Behold the World is Gone After Him

SERMON PREACHED BY REV. A. H. HUGHES AT CENTRAL N. S. BAP. ASSOCIATION, AND PUBLISHED BY THEIR REQUEST.

John 12:19.

This language is the caucus whisper of defeated and despairing Pharisees. The Lord Jesus had now accomplished two of the most eventful and glorious acts of his life and ministry, viz., the raising of Lazarus from the dead, and his triumphal entry into Jerusalem. The raising of Lazarus was a stupendous and convincing miracle. His entry into Jerusalem was an overwhelming demonstration of regal supremacy and glory, and a prophetic fulfilment of his Messiahship; and had largely combined to overthrow Jewish prejudice. To summon a man from the grave who had been dead four days was an evidence of superhuman power. No mere man could do it; and as Jesus claimed to be the Son of God this, his act, justified the claim. And it was greatly strengthened by his riding into Jerusalem in exact accord with the prediction of the event. A Jewish prophet had centuries before described Israel's deliverer as riding thus into the Holy City, and so strong is the feeling that Jesus is he, that crowds of the people go out to meet him, and accompany him back with glad demonstrations of fealty and homage. It was the occasion of a wonderful change in the condition of affairs. To many who hitherto had stood in doubt, and had kept aloof from him, he now became the prospective heir of the throne of his father David; and his following became greatly increased. But there were a band of invincibles who were not to be moved or convinced. Had Lazarus been raised from the dead: they had a theory which robbed the miracle of all convincing force. It was an exhibition not of divine, but of infernal power. Had the entry into Jerusalem been made in exact accord with an ancient prediction: it was the trick of an artful imposter, who was conversant with prophecy, and who would cunningly mislead the popular mind. But while they were unconvinced, they were not at all happy in prejudice, nor by any means hopeful in their opposition. As the leaders of an organized band of hostility to the claims and person of Christ, they saw their cause weakening, and were chagrined to see the multitudes of people flocking to the standard of the Nazarene; and standing apart from the crowd they talked the matter over among themselves, and despair is the result of the party convention.

