

be worked upon; not of my power, but of your faith in me, without which almighty power can do nothing. Christ came to an unbelieving generation. If the suppliant father lacked faith, in this he was like the Scribes and apostles themselves. The age lacked faith. It is difficult to believe in a skeptical time, when the very atmosphere is of doubt. Yet in such a time faith is not less indispensable. Tearful anxiety of parents is a hopeful sign for children. Faith springs strong in the soil which tearful prayer has watered. Another indication is the readiness of his reply: "Lord, I believe." Ready faith is strong faith. And is not another indication in the very words: "Help thou mine unbelief?" In the humility of this cry is there not at the least the promise of great faith? Self-confidence shows a lack of faith in God. Self-distrust is a mark of faith. The result indicates that the faith of the man was great.

LESSON XII.]

[JUNE 18.

THE CHILD-LIKE BELIEVER.

MARK ix. 39-50.

WE follow the Master into the house at Capernaum. The disciples seat themselves about him; he calls a child who is playing near. At the word, the little fellow runs up, the small arms come up to meet his and twine about his neck, he lifts the boy and holds him there with strong and tender embrace. From this guileless, loving heart, the Master teaches lessons which the Church has ever since been struggling to learn and practice.

I. *Humility* was the first lesson taught from this living text. In Matthew's account we read, "Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven." Those were earnest and true-hearted men to whom he spoke. They had left all to follow him—all except themselves. But because of this self-love, their very devotion to the Master was an occasion for new ambitions. What honours and authority they should have in his kingdom, made a large part of their thought and conversation. This was not the first time, nor the last, in which they discussed the question. The most solemn or tender

scenes could not drive it away. But the spirit was all wrong; unless they got rid of it, they would lose the kingdom. So Jesus holds up the child as a picture of simple-hearted devotion, free from all self-consciousness and self-seeking. They were like the planets, each revolving on its own axis while circling the sun; he was like the moon, whose very motion is ruled by its central orb. Watch him; he cares nothing for their strifes, cannot understand their ambitions. If told of their disputes, he would have said wonderingly, "Isn't it enough to have Jesus?" He came at no threat or promise; the Lord wanted him, that was enough. To look into his face, to cling about his neck, filled his heart so full that no room was left for self.

II. *Service* goes hand in hand with humility. Consciousness of power, jealousy, ambition, might seem the best stimulants to exertion. But no thoroughly noble and helpful work was ever done in a spirit of rivalry and self-seeking. "If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all and servant of all." The words may be a warning of the abasement which waits for the proud, but their plain purpose here is to show the true way of greatness in the kingdom of Christ. Pride serves those who minister to its greatness. Humble love seeks those who most need its blessing; and yet this lowliness has the secret of success. As the artist took the bits of stained glass which other workmen had thrown away, and made from them a window whose translucent splendors surpassed all the rest; so Christ with the refuse of humanity, formed a Church whose divine glory shames in the contrast all other organizations. How narrow and short-lived are human societies and nations, compared with the Church of Christ! How contemptible besides it are socialistic and Utopian schemes. Statesmanship builds greatness on wealth and arms and diplomacy; it will sanction gambling, protect slavery, crush empires into dependencies, and ruin a nation with opium to replenish a treasury. Christianity gathers the deceased into its hospitals, and lays down life to carry salvation to the sinful. Love, which blesses the lowliest, serves most nobly.