

Devotional Service.

By Rev. T. J. PARR, M.A.

APRIL 13—"GIVING: ITS LAW, ITS REFLEX INFLUENCE"

2 Cor. 8: 1-5; 9: 6, 7; 1 Cor. 16: 1, 2.

HOME READINGS.

Mon., Apr. 7. Quiet charity Matt. 6: 1-4
Tues., Apr. 8. From what one has Mark 12: 14-22
Wed., Apr. 9. Liberal giving Job 31: 14-22
Thurs., Apr. 10. Rewards of giving Ps. 37: 21-27
Fri., Apr. 11. Blessing and harvest Job 38: 6-22
Sat., Apr. 12. More blessed to give Acts 20: 28-35

The League meeting this week should have for its main object the consideration of systematic and proportionate giving. One of the things most needed by the Church to-day is the consecration of the pocket-book. Talking with an experienced Recording Steward some time ago, we were lamenting the existence of church debts, and the difficulty of raising the money necessary to meet the expenses of church management. This layman stated as the leading cause of the state of things in question, as follows: "The people don't give." He stated that out of a membership of 600 in the church he represented, there were only \$50 giving weekly through the envelope. If this is a sample case, and there is no reason to believe that it is exceptional, it is a lamentable condition to exist in the great Methodist Church in Canada. And it is time that loyal young Methodists were considering the important subject of systematic and proportionate giving to the cause of God, and the vital relation between the prosperity of the Church and the consecrated givings of the people. It is true that nearly every church, if not every one, has its number of liberal supporters; but the number who give "as God has prospered them" is far too small. Very few give a fair proportion of their income, and give it regularly. If all members of the Church, and all professing Christians would recognize their duty and enjoy their privilege in this regard, there would be no serious difficulty in the financial management of the Church.

LOOK AT YOUR NEIGHBORS.

Comparisons are sometimes helpful. Think of this, young people. We are Protestants, and claim an open Bible, and freedom from priestly dictatorship. But should we be less loyal and responsive to the call of God and the Church because of this? Should not the qualities of loyalty and responsiveness to righteous appeal be all the more operative in us because of our Protestant principles? The Roman Church appears to have from its adherents the necessary means for the successful financial operation of its ecclesiastical enterprise. Romanists feel and recognize the claims of the Church as not only important, but vital. We may not endorse the methods which secure their riches, but must admire their faithfulness, and should profit by it as an example. Submission to efficient leadership, practical endorsement of methods of work, financial support of Church claims—these are things much needed now in Methodism. Shall not our young people rise to the occasion, honor themselves, and prove loyal to Christ and the Church by a recognition of these essential elements in Church progress and prosperity?

HOW TO BEGIN.

Begin by remembering that you are not your own. As a Christian, what you

have, as well as what you are, is the outcome of the goodness of God. In the eyes of your Lord you do not absolutely own anything. You are but a steward of the gifts of the Creator. After you have done with them, you cannot take them with you. Some one else becomes the steward of that over which you have been overseer. While a steward of God's gifts, you must exercise just and skilful management. You must give back to the owner a portion of his own for the establishment of the owner's kingdom. You are called upon to maintain the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." This should be done in the spirit of love for the owner who has entrusted you with his gifts, and allows you so much a share of them for your own well-being. And even in the proportion you return, you are really edifying yourself, and providing for your present and eternal welfare. In the light of this solemn truth, you should each ask yourself the question, "How much owest thou unto my Lord?"

THE SPIRIT OF GIVING.

The passage in Mark referring to the widow's contribution (Mark 12: 41-44) enforces the truth of our subject. The treasury in front of the sanctuary, into which the widow and the other worshippers put their givings, consisted of thirteen brazen chests, called trumpets, from their peculiar shape, swelling out below, and tapering upward with a narrow mouth or opening, into which the contributions were put. The money given was for the sacrifices and the giving was voluntary. Here we see the true spirit of Christian giving—it is voluntary. Offerings to God are not forced, as civic taxes are, by the strong arm of the law: they are the outcome of a willing mind and a loving heart—a mind made willing by knowledge of the divine claims, a heart made loving by reciprocating of affection. "We love him, because he first loved us." As Jesus sat by the treasury, he beheld how the people presented their offerings. He was not only interested in the amount, but chiefly, as the narrative indicates, in the manner and spirit of the giving.