The text leads us to consider as a theme, the magnitude of Christ's following; and, first, look at the fact expressed: "Behold the world has gone after him." It was a strong way of saying that Christ had at that moment a very large following,—which he unquestionably had. Jesus was not the lonely, friendless character that we sometimes think he was, and that he is often represented to have been. Our sympathy for Christ in his earthly condition is often a mistaken sympathy. We often hear him spoken of as a friendless and forsaken person; whereas the fact is, the people flocked after him. We think of him as destitute of sympathy and support, whereas there were thousands who, while they did not understand him, were his ardent admirers, and as far as safety would permit, they were his earnest supporters. True, he was not often taken into the higher circles of Jewish society; but the common people received him gladly. It was inseparable from the design of his mission that crowds should wait upon him. Christ did not come to spend his time in a cave or in a cloister. He did not come as an unattractive, uninteresting, wearisome exponent of religious truth; but with the sparkle, the independence, the originality, and the authority of one who was to successfully inaugurate a great and overshadowing religious movement. When he spoke, the magnetism of the man, and the charm of his sayings, attracted and won the people. Hence we read of multitudes of people being about him. The sermon on the mount was not delivered to a handful of people; but "seeing the multitudes," it is said, "he went up into a mountain, and when he was set he opened his mouth and instructed them." The parable spoken from the ship near the shore, on the sea of Galilee, did not fall in vain upon the desert waste, but was caught up by the ears of closely-packed multitudes, charmed into interested silence. It was while in the press of a surging crowd that trembling invalid came and touched the hem of his garment, which touch brought deliverance from the malady which had made her life miserable for many years. And the crowds that gathered about him were not of hostile intent. They did not come with concealed weapons to put him out of the way. They were people who regarded him in some way as a public benefactor, and they followed him, either from a recollection of past favors, or in the hope of receiving or seeing others granted. And these crowds were at times as so many body-guards about him. More than once do we read of the Pharisees desiring to take him that they might put him to death, but fearing to do so because of the people. While they were strong in themselves and in the numbers of their sympathisers, the Galilean was much stronger than they in numbers, and they feared the consequences of resorting to means of violence. Jesus was no friendless mendicant; but he was a man with a reputation and an influence. While he was forsaken and opposed by one class of his countrymen, he was the charm and admiration of the other. And at times we see his popularity so widespread as to make his crucifixion seem an almost incredible circumstance. And there are some who account for the change in the circumstances that came over him in his apprehension, trial, and death, as the fickleness of the people who followed him, in that they one day cried, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" and the next day after they cried, "Away with him! away with him!" But such are not the facts as related by his biographers, for he was betrayed at night into the hands, not of the people, but of the officers of the rulers, who had long sought an opportunity to take him when none of his friends were about him. And with the betrayal sign of Judas, and the stillness and seclusion of Gethsemane, and the presence of only a few of his disciples, his bloodthirsty enemies had their first opportunity to secure him; it was their hour, and that of the power of darkness. His professed friend betrayed him to his foes. It was the rulers (the aristocracy), with the baser sort, who always work together to oppose and hinder righteousness, were the parties who cried out in Herod's court, Away with him! let him be crucified! and secured, to their fiendish pleasure, his death sentence. And before many of his followers were aware of it, they had him nailed to the cross. But he being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, they did with wicked hands crucify and slay. But it is abundantly clear that Jesus, during the years of his public ministry, had a following of no mean proportions, and at the time to which the text refers it was so large as to awaken despair in the minds of his opponents. They beheld, so to speak, the world running after Christ, and admitted their inability to stop the current of his increasing popularity. The aspect of affairs has not changed. Jesus to-day is the acknowledged leader of a tremendous following. I know that some people get nervous about Christianity, and spleenishly talk about its retrograde movements, and affirm that the world is growing worse notwithstanding its benign and sanctifying influence. They remind me of the little boy who came in and told his mother that the river was running up stream. He had been playing in an eddy on the shore, and thought the whole stream had turned about. His mother told him to go and throw a stick out into the middle of the river, and then he would be better able to tell which way it was running. And so we say to those dyspeptic Christians who are always fretting themselves about the eddies in Christianity, launch out into the deep, and you will find that the great volume of Christian forces in the world are not lessening, but increasing with portentous momentum. People are sometimes injudiciously charitable with their fears and their tears. The fact is, Christianity does not need our sympathy except as it runs through the channel of a loyal devotion to its claims. Christianity is no starveling. It is no homeless beggar that comes and asks for shelter and support. It is no charity institution. It is a mighty system of religious faith which is revolutionizing the world, and enlisting a following that is destined to be universal. We are aware that its weakness is being asserted, and its overthrow is being predicted, but the assertions and the predictions come from sources alike prejudiced and unreliable, and in attitude of mind the same as those who murdered its founder. But Christ has a following to-day of the most magnificent proportions. The spires and domes of Europe and America, with those now rising in Asia and Africa, are evidences of his unrivaled supremacy. We know it can not be said that the people of Christian countries are all Christians in the evangelical sense of the term; neither was the following that alarmed the Pharisees fully composed of regenerate people: a variety of motives combined to make a large and friendly following, and while it cannot be affirmed that the masses of Christendom have their names all enrolled in the Lamb's Book of Life, it is, nevertheless, a fact that the people of Christendom in a vast and most assuring majority are united on Christ, and will tolerate no other religious head. We know, also, that there are here and there some carping conceits who raise their objections to Christianity and are only annoyed to see or hear of its benign influence. They often rent their rage and predict its downfall; sometimes we hear of them mustering their forces, and gathering their material for an onslaught on Jesus, and for sure they are going to dethrone him in Christendom, and crush his power forever; and as they report progress from time to time, we Christians become terribly alarmed and tremble for Christianity, and while we thus stand in a trembling attitude they, perchance, are being filled with sore dismay at some new success achieved by Christ, and are whispering to each other in private conference, their secret despair. The best panacea for our fears is to open our eyes to the evidences of Christ's growing popularity, and so become assured. He is moving to-day among the masses of mankind as never before, enlisting their sympathy and winning their adherence. Though unseen, his existence and his kingship are receiving a ready acknowledgment, and his sceptre sways to a large and cheerful obedience. His character and claims are divested of all uncertainty, and it is with absolute confidence that men commit their destinies to his keeping. The loyalty to Christ which has been developing through the ages is not to be shaken by any amount of unwarrantable antipathy. The common sense of men has not yet forsaken them, and while it remains, guided by the Holy Spirit, Christianity must live. Christ is no unsuccessful aspirant for universal supremacy, nor is he a fallen chieftain with the empty insignia of departed glory; but he is a mighty leader who is today marshalling the world forces, and the zenith of his success is to be the establishment of boundless dominion and sovereignty.

