

guard the sepulchre. But when the appointed third day came no tomb could hold, no sentinels could restrain, the risen Lord of Life and Glory. In a few weeks' time the members of the Sanhedrim were in despair, they found themselves powerless to restrain an army of enthusiastic Spirit-filled witnesses who were filling Jerusalem with the name of Him they had crucified, and were bringing His blood upon their head. Jesus could not be hid.

Centuries passed and a time of darkness overtook the Church. The Gospel was buried in errors. But even then Christ could not be hid. He broke out again before men's eyes. Then came a general decay of faith, when a lifeless orthodoxy reigned in the churches, and the voice of joy and health was unheard. The sermons were ethical essays, faultless in literary grace, but void of all spiritual power. Then came revival. A new set of teachers was raised up—men who had a definite personal experience, and knew for themselves the constraining love of Christ. In the joy of that revival Christ broke out once more in our national life, the character of the nation was entirely changed, and very soon missionary work of every description sprang into existence. Christ could not be hid.

Even in war time Christ cannot be hid. The authorities decreed that there should be no Christmas truce, but they forgot the power of the living Christ. When Christmas drew near the men in the trenches felt the power of Emmanuel. Bavarians and British met as brothers, exchanging courtesies and entertaining each other with their national choruses and anthems. It is still true that Christ cannot be hid.

This is the joy of public worship. Our elaborate services are a melancholy farce unless Christ breaks through and makes His presence felt. Sometimes Christ may do this through a perfectly rendered solo or hymn, but more often it is the quivering notes of the burdened saint, the high treble voice of the eager child, or it may be the tear on the cheek of the heart-broken child of God which betray His presence. The most perfect worship is that in which Christ is most manifest because the hearts of the worshippers are so impressed with the awe of His presence, so full of the joy of His salvation.

This, too, is the secret of success in evangelistic work. Organization can do a good deal to gather crowds and awaken interest, but the most enthusiastic meeting is void of blessing unless there is a breaking through of the presence of Christ. The simple testimony, the homely illustration, the plain familiar hymn are often more effective than the learned argument or the eloquent appeal, just because the Lord Jesus makes His presence better known through them. It is the strength of the Christian Church in all her work and witness that we have a Saviour who cannot be hid.

## II.

We pass on to notice the daughter who could not be controlled. She was grievously vexed with a devil. This "little daughter" had an unclean spirit, but when the mother returned instead of hearing the piercing shrieks of a demon-possessed child pacing up and down like a wild beast in a cage, she found her made whole and lying on the bed. It reminds us of the strife and turmoil in the labour world. It was one of our chief subjects of thanksgiving that the life and death struggle in which our nation is engaged had put an end to the internal strife and controversy which were menacing our domestic peace. But serious labour troubles have reappeared on the Clyde and in the coal trade, and according to the estimate of public

men who know all the facts, are doing more to delay the eagerly coveted victory than all the efforts of the Germans. It is an old trouble, it is part of the price we pay for our liberty and independence, but in the face of a powerful enemy this unwillingness to be controlled is quite excusable. The nation and all our Allies will cry shame on those whose greed, whether it be the desire of the masters for excessive profit or the desire of the men for excessive pay, is imperilling the welfare of the nation and increasing the number of the wounded and slain.

It reminds us also of the self-indulgence and lasciviousness in the fashionable world. The war startled the most reckless into some measure of earnest thought. Bridge competitions gave place to knitting competitions, and energies which used to be wasted over frivolous and not always wholesome gaieties were devoted to working parties and learning first aid. But recent revelations of night clubs attended by both men and women for gambling and other reckless purposes show that the unclean spirit is not yet exorcised. The house may be swept and garnished, but if still empty there will be nothing to hinder the evil spirit returning in even greater force. Only the living Christ in the heart can set men free. There are many indications. Modern works of fiction bear lamentable witness that a spirit of uncleanness still reigns largely in the life of the nation, and that men and women delight in letting their thoughts and imaginations roam freely amongst all that is vile and impure. Above all, it should remind us of the prayerlessness and restlessness in the religious world. How few make time for quiet waiting upon God in prayer, how few have any real delight in Bible study. How prone men are to hurry through their devotions, the private prayer, or family worship, glad that it is over and done for the day, and that they are free to give themselves to more congenial occupations. It is difficult to imagine any conditions more calculated to make men thoughtful and earnest than the present conditions of national anxiety and peril. With intense solemnity the present passing events seem to urge people to follow the example of the Psalmist and say: "I will hear what God the Lord will speak to His people." But so few are really waiting upon God; the great majority are rushing off to some new enterprise, some fresh endeavour. God is calling our nation to repent, *i.e.*, to think again, but this is the last thing we want to do. Solemn, indeed, is the warning, "He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, Who hath also given unto us His Holy Spirit." The injunction "despise not prophesyings" is of supreme importance in these days, when to Spirit taught readers the prophesyings are found written in the daily paper. But more than this war of many nations is needed to cast out the spirit of prayerlessness and restlessness. Oh that the conscience of the Church might be touched, and that the sin and shame of this uncleanness might be more deeply felt.

