

THE SEMI-WEEKLY TELEGRAPH, ST. JOHN N. B., APRIL 11, 1903.

THE TELEGRAPH'S PULPIT.

'Jesus' Family Trouble,' the Theme of Rev. B. N. Nobles in Sermon to Our Readers Today.

Mark 6-4: 'A prophet is not without honor, but in his own country and among his own kin and in his own house.'

A range of hills extending east and west forms the northern boundary of the plain of Esdras. About half way from the Jordan to the Mediterranean there is a cleft in this range which soon widens into a little valley well nigh surrounded by hills. This is supposed to be the crater of an extinct volcano and built upon the side of one of these hills which rises some 500 feet above the valley, is the little town of Nazareth.

Such is the Nazareth of today as travellers describe it and such it was substantially when Joseph and Mary dwelt there 1900 years ago and reared their family. Here with his four brothers, James, Joseph, Simon and Judas and his two sisters whose names according to tradition were Esther and Thamar—here with these his half brothers and sisters and Joseph and Mary whom he doubtless called father and mother Jesus lived in sweet and loving harmony as boy in village school and later as carpenter in shop making yokes and plows and axes. If ever brothers and sisters lived together happily I judge these did.

The alienation began probably with his spending two months beyond Jordan where John was baptized when in the judgment of the family he should have been at home attending to his business in the carpenter shop. So far as we know Jesus was the only one of the family who went to hear this great prophet of the wilderness. After having been baptized of John in the Jordan, the sacred writer says the Holy Spirit descended upon him in the visible form of a dove as he was coming forth from the water, and forthwith led him into the wilderness where amid great temptations and without food Jesus endured for forty days.

They also suffered a great shock when that Sabbath day in the synagogue he read Isaiah 61-1-3 and publicly announced himself as the Messiah of whom the prophet spoke. Such pretensions seemed the acme of folly to his fellow-townsmen and doubtless seemed so to his brothers also. That he who had wrought with them in same shop, dwelt in same home, ate at same table—that he, their brother, good and true though he was, should be the Messiah of prophecy was beyond belief.

Later still, after spending some months in Galilee with his disciples in comparative retirement because of his waning popularity, his brothers seem to have gone so far as to cruelly mock him. John's explanation of their conduct is that they 'did not believe in him.' Thus the alienation continued and the breach widened until with the exception of Mary his family seems to have forsaken him altogether, leaving him to his fate. When in Gethsemane, when before Annas and Caiaphas and Herod Pilate, when on the cross dying, when laid in grave no brothers or sisters attended him. All alone he endured.

And how all this must have grieved him. Are not the sympathy and approval of those you love among the strongest stimulants to persist in the course one judges right? And what can tempt a gentle, affectionate soul to desert from his course like the opposition of loved ones. Think of Job trusting God in his trials while his wife bade him curse God and be and Whitfield stoned for his plain preaching and his wife bidding him lay the man and declare the whole counsel of God. Job was surely at a disadvantage compared with Whitfield. So far as it was possible for Jesus to feel temptation he must have been specially tempted to refrain himself. He saw his brothers and sisters were opposed to him and becoming alienated. It would have been hard enough for Jesus to bear the misunderstanding and unbelief and opposition of other men, but doubly so when James and Joseph and Simon and Judas—his own beloved brothers, are among the unbelieving ones.

The reconciliation, however, came at last for St. Luke writing about a protracted meeting which continued from the day of our Lord's ascension until Pentecost mentions among those present 'Mary, the mother of Jesus, and his brethren.' So it came to pass that his brethren did come to believe in him and their estrangement ceased. But the reconciliation came too late to be of service to Jesus in his hours of trial, too late to relieve and comfort his overstrained heart.

All those weary months he longed for the love and fellowship that had been withdrawn—longed to enter home as he once did and feel at ease, but the alienation of his brothers forbade him. Not until he had passed through his darkest way, suffered his keenest pangs and through faith entered into his glory did the estrangement and unbelief give place to faith and reconciliation. After his resurrection when it became noised out that he had risen and been seen of the disciples, I judge their unbelief began to give way, but his appearance unto his brother James set-

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ST. JOSEPH UNIVERSITY NEWS. St. Joseph, N. B., April 4.—Mrs. T. Burke, of St. John, who spent last week with her son, James, in our infirmary, returned home with him on Monday.

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