

The Quiet Hour.

REWARDS OF SERVICE.

And, behold, I come quickly, and thy reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be.—Rev. xxii: 12.

And every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor.—1 Cor. iii: 8.

A child's kiss
Get on thy sighing lips, shall make thee glad;
A poor man served by thee, shall make thee rich;
A sick man helped by thee, shall make thee strong.
Thou shalt be served thyself by every sense
Of service which thou renderest.

—E. B. Browning.

Though the highest motive for service is never the hope of reward, yet the rewards for faithful service are rich and sure as God's promises can make them. Our Master's last great promise to His faithful servants is that He is coming quickly, to reward "every man according as his work shall be." And that promise is intended to be an incentive to keep us from discouragement and weariness in well doing, "for, in due season, we shall reap, if we faint not." No one would put precious grain into the soil unless he hoped to get it back with interest. The hope of a harvest does inspire us to sow enthusiastically and untiringly.

See how true it is in every kind of work that "every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor." On the whole, people get on in this world if they deserve to prosper. A man who is steady and industrious, putting heart into his work, doing his best whether he expects pay or whether he is only a volunteer, is a success—at farm work or in any other business. And the woman who does her daily duty with cheery, energetic enthusiasm is also a success. And anyone who is working only for pay, and who never wants to do a hand's turn more than he is paid to do, will never win any success worth having. The rewards are sure to those who deserve them, but service rendered for the sake of reward only, is thin and scraggy and unpolished. It gets all the reward it deserves—but that is very little. Some people would tell us that the thought of reward should have absolutely no place in our religion. If that is really so, then it is a strange thing that God should hold rewards of all kinds continually before our eyes, both in the Bible and in the world. Read the Bible and see. In the first books we find a succession of promises addressed to those who keep God's commandments. There are promises of fruitful seasons and safety from enemies, wild beasts and pestilence; promises of corn and wine and oil, of flocks and herds and the blessing of children, and all good things are summed up in this comprehensive promise: "For this thing the LORD thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all that thou puttest thine hand unto." He promises to open the windows of heaven, and pour out such a blessing "that there shall not be room enough to receive it."

Look around in the world, and see whether this promise has been fulfilled. Think of the opposite side of the promise, think how a course of wilful sin leads straight down to misery and shame, loss of self-respect and loss of the respect of others. I heard the other day how a young man came out from England to learn farming, and found a comfortable home with a farmer, had every chance to prosper, had well-to-do friends who sent money to him often from England. If he had kept God's commandments he might have been living comfortably on a farm of his own by this time. But he started to loaf in bar-rooms, drank and

gambled, grew more and more unhappy, until at last he committed suicide, because he had made his life unendurable to himself. That is an extreme case, but it lifts the curtain to show how the path of careless self-indulgence goes swiftly down to misery and ruin. A man who sells his honor and righteousness for pleasure or money or worldly advancement, may grow rich, but he never wins for himself happiness worthy of the name. One must be on reasonably good terms with his conscience to be happy, for it is not pleasant to have one's conscience saying that one is a thief or a liar or lazy or cruel.

And let no one think that God has only promised rewards for service under the old covenant. Both the texts I have chosen to head our talk to-day are from the New Testament. One is the last message from our Lord Himself, spoken after His ascension. And they do not stand alone, for the promise that the King will return at the last to "reward every man according to his works" is repeated over and over again, both in direct sayings and veiled in parables. The laborers in the vineyard are paid at the end of the day—even those who only worked one hour receive a liberal reward. The sheep on the King's right hand receive a glorious reward for their kindness to the sick, the poor and the stranger; for they are invited to inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world. The young ruler was encouraged to the hard duty demanded of him—to sell all he had and give to the poor—by the promise: "Thou shalt have treasure in heaven." Those persecuted for Christ's sake are told to "rejoice, and leap for joy." Why? Because they are reminded of the reward: "for, behold, your reward is great in heaven." We are commanded to love our enemies and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again, but the command is instantly followed by the promise: "and your reward shall be great." In the last Book of the Scriptures, the promised rewards to those who overcome in the battle of life are many: A crown of life, the hidden manna, power over the nations, the morning star, relief from hunger and thirst, from pain and tears. The Sermon on the Mount—which sets before us the ideal of disinterested holiness—begins with a statement of promised rewards. The poor in spirit are to receive the "kingdom of heaven," the meek are to "inherit the earth," the merciful "shall obtain mercy," and so on. Those who give alms in secret shall be openly rewarded by God, while those who give "before men, to be seen of them," have no reward of your Father which is in heaven." Those who pray to the Father in secret are told: "Thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly"; and the same thing is said about fasting. Those who are forgiving will receive forgiveness, and those who "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness" are told that they need not be anxious about what they shall eat or drink or wear, because "all these things shall be added" unto them.