## III.

We now consider the faith which could not be denied. It is one of the outstanding examples of great faith—faith which won commendation from the Master. At first the joy of winning the boon on which her heart was set kept her from noticing the Saviour's special word of praise. Afterwards, as she told the story to her little daughter, her heart overflowing with joy that she was once more able to have fellowship with her child, she would perhaps say: "The Master said something which seemed to make the disciples almost envious. He said, 'O woman, great is thy

faith.' But I do not see how I showed any very great faith. I knew He had the power to heal you, so how could I leave Him until He had granted my request. I only did what any other mother would have done." Great faith is never great in its own eyes. It is only the natural and instinctive response to a great Saviour. But hers was great faith. She overcame the silence of Christ. At first "He answered her not a word." But she persisted until at last the disciples, annoyed at her persistence, asked Jesus to send her away. Then she overcame the apparent sectarianism of Christ. He said, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the House of Israel." She did not stumble over this seemingly narrow and exclusive statement, nor did she argue against it. She simply cried, "Lord, help me," and poured out the full tide of her grief upon the Saviour's compassionate heart. But she was to be even further tested. She was brought to take the lowest place, and to ask, not for the children's portion, but for the children's crumbs. "It is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs." It seemed a cruelly harsh reply, yet Christ softened somewhat the ordinary language of the day. He used a diminutive form, "little dogs," referring not to the big dogs, the fierce scavengers of the streets, but to the little dogs, the children's pets, which were allowed inside the homes.

This word she seized upon, "Truth, Lord, yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs." In her humility, she only claimed the position of a household dog content to remain under the table at the master's feet. But to her clear faith, the great boon she desired was only like the crumbs that fell from the table. She did not need all the portion of a child; the scraps that are given to the pet dog would suffice for her. This is what moved the Saviour's admiration. If in her eyes such a boon were only a scrap, what must the feast itself be? Hers was a faith which could not be denied. To sum up, Jesus Christ is the same to-day, a Saviour who cannot be hid. Human nature is the same to-day, a spirit of uncleanness often prevails. Faith is the same to-day. A grain of faith can still move mountains.

## WAR-TIME HYMN

By the Bishop of Durham.

O man, for whom eternal Heaven  
Was moved of old, to set thee free,  
And God took manhood, and was given  
By His sheer love to die for thee—

To die unfathomable death,  
To traverse shades and deeps unknown,  
That thou might'st breathe immortal breath,  
And see His face, and share His throne;

Thou for whose life He shook the grave,  
And underfoot its demon cast,  
Intent to win thee, and to have  
His creature all His own at last;

To-day draw nigh, as ne'er before;  
Consider, contemplate the Lamb;  
Thy heart surrender; love, adore,  
The great self-sacrificed I Am.

Begin to-day in act and thought  
To live life whole, a Christian man,  
Whom his own suffering God has bought;  
God's love his law, God's will his plan;

Who sees with joy his years and hours,  
With all their happenings, hallowed all;  
Who serves his kind with ransomed powers;  
Who, praising, trusting, cannot fall;

Who finds a settled, strange repose  
Mid shocks and ruins, tears and wrongs;  
Knows all is well, for Christ he knows,  
To Christ, who died and lives, belongs.

*These verses may be sung to the tune "Melcombe," "Hursley" and "Pentecost" are alternative tunes.*