude is the fairest blossom which springs from the soul.—Ballou.

SUNDAY SCHOOL

INTERNATIONAL LESSON NO. XI. SEPTEMBER 9, 1900.

The Good Samaritan.—Luke 10: 25-37.

Commentary.—25. A certain lawyer—A teacher of the law. A modern theologian. Stood up—Jesus must have been in some building, discoursing on some subject that suggested the question asked by the lawyer. Tempted Him—Or tested Him. The question was not asked from any desire to know his own duty, but for the purpose of testing the knowledge of Jesus. Master—Or teacher, the same as rabbi. What shall I do to inherit eternal life?—The question is highly important. "Eternal life is the true spiritual life of the soul—that which is natural to it in its highest state, and of all things in this world is most worthy the seeking."

26. What is written—As a teacher of the law He should be able to tell, and He was able, as His answer shows. How readest thou—What we gain from the Bible depends upon how we read it.

27. He answering said—He replied by quoting the great summary of man's duty towards God in Deuteronomy vi. 5, and a statement of the law of love from Leviticus xix. 18.—Cook. Thou shalt love—The religion of the Bible does not consist in good external acts, in prayers, in our zeal for Christ, in performing the deeds of the law, or in being made happy, but in love to God and man. With all thy heart—This is supreme affection to God. The heart is the seat of the affections, desires, motives and will. "It's the centre of all physical and spiritual life, the central focus from which all the rays of moral life go forth." With all thy soul—He loves God with all his soul or rather, with all his life, who is ready to give up life for His sake—to endure and suffer rather than dishonor God.—Clarke. With all thy strength—To the extent of giving all of our physical powers in His service. With all thy mind—The intellect belongs to God. This embraces the whole man. A person who thus loves God will be wholly and unreservedly given to God and will be satisfied with Him. He will admire and obey God. There will be no looking to this vain world for delight and happiness, for all our joy will be in Him. Thy neighbor as thyself—This is nothing short of the golden rule. Matt. vii. 12.

28. This do, and thou shalt live—Shalt have already eternal life, the life of heaven; for this heart of love is eternal life. It is the life of saints and angels in paradise. It makes heaven what it is.

29. Desiring to justify himself (R. V.)—The conscience of this learned lawyer was touched, and he saw that he was destitute of the love he had just declared to be necessary in order to inherit eternal life. Who is my neighbor?—The degree in which he kept the law of love would depend on the answer to this question.

30. Jesus answering said—Here it was that Christ could, in a parable, show how far Judaism was from even a true understanding, much more from such perfect observance of the law, as would gain heaven.—Edersheim. From Jerusalem to Jericho—It was a very dangerous road, lying much of the way in a deep ravine through soft rocks in which caves abounded, affording shelter to miscreants who sallied forth to prey upon travellers.

31. Certain priest—A large number of priests and Levites dwelt at Jericho. This priest might have been passing to or from the temple service at Jerusalem. He saw him and knew that a fellow man was suffering and in need. On the other side—He no doubt could frame many excuses for not stopping.

32. Likewise a Levite—A Levite was one of the tribe of Levi, a priest was of the family of Aaron in that tribe. The Levites performed the humble services of the temple, as cleaning, carrying fuel, and acting as choristers.

33. A certain Samaritan—The Samaritans were a half heathen people, greatly despised and hated by the Jews. Had compassion—Although they had no right to expect any help from a Samaritan, yet he hastened to assist the suffering man.

34. Bound up his wounds—He did the very best he could for the man with the remedies he had at hand. On his own beast—This all took time and effort, but he did not hesitate and make excuses.

35. On the morrow—He evidently remained with him that night. Two pence—A pence or Roman denarius is worth about 16 cents, but it would be equivalent to eight or ten times as much in our day.

36. Which... thinkest thou—This question almost compelled the lawyer to speak highly of the Samaritan. Was neighbor unto him—The parable implies not a mere enlargement of ideas, but a complete change of them. It is truly a gospel parable, for the whole old relationship of mere duty is changed into one of love.

37. Do thou likewise—He to whom you ought thus to show mercy in order to become his neighbor is your neighbor. I should be ready to help every person who needs my assistance. The command is imperative "Go and do thou likewise." I should "go" wherever a human soul is to be found and, with a heart filled with love, carry the gospel of Christ.

Teachings.—"The love which the law of God requires, leads those who have it to do good, not merely to their friends or countrymen, but, as they have opportunity, to all, in imitation of Him who makes His suit to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends His rain on the just and on the unjust."

PRACTICAL SURVEY.