A DOUBLE COMMENDATION.

Jesus appears to have commended the widow for two things: (a) Because her offering, like all the others, was voluntary. And if any one had good reason for not giving anything that day—the time of the free-will offering—surely the widow was that person! for her entire means amounted to one farthing, about two-dinns of a cent in our money. But she did not allow her poverty to prevent her privilege of giving to God. (b) Because, although poor, she gave what she could. She did not say to herself, "My farthing will look very small by the side of the gold coins of the rich people. It won't help much at best. It isn't worth putting in. Some one will laugh at me when they hear the farthing drop into the trumpet. I think I won't give. Let those rich men support the temple." If she had said this, as many poor people say in effect these days, she would have deprived herself of a personal help, the treasury of some needed help, would have lost the eulogium of her Saviour, and the famous farthing would never have been immortalized. (c) Because it was love which prompted the gift. The value of the offering in our Saviour's estimation was enhanced, no doubt, by the spirit of love for God and his cause which the gift conveyed. Christ's teaching is, let every one give something, and let that something indicate loving sacrifice for the great cause of Christ and the Church. The motive, the intent, is the leading factor in determining the character of any act of service done for our Lord.

HOW MUCH TO GIVE.

Well, the tithes which the Jew gave for religious purposes represented but a small portion of his gifts to God. There were many demands for charity which he was expected to meet. First of all, his gift was the tenth. That he must give. And if the Jew with his limited religious advantages and blessings as compared with those of the Christian, gave his tenth to the cause of God, should we in the blaze of Gospel light and privilege give less? Think of it, young people! In asking how much we should give for the Lord's work, Christ himself has given an answer. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself." This does not necessarily imply a tenth or a twentieth, but as much as will call for sacrifice. If each follower of Christ would honestly apply this test, would measure his giving by this rule, Christ's ministers would never lack support, nor his work suffer for funds.

POINTS FOR THE PRESIDENT.

Make this a practical business meeting—business from the standpoint of the Lord's claim upon our givings. Make clear that giving is as much a religious exercise as praying, or reading the Bible. It is a religious act attended, as such, by God's blessing. Show that the Church is hampered in its work by the failure of the people to support its enterprises. Urge the young people to begin at once to give a proportion of their earnings or income to the Lord. It might be interesting to ask answers to the question from all present: "How much do you give weekly for the Lord's work?"

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APRIL 20—"HOW CAN I KNOW THAT I AM SAVED?"

John 8: 32; 1 John 3: 14; Rom. 8: 1-5; 1 John 4: 7.

HOME READINGS.

Mon., Apr. 14. Salvation from what? Eph. 2: 1-17
Tues., Apr. 15. Salvation—how? Luke 19: 1-19
Wed., Apr. 16. Salvation—for whom? Acts 2: 32-39
Thurs., Apr. 17. Salvation—results for whom? John 5: 1-17
Fri., Apr. 18. Salvation—results for whom? John 5: 1-17
Sat., Apr. 19. Salvation accepted Titus 2: 3-7

It is reasonable to suppose that when a man forsakes sin and gives his heart and life to God, he will have some evidence that his offering is accepted. The deluded worshippers of ancient Greece and Rome, after praying to some idol, would wait a reply, and having heard the answer from the gods, they supposed to be the lips of the god, would depart, satisfied that their petition had been heard. Not deluded as these ancients were, we are sure from certain testimony that our prayer has been answered of God, that he has accepted us as his followers, and that we have the privilege of sons of the highest.

In other words, it is possible to know beyond the possibility of mistake that we are Christians. It would be strange if it were not so! Must we go wearily through this world without the assurance that God has accepted us, that we are in Christ come to him? Must we be forever uncertain whether or not our peace is made with God, and that all is well for the present, and for the future?

We present for the consideration and comfort of the young people certain truths and reflections from the Word of God, which will lead us to the restful conclusion, the joyous assurance that "We know that we have passed from death unto life."

We shall consider four things:

1. The assurance of God's Word.
2. The testimony of our own spirit.
3. The testimony of God's Spirit.
4. How may we distinguish the true witness from the delusion?