Secondly. The fact is in accord with reason. It is not at all to be wondered at that the people flocked to Christ in great numbers. It is but reasonable that they should have done so, for he stood to the masses in a peculiarly helpful relation. He was not a self-seeking demagogue, but a self-denying benefactor. He was the people's physician. No disease could baffle his skill, nor was his treatment obtained by expensive outlays. He was the people's teacher. The synagogues were too small to accommodate his audiences, and therefore he held mammoth open air meetings, which only intensified the hostility of his opponents. His teaching was not like the dry and proey repetitions of the Rabbis; but the winning, tender, inspiring, yet authoritative sayings of a better dispensation. Best of all he was the people's Saviour, not only from physical maladies, but from that subtle, evasive, ineradicable disease which has entered into our spiritual constitution and has poisoned all our moral faculties. Sustaining relationships to vast numbers of his suffering countrymen, it is but natural that they would be his friends and admirers. The popular following was but the logical sequence of his gracious ministrations among them, and while it enraged the Pharisees it ought not to have occasioned them any surprise. On equally reasonable grounds can be explained the present magnitude of Christ's following. The salvation which Christ sustains to the world is one of infinite tenderness and sympathy; and the world knows it. At a tremendous cost he bought the privilege of being helpful to suffering humanity in all its wretched condition. Sin is in the world; but Christ comes with the articles of emancipation and delivers from its bondage and penalties. Suffering is in the world; but Christ comes with words that explain its mystery, and alleviate its pain. Sorrow is in the world; but Jesus assures us that a being of infinite wisdom and tenderness is directing and controlling all, and the poor suffering heart discovers a blessedness in all the sadness and tears of life. Doubt and perplexity are in the world. Men are profoundly exercised over the great problem of human destiny, but in Christ we find a solution of this momentous question. His gospel explains man's destiny and highest happiness as culminating in the perfection of the divine glory, and the way of obtaining it is belief in Christ, who is the way, the truth, and the life. Despair is in the world. But in the gospel of Christ there nestle the choristers of hope which ever and anon stand out and sing despair away. Death is in the world. But in the story of the resurrection is the angel of promise that turns the saddened gaze away from the charnel-house to the glorious spectacle of a risen and ascending God. Helpfulness is the first condition of gratitude and devotion. Jesus is the timely helper of sin-stricken humanity. He saves men even when they are sinking in depths that have no bottom; and that his acts are gratefully recognized should cause no surprise. The Pharisees in the time of Christ had their followers; and the Sadducees had their's; but the creeds of neither of the two parties could appeal to the universal heart. Christ came with the message and deeds of pity and love, and won the aching hearts of the suffering and oppressed. The present day has its promulgators of conflicting creeds, none of which can ever win the confidence and secure the following of the masses of society. Let us look at some of them and compare them with what Jesus says, and is. Well, Agnosticism with its doubt and declared ignorance of God, of heaven, and a future state, has no balm for a race of perishing mortals, but the balm of eternal life is found in the luminous teachings of him who was dead and is alive and lives forever more; so that Christ is preferred to Agnosticism. Materialism, acknowledging no productive power outside of matter, and fixing man's origin and destiny there, leaves the world without a providence, the sinner without a Saviour, the soul without immortality, and the universe without a God. It leaves poor anxious manhood to the inevitable fate of eternal annihilation. But the heart of humanity as it throbs to the response of a much more cheering outlook than this discovers it in the plain and positive teaching of him who is the resurrection and the life; so that Christ is preferred before materialism. And now the Rationalist mounts the rostrum to teach the world, asserting the supremacy of reason over that of revelation. Reason must be the guide, says he, and faith must confine itself to its cold and limited deductions. But the human heart is not satisfied with what it receives from this source, it cries out for God, for the living God, and covets the very gifts which revelation discovers but which reason denies. So Christ is perfegred rather than Rationalism. Then the Pantheist seeks for leadership in the realm of thought and inquiry. His creed is best stated in the stanza by Tennyson:

> Hallowed be thy name—Hallelujah!—
> Infinite Ideality!
> Immeasurable Reality!
> Infinite Personality!
> Hallowed be thy name—Hallelujah!