Love to God. The religion of Jesus Christ is a religion of love. We can only love God truly by knowing Him, not by striving or endeavoring, but by a revelation of God Himself to our spirit. We will then love Him because we see in Him that which is lovable. Through repentance and

faith we are brought to a knowledge of God.

Love to man. The feature that distinguishes Christ's religion from all others is that it teaches universal love and benevolence. It makes no provision for resentment, ill-will or revenge. Christian benevolence is not limited to our particular sect, sect or fraternity, but is as wide as the universe. "It begins with our own household, it ends with the most distant idolater on the opposite side of the globe." It is not compulsory; the only obligation is the bond of love.

We must consider our interdependence one upon another; we cannot be independent; we need each other's assistance in many ways. With this first breath we draw, we need the aid of a friendly neighbor, and as we pass out into eternity we want the press of a sympathetic hand. Any of us are liable to fall among thieves and find ourselves unexpectedly in great distress, and have need of the kindly offices of some good Samaritan. The man needs immediate and substantial relief.

The priest and the Levite, in passing by on the other side, knowingly and intentionally shun their duty. They did not care to know anything about the case. They were not inclined to be troubled with other men's trouble—if people fall among thieves it is their lookout. They got into the difficulty; let them get out the best way they can. The priest and the Levite represent a class of persons who adopt the "let alone" policy. This is not what Jesus taught. We are to do good to them, to love them.

The Samaritan. The Jews hated the Samaritans and had no dealings with them, and considered them incapable of any good. They rallied upon the Saviour once, saying, "Thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil." This Samaritan is not resentful and does not retaliate. He might have said, They have no dealing with us; I will have nothing to do with them. We are sometimes disappointed in not receiving sympathy and aid from the ones whom we think ought to give it. The priest and the Levite were pre-eminently religious, and one would naturally expect them to be foremost in works of love and benevolence, while the Samaritan was not expected to be given to such deeds. So sometimes we are surprised in finding help and sympathy where we least expected it.

GET ABREAST OF THE NEWS

Interesting Game Based Upon Incidents of the Day.

The young hostess who would be up to date should invite her friends to a Chinese porch party. The decorations are easily managed—lighted Chinese lanterns, fans in profusion, Chinese bowls of flowers on little stands, with the porch mats and bamboo chairs, are enough. Cards with the figure of a Chinaman in characteristic attitude, sketched in one corner and pencils are given to the guests, who are told that each question asked must be answered by some name or expression often heard in connection with China and the fighting there.

The loud report of a cannon crackler is the signal for attention, and after asking each question the hostess slowly unties from a bunch lights, and tosses out into the darkness a little one, the explosion of which is a token that time is up and another query is about to be put.

Fourteen questions and answers are given here, but other and better ones can easily be found:

1. What two letters are most popular in China? T and cue.
 2. What is proof that the eyes of the Mongolian are open at last? The Yellow Sea.
 3. Through what? The open door.
 4. When the powers get hold of the Empress Dowager what will they catch? A Tartar.
 5. If you're anxious to go to China what will the government do? Taku.
 6. What will you be in? Transports.
 7. What couldn't the empress dowager govern? China proper.
 8. When the empress makes the emperor cry what would he like to do? "Boxer."
 9. What sort of a great wall are the powers likely to build in the flowery kingdom? A partition of China.
 10. How is it to be expected that the Chinese will take reverses and victories? Coolie.
 11. If the Chinese were Spaniards what would they call the stories of American heroism in China? Pig tails.
 12. What sort of fruit is generally found green and always found rotten in China? Mandarin.
 13. What sort of an army ought to reach Pekin the quickest? A Russian.
 14. There are Chinese politicians that don't care for Earl Li, but who would like what? Old Li Hung.
- The explosion of a whole bunch of crackers marks the close, and while the cards are being looked over with a view to finding the most correct answers refreshments are served. There must be tea, of course, even though it is fed, and there should be something that can be eaten with chop sticks.

Whether the prize is a fan or a jar or a bit of carved ivory depends upon the taste of the hostess—and also upon her purse.—New York Sun.

Water as a Pacifier.

The artesian wells of Eastern Algeria have reconciled tribes whom military terrorism failed to pacify. The first appearance of the rock drill machinery merely provoked their banter, but when unflinching fountains of cold water burst forth and filled tanks and irrigation canals and filled jibes turned to silence and finally to grunts of approval. Now they are besieging the tents of the government engineers, begging them to try their luck here and there and promising their political support in case an aquatic treasure trove should restore the productivity of their parched-out fields.

No one knows what he can do until he tries.—Publius Syrus.