God's rewards seem to be often framed after the pattern of the law of retaliation—the merciful and forgiving are to obtain mercy and forgiveness, those who judge others harshly shall receive the same judgment, he who is considerate towards the weak or sick (see Psalm xli: 1—margin) finds the promise true that the LORD will "make all his bed in his sickness." So, also, the servant in our Lord's parable, who had gained ten pounds for his Master, was given authority "over ten cities," while the one who had only increased his one pound to five was only placed "over five cities."

I have tried to mention a few of the numberless rewards held up by God to encourage faithful service, because I think people often speak as though it were wrong to expect any return for their work. If it is unspiritual to sow seed in the hope of a harvest, why does God so constantly remind us that bread sown on the waters shall be found again after many days?

But the character of a man is plainly shown by the character of the reward he is looking for. One man would think a life of luxury and sensual pleasure a thing to be desired, while another would feel it a glorious reward for hard labor in teaching and preaching, if he were used by God as an instrument of bringing many souls out of darkness into light.

Those who are pure in heart rejoice over the wonderful promise that they shall "see God," while those who indulge in low and debasing thoughts would shrink away in terror from such a promise. Those who are really hungering and thirsting after righteousness, eagerly look forward to the promised reward that they "shall be filled," but that would be no reward at all to one who cared only for riches, or fame, or sensual pleasures.

God pays good wages, even here and now. The little act of loving service rendered, brings instant joy to the one who serves—if it is really done from a kind motive. The reward seems to work automatically; the motive, if it is true and sincere, touches the spring, and joy drops into the heart. God cannot be deceived, and He does not give joy if the act of service is done selfishly or vain-gloriously.

Look back at the verse with which this paper began, and you will see how the reward fits the service. He that watereth shall be watered also himself, he that scatters happiness in the path of others finds happiness springing in his own path—God sees to that. Those who pour out their lives in the service of God, without thinking of a reward here or hereafter, find that a wonderful joy is like wine in their veins. Give unstintingly to the King, and He will give like Solomon to the Queen of Sheba, "whatsoever she asked, beside that which Solomon gave her of his royal bounty."

Francis of Assisi tried the plan of giving up everything for Christ's sake, and his wonderful joy was so deep and infectious that it is an inspiration to the world still.

Joy is the reward bestowed on those who can echo the words of the Psalmist: "I remember Thee upon my bed, and meditate on Thee in the night watches"; for they can say with him, "in the shadow of Thy wings will I rejoice."

Joy is not the portion of one who yields a half-hearted, unwilling service, but it "gathers like a radiant, fostering, cheering air around the soul that yields itself to the grace of God, to do His holy, loving will."

But, as the motive is the reality, and an act is good or bad according to the spirit which inspires it, God generally tests the motive severely. Honesty is the best policy, and truthfulness pays, in the end, far better than deceit; but neither God nor men respect one who is only honest and truthful when it seems likely to pay best—for that is not honesty or truth at all, but simply worldly wisdom. Joseph held fast to his integrity, though his horror of sin led him straight to a shameful imprisonment. God tested his motives very severely, and then heaped riches and honor on him, because he deserved them and had proved himself strong enough to bear prosperity. Daniel and his three friends were true to their principles, even when such determination seemed to be very poor policy, certain to result in a terrible death. They served the true God, without any prospect of reward, they stood the awful test splendidly, and then He poured out all the riches of His favor openly upon them for all the world to see.