We feel that we are nothing, for all is in thou, and we in thee. We feel that we are something that also comes from thee. We are nothing, and thou wilt help us to be. "Hallowed be thy name—Hallelujah!" Such a creed is too fanciful and meaningless for anything like universal acceptance. It magnifies human nothingness, and ignores human guilt. It asserts God's infinitude at the expense of his personality. Man knows himself to be a sinner; and the longing of his heart is for a personal, a divine Saviour, he finds him in the man of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write, "Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." So that Christ is chosen rather than Pantheism. The infidel also courts a universal following, and to secure it he caters to the human tendency to doubt. He denies revelation; he denies heaven; he denies hell. He denies everything pertaining to man's future weal or woe. He accepts nothing but the sentiment of the fool mentioned by the Psalmist, who said in his heart, "There is no God." But the hopes of humanity consist not in denials, but in crediting the plain statements of him who spake as man never spake, and who loved as none other ever loved, and who saved as none other ever saved. So Christ is embraced rather than the cheerless and blasphemous denials of infidelity. Is the world running after Christ? Has he a following that confirms, with increasing certainty, his growing popularity? Let us not regard it as phenomenal, but as being in accord with the simplest dictates of reason. He is the prince of benefactors. He is humanity's best friend. The salvation he brings embraces the entire man, and stops not until it lifts him up to the sunlit heights of a sinless and perfect manhood.

Third. The fact is in agreement with all the prophetic descriptions of the Messiah. His claims to the Messiahship can only be sustained on the correspondence of his life with the statements of prophecy. That illustrious personage figures in prophecy as its great central attraction, and between the predictions and the events of his history there must necessarily exist an absolute agreement. His advent was foretold under a variety of relations, which answered to the peculiar epochs in which the communications describing his character and mission were given. In the patriarchal age he was presented under the aspect of a powerful tribal prince, and such was the patriarchal conception of him. In the Abrahamic line of descent was to arise one whose progeny was to overspread the earth, blessing the nations and families of mankind, and establishing the unparalleled lustre and dignity of its patriarchal head. In the palmy days of Jewish monarchy we read of him as a king whose throne was to be on Mount Zion, whose dominion was to be universal, and whose reign was to last as long as the sun and moon endure. It was thus that David, and Solomon, and their contemporaries wrote of him. In the prophetic era he is set forth as the coming prophet and teacher of his people, who was to give heaven's last and final dispensation to man, and who, because of his growing influence, was to have the Gentiles coming to his light and kings to the brightness of his rising. Ethiopia was to stretch out her imploring hands unto him, and the isles were to wait for his law; the wilderness and the solitary place were to be gladdened by his presence, and deserts were to rejoice and blossom as the rose. So that Jesus came to earth with a most magnificent destiny. But it was to be obtained through self-abnegation, humility, and pain; but these are always the essentials to the attainment of the imperishable and the sublime. His destiny was to be one of unequalled conquest, that of universal conqueror. But Christ conquers in the spirit realm. He establishes a supremacy where others must forever fail. Every battle of the warrior is with confused noises and garments rolled in blood; but this is with burning and fuel of fire. He subdues amid the hush of a profound silence. The roar and clash of carnal weapons are not heard. Love is the weapon by which he subdues. This gives character to his conquests, and the multitudes enlisted beneath his banner march with willing and grateful obedience in their train of devoted subjection. His destiny was to be one of loyal adherence on the part of all his subjects. There is no organized treachery in the camp of our Immanuel. But there is a willing compliance of all his followers with the terms of his administration, a loving submission to its every enforcement. As a prince he has power to prevail with men, to win their sympathy and their devotion. Fidelity has been the distinguishing characteristic of his followers through all the centuries. It has survived the violence of fiery persecutions. It defies the malice and ingenuity of its most relentless enemies, be they human or infernal. It was well said by the first Napoleon when Christ was the subject of conversation, "Alexander, Cæsar, Charlemagne, and myself founded great empires by the force of arms, but they have all passed away; but Christ founded his empire in love, and it still survives, and is destined to live, and there are millions of his subjects who this day would die for his cause." His destiny was to be one of universal leadership, subduing and governing in love, he must eventually bring all people to himself, with willing acknowledgments of his absolute right to control and lead. This makes him the unique character in human history, and if there be any philosophy in history, its final word is redemption. Cosmopolitan rule is restricted to one individual Christ. Attempts on the part of others to obtain it have ended in disaster and defeat. The world *needs* only one leader; and there is only one who deserves to lead. Christ's position has been earned by merit. He has given himself for the world, and therefore deserves its affections, its confidence, its loyalty, and its support. These he is receiving, and the better portion of humanity would to-day enthrone him by unanimous acclamation. The helpfulness, the sympathy, the love of Christ make him supreme in the human heart, and are winning for him the world's devotion. The words of the text take to themselves a deep significance with every passing decade. That the world was running after Christ was the painful acknowledgment of his enemies, and to-day in every quarter of envious opposition the same unwilling confession is being made. To employ the language of another, "Christendom is ruling the world, and the reason that Christendom rules the world is that Christ rules Christendom, and the reason that Christ rules Christendom is because Christ is divine." To such a destiny points the finger of prophecy. It must therefore be realized, or Christ and prophecy will be found to conflict with each other. It is being realized, and so Christ and prophecy are mutually establishing each other's claims. A grander scene challenges to-day the world's admiration, and inspires its confidence and wins its adherence, than the entry of Christ into Jerusalem amid the deafening Hosannas of the expectant throng. It is the following of the nations after this same Christ, and their consequent uprising from a degraded type of national character to the divinely exalted ideal of national excellency, the kingdoms of this world are becoming the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ.

