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The Perception of Values.

THE passage describing the tribute paid by Mary of Bethany to our Lord at the beginning of the last week of His life, sets in the sharpest contrast the different perception of values entertained by different persons. To Mary, three hundred pence—the wages of a laboring man for an entire year—were nothing, if she might use them to manifest the devotion of her heart. To Judas, thirty pieces of silver—the legal value of a slave—were so precious that for them he was willing to betray Christ into the hands of His enemies.

Our perception of values depends upon what is first in our regard. Every day we see men sacrificing money and comfort and health for the sake of reputation and position; we see those devoted to literature and art surrendering many of the things others prize in order that they may give themselves more completely to these pursuits. The votaries of fashion have their own standards, and the possession and command of money is the chief end to which many subordinate everything else. Mary of Bethany is consistent with her own ideals in subordinating treasure to affection. Judas acts in accordance with his standards in making honor and loyalty secondary to a trivial selfish gain.

Our ministers and teachers and parents render young people a most important service when they inspire them to adopt the worthiest standards by which to estimate values. The issues of life are involved in that. The tendencies that uplift men or degrade them have their root in these ideals. Make what is called "success," the amassing of money and the attainment of position, the chief end of a young man or woman's life, and you will invariably develop some phase of the Judas type of character. Make truth and honor and loyalty to the best spiritual impulses the standard, and the Mary type of character will result. Perhaps there are few lessons more pertinent to our own times in America than just this. Every community has noble men and women, who illustrate devotion to the best ideals, but the set and drift of modern life is toward a worship of material success. The men that fill the public eye are those who have done best by themselves in gaining power and in building up great fortunes. A Collis P. Huntington fills the newspapers, and his name is on all lips. Cyrus Hamlin, who passed away about the same time, is dismissed with barest mention, and yet Hamlin's life was full of usefulness and achievement. And in natural and acquired qualities—in generalship, and grasp and enterprise, he was the superior of Huntington.

Is it not singular that the tragedy of the New Testament should centre about a man whose master impulse was the love of money? We are apt to think that sins of the flesh or of a passionate nature are the worst. The great dramatists pivot their representations on these passions; but the sins of passion arise from the misdirection of impulses that in their true development produce the noblest life. On the other hand, the love of money, avarice, the habit that weighs everything in the scales of dollars and cents, the materialistic temper that sees nothing in life worth having that money cannot buy, are almost hopelessly evil. Covetousness alone of sins is identified with "idolatry," because, as Marcus Dods says, there is more choice in it than in sins of the flesh, it is more a sin of the will and of the whole man unresisting. Above all others, it proves that the man in his heart is choosing the world and not God.

To preach effectively the preacher must know his people and their necessities. To know them he must visit them on proper occasions, and talk with them. He need not cultivate too great intimacy or familiarity, but he should become so related to his people that in any case of difficulty or trial he would be looked upon as a sympathetic and trustworthy friend and adviser.

Personal Influence.

ONE of the prominent moral reflections, suggested by the book of Esther, relates to the use of personal influence. The passage sets before us the beautiful Esther, raised to the dizzy height of an Oriental throne, lavishing her resources of winsomeness and persuasion to induce Ahasuerus to reverse the letters devised by Haman to destroy the Jews. Her plea was completely successful, and Queen Esther, through her influence with the king, became the savior of her people.

Much is written and said about the responsibilities of wealth, but we do not always realize that these principles apply equally to our responsibility for influence. We constantly put this matter on too low a level. We think of influence under the form of example. We say that we should not do this and that and the other because it will set a bad example; because those who are weaker than we will imitate us in what it is perfectly right for us to do, but it would be injurious for them to do. In enforcing upon Christians the duty of setting a good example, some narrow-minded people make the whims and prejudices of the weakest members of the community the final standard for the conduct of all men. We clear away a multitude of misconceptions when we stop thinking about example and think about influence. That transfers the whole matter from the negative realm to the positive. It is not merely the duty of the Christian to avoid the course of life that might directly or indirectly injure others; it is his calling to make the total influence of his life helpful, constructive, and inspiring to others. We do not say that a man uses his wealth aright when he simply avoids doing evil with it. He is bound to use that great force for helpfulness and the promotion of righteousness. It is precisely the same with the powers of personality. To avoid setting a bad example is better than nothing, but the vital Christian seeks to make example, personal force and influence a blessing and an inspiration to others. That is the heart of this story of Esther. She had influence, and she used it to the full, at the gravest peril to herself, to thwart a wicked plot.