But those who choose God's service as their first object in life do not always prosper so openly. If they did, we could all walk by sight, and the necessity for faith would be done away. But why do people want to be rich? Is it not because they expect to be able to buy happiness with money? And God can take a short cut to happiness, giving it to his beloved children without money and without price. Look back on life, and see whether your happiest moment were bought with money. The heart can leap with joy in a log hut just as easily as in a palace. The mother who presses her first-born child to her breast has just as much gladness under a low roof as under a high one. God knows the human heart, knows its capacity for wonderful gladness, and also the heavy-weighted misery it can endure. If you see one of His saints called to endure pain or poverty or sorrow, do not hastily judge that He is withholding the reward due for faithful service. Nero was infinitely more unhappy than the faithful Christians he tortured and killed, and one who really loves and serves God carries within him a secret spring of joy that pain and sorrow cannot quench—a joy that no millionaire can buy with all his money. But joy is scarce in this world of rush

and sorrow and sin. Only here and there we see people whose faces shine with this inner light of joy, every day and all day. How attractive such a face is, even though it may have little beauty of feature or complexion!

But why is joy scarce? Is it not because very few people make the service of God their real business and object in life? Nearly everyone wants to do right, I suppose. Most people are honest and truthful and Godfearing, but is not their religion very often secondary to their business, from Monday morning to Saturday night, and even a good part of Sunday? Those who lay each hour of life at the Master's feet, asking Him what He wants them to do in that hour, and leaving all their anxieties in His hands, cannot fail to be happy. Does He give them pain to endure? Well, that is their business, and they rejoice to endure manfully for His sake. Does He send failure or disappointment? They go on bravely, knowing that results are in His keeping and that whatever He chooses is best. It is very easy to preach, is it not? Please don't think that I am always true to my name, that I always accept God's will in unquestioning trust, and always keep the morning joy undimmed until evening. No, I fail to practice what I preach, so often, that I should hardly dare to preach at all except that I can't keep good tidings to myself when God gives me such a grand opportunity to publish them.

But I can see plainly that when my joy grows dim, it is my own fault. It is because my service has been lukewarm, my prayers cold and careless, and my trust in God's presence and in His wise, loving care has failed. God has never once failed to pour joy into my heart when my will has really been laid in complete surrender before Him. Happiness and joy are not the same thing. Those who turn their backs on happiness, sacrificing their own wishes for love's sake, do not always find that God gives them back the happiness they have given up—but He does give a mysterious, secret joy that can sweeten the bitterest cup and brighten the darkest cloud of sorrow. God's rewards for service need not be waited for, they are hidden in the service: "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint."

"Lord, with what courage and delight
I do each thing,
When Thy least breath sustains my wing!
I shine and move
Like those above,
And with much gladness
Quitting sadness,
Make me fair days of every night."
HOPE.

THE COMMON THINGS.

Let me get not far from the common road,
With all around me, the common things;
Let me feel the nip of the Winter's cold;
The quiver and stir of budding Spring;
The Summer's heat, and the Autumn's lull;
And a sense of the old world beautiful.

Let me hear the children about the house;
No sermon so great in all the land—
Let me greet the glance of an earnest eye.
The cheerful clasp of a toiling hand;
Let me linger where throbs the heart of Life,
And where hope and valor mark the strife.

Be deaf my ears to the siren notes
That lure to vain and glittering peaks,
Where seldom the feet of mortals tread,
And only a frigid nature speaks;
The great sun glints from their chilly spires,
To kindle in gentle vales his fires.

Let me find true rest in weariness;
Let me know the worth of the grime of things;
And face, clear-eyed, the struggling days
That come with bruises, but not with stings.
The Just One ruleth this Vast Estate:
Shall I count that little which He makes great?
—Julian A. DuBois.