And now, brethren, these thoughts furnish us a powerful incentive to attempt great things for God and humanity. Christianity is a divine enterprise. Its success is guaranteed by all the sources of the infinite God; and he has given us the honored privilege of being workers together with him in his grand accomplishments, and to be sharers together with him in the glory of its triumphs. There is much of this world lying yet in the hand of the wicked one, under the deceptive and soul-ruining control of the Prince of Darkness. But God has given it to his Son for an inheritance, yea the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. Then let us have a grand rallying of forces all along the line of the sacramental host. Let no cowardly timidity or love of self-ease on our part prove us unworthy of our high calling. But with the love, the zeal, the self-sacrificing devotion that characterized our Master's ministry, let us go forth into the conflict as valiant soldiers of the blood-stained cross, and with salvation inscribed upon our heaven-given banners, march up to the strongest ramparts of the enemy, whether they be entrenched upon the maritime shores or western prairies of our beloved Canada, or the far-off Indies of the Buddhist and the Brahmin. Oh, yes! as workers together with him, let us enter this world-wide harvest of precious souls for whom Jesus died, and slacken not our efforts until the echoing shouts of the blood-saved from the ends of the earth become the language of the text, "Behold the world is gone after him."

Where Ivory Comes From—Its Uses.

Mammoth tusks of ivory occasionally come to this country from Siberia, but as these have been long exposed for centuries, and probably for many thousands of years, and often buried in ice, the "nature" has gone out of them, and they are not fit for the cutler's use. The teeth of the walrus and hippopotamus are used in considerable quantity, and, being of suitable size, are used whole for making expensive carved handles. The best quality comes from the west coast of Africa under the names of Cameroon, Angola and Gaboon ivory. This is brought down from the interior, and retains a large proportion of the "fat" or gelatine, from the fact, probably, that it is more recently from the animal. In this state it is called "green" ivory. It is more translucent and not so white as the Egyptian and other kinds, called "white" ivory, that have been lying a longer time and in a more sandy region, and exposed to the heat of the sun until the animal matter has disappeared.

The excellence of the "green" ivory consists in its greater toughness, and in its growing whiter by age, instead of yellow, as in the case with the whiter varieties. Yet buyers of cutlery through ignorance of the qualities usually prefer the whiter kinds, which, on their account, are more in demand for the sheffield trade, and have more than doubled in price since 1870.

The sales of ivory occur every three months at London and Liverpool, and sales are also held to a limited extent and at irregular intervals at Rotterdam. At Liverpool, only ivory of the best quality and from the west coast of Africa is offered. Buyers from Germany and France and agents of America consumers attend these sales, and it is estimated that about one quarter whole amount goes to Sheffield, another quarter to London, and the other half to Germany, France and the United States.—*Chambers' Journal.*

"He Stands Fire."

As the late T. F. Shields, editor of the *British Workman*, was walking in the Strand one evening, he met a tall and fine looking man wearing the uniform of a soldier. After a few friendly words he said of him, "There is one thing about the British soldier I cannot understand." "What is that, sir?" inquired the son of Anak. "Well," rejoined Mr. Smithiny, "he's so bold and daring in fight and there is no such insult you can offer him as to call him a coward. He will rush to the cannon's mouth, if duty demands it, and yet he has not the courage to kneel down in the barrack-room and repeat the prayer that his good mother taught him." After a little pause, the soldier said, "That's true and yet there are exceptions. A young chap came into our room, and the first night he knelt down to pray before jumping into bed. Instantly there was a row. Caps and belts were flung at him, but he did not move. The second night he prayed again, and once more caps and belts were pitched at him, but the fellow didn't mind. The third night came. The men were worse than before; they jeered, laughed, whistled and yelled, but he prayed on. The fourth night found him again on his knees and the attack was about to be renewed, when the leader called out, 'Lads, let him alone, he stands fire!'" Young men, can you stand fire? In your case, the bullets may not be of lead, nor may the ammunition of the enemy consist of caps and belts, but can you endure ridicule, jeers, and scorn? If you are a weakling, a woman's sneer will frighten you out of what little Christianity you possess; but if you are a true man, a moral hero, an unyielding soldier of Jesus Christ, you will stand fire with resolute courage, knowing that to conquer temptation is to have double strength for the next encounter.

We want men to-day with true valor, great hearts, and splendid faith, men with a full, rich, versatile life, who, if they do not "scorn delights," are yet capable of living "laborious days." We meet everywhere the amiable lounger, the creature of the tailor and perfumer, the thing of collars, cuffs and curls, the

> "Man who would
> Be a woman if he could,
> But as he can't, does all he can
> To show the world he's not a man."

But it is only now and then that we see the stern uncompromising man with fearless chivalry, unswerving heroism and Samson-like strength.

In Everything give Thanks.

Perhaps there is no command in the Bible that puts the Christian more to the test than this. Life at best has much work and many burdens. Even in the majority in the world, whether in the pulpit or pew, the shop or the home, labor early and late with little compensation. For the mother it is the old round of daily care, the turning dresses inside out, planning, hoping, working after the children are asleep, till the father it is the constant work at the bench, on the farm, or over the counter, and the wearing competition of business, till the brain whirls and he longs for a place where he can sit alone for a moment and commune with himself. Life is not the rosy thing he looked out upon when he was a boy. He hardly finds time to look at a paper to see what the great busy world is doing around him. He is trying to do his duty. But is he giving God thanks? Is life a psalm of praise to him? Is he thankful for each day with its dark hours and struggles?

Perhaps we are in a way that is thoroughly unconscious as well as coming, and yet do we carry a merry heart that doeth good like a medicine? Perhaps we are with those who fail to appreciate our ability or effort. We and the world grasping and each one living for himself. Others step in to fill the places we had hoped to choose ourselves, even death, come to those who are dear to us, yet do we take all as from One who knows the end from the beginning, and do we in everything give thanks?

We are perhaps conscious of having made a failure on some public occasion where we had hoped to do ourselves great credit. Are we content to leave this with God if we have done our best? It is easy to be thankful for the successes of life, but is it a poor Christian living that is not thankful amid its ills.

What a world this would be if Christians lived up to this high privilege, consumed even, to be constantly thankful. In such a state of mind there is no gloom, no fault finding with the place where God puts us; no irritability, no envy that another has succeeded, no distrust, but sunshine and peace and hope. Let us take this for our motto for one week at least: "In every thing give thanks." It will be a short blessed week, and God will be honored.—*Congregationalist.*

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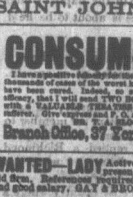

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