But we are not merely to use our influence with others for their good and to promote worthy causes,—we are called to cultivate and extend our influence in order that we may have it to exert. We may well believe that Esther did not spare any resource of womanly art to gain ascendancy over the mind of the King. Men cultivate assiduously their influence with others to further their own ambitions and pretensions. The followers of Christ are called to use their skill in conversation, social attention, the tact and charm that gain human hearts, to win those hearts to Christ. We say much about the fact that if the money Christian people spend on their luxuries and pride and ambition were diverted to distinctively Christian service, the conversion of the world would be hastened; but it is also true that if some of the tact and patience and art, that we spend in gaining one another's favor for wholly temporary purposes, were spent in winning men to Christ, our communities would be far more rapidly Christianized. Occasionally we hear sermons on "Using One's Influence for Christ;" but the point is often missed that we ought not merely to use our influence, but to be making new influence that we can use in Christian service.

A New York church committee, looking for a pastor, made application to a minister whom I thought might suit them. They were evidently thinking of the transaction as a business one, pure and simple, for they desired the minister to let them know "the lowest terms" for which he would give "two eloquent and instructive" sermons each Sunday; and one secular lecture in the middle of the week. It is because this spirit enters so much into the relation between pastor and people that so little good is done.

Christ's Call to Sinners.

A MINER having heard the Gospel preached, after the service waited and said to the minister, "Did not you say I could have the blessing now?" "Yes, my friend," was the reply. "Then," said the man, "pray with me, for I am not going away without it." And he sought and found Christ. The next day a terrible accident occurred in the mine, and this very miner was in the thick of it, and only had time to bear witness that the *now* of yesterday was the comfort of the trial of today, and he passed away triumphantly. "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation."—*Exchange.*

Personal Service.

A MISSIONARY meeting was held in a certain town. Addresses were given describing the need of more men to go, more money to be given, more prayers to be said. Then the collecting plates were passed round and the contents duly counted over. There were banknotes, gold, silver and pence, a goodly pile. But among them was a card on which a young man at the back of the room had written one word besides his name. What was the word? "Myself." Yes, that was the young man's offering—his youth and health and strength, his time, his heart, his love—in a word, *himself*—to the service of God.—*The Times.*

Firm Faith.

"SOME years ago," said a captain, "I was sailing by the island of Cuba when a cry rang out through the ship, 'Man overboard!' I immediately threw a rope over the ship's stern, crying out to the man to seize it. The sailor caught the rope just as the vessel passed him. He was then drawn up and rescued, but he had grasped the rope with such firmness that it took hours before his hold relaxed and his hand separated from it, and such eagerness had he shown that the strands of the rope had become imbedded in the flesh of his hands." Even so we must cling firmly to the rope of faith which is the link between us sinners and the Captain of our salvation.—*The Times.*

His Prayer for the Children's Corps.

IN all the literature of sacred experience that has grown around that child's prayer of the Christian world, "Now I lay me down to sleep," etc., we have seen few narratives more affecting than this; it was told by the pastor of St. John's Church, New York. "Part of the wall of a barn house," he said, "had fallen on a six or seven year old boy, and terribly mangled him. Living in the neighborhood, I was called in to see the stricken household.

"The little sufferer was in intense agony. Most of his ribs were broken, his breastbone was crushed, and one of his limbs fractured in two places.

"His breathing was short and difficult. He was evidently dying. I spoke a few words to him of Christ, the ever-present and precious Friend of children, and then, with his mother and older sister, knelt before his bed. Short and simple was our prayer. Holding the lad's hand in mine, I repeated the children's gospel:

"Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven."