

Our Young People

"The Trivial Round, the Common Task."

Topic for April 23: "How Christ makes use of Common Lives."—Luke 14: 12-16.

For Dominion Presbyterian.

Common Lives.

By Woodford.

Superstition in us, which is blindness and not religion, which is seeing, makes us to look for a sign, for the miraculous, for the extraordinary. To those who see, every common bush is afire with God. So much of what we call common or unclean is anything but this; and in considering this Topic, if the ideal rather than the actual be thought of, in all cases "common lives" will be the exception, and by no means the rule, as we too often make it. There is too much looking at life and man and the universe from the human, the finite side merely. This indeed will be so, just so long as in our beholding of these the seen and temporal only is what is beheld; the place whereon we stand shall be known as holy, life and man and the universe as of God, when to our beholding we bring a conception of the unseen and eternal. Thus every day shall be radiant with a divine light; every deed dignified by a divine purpose; every life lifted out of itself by a divine power and love. What proof we have of this in the Readings for the week.

Topic.—Notice in this heading the wisdom of Him whom we believe to be able to make such perfect use of common lives. Neither the house where the Passover was to be kept, nor the owner was to be named beforehand within the hearing of Judas. Two common men—so their fellow-citizens in all likelihood regarded them—Peter and John, who in Jesus' hands are being fashioned into heroes, are being changed from character to character, are sent into the city. In Jerusalem they would meet a common man—manifestly a servant—carrying a pitcher of water, a common errand. Him they were to follow until they reached the house whither he went; then they were to deliver His message to the master—not to ask for the upper chamber, but for the hostelry or hall (if an apartment, a common one; certainly not the best). He who was born in a hostelry, katalyma, was content to ask for His last meal, in a katalyma. As the result of this, and of His life and death, how many ones unknown here, common people, may we not expect to see in high places in his Father's house of many mansions. And

here, surely, while we are about the common tasks, we may be leaders to the upper room for many a soul. Is it not enough to make life for us a continual prayer to think that such as were Peter and John may be following us, silently but enquiringly, in the way we are travelling. Who will dare call his or her life common, when there is such a possibility.

Monday—Obedient. These men, by obedience to Christ, were raised from a lower to a higher fishing as David was from a lower to a higher feeding. (Ps. 78: 70-72.) Note His patience with our commonness, which makes us stubborn and to hide behind our weakness. The first call for Peter, James and John is recorded in John 1: 35-42; the second in this reading; the third in Luke 5: 1-11.

Tuesday—Loving. Matthew was not only a publican, but of the lowest kind, according to the Jews; one who himself stood at his custom-house, not great as he would have been counted had he employed substitutes. He was indeed a common individual of the most heartily despised and hated class of people among the Jews at this time. His being called by Jesus was the gain not of Matthew alone, but of all such poor and needy ones in Israel; and will not some say who read this, of all sinners among men. What may not be called clean, who may not be saved, if to one who was counted of the lowest and as altogether common and unclean, the Saviour's invitation is given. This most common man was fitted to write the life of Christ! Verily, they that long for, hunger and thirst after righteousness, shall be filled.

Wednesday—Loving. At the bidding and with the far-seeing inspiration of love they, whom we might call common women, were made famous. The love of a woman led her to anoint Him for His burying, when she merely did what her devoted love prompted her to do. The love of women led some of them to walk the sorrowful way with Him, when strong men had fled. The leading and strong, sweet compulsion of love it was that made them do wiser and kindlier things than did those who sought to reason all out ere they acted. Love truly is master of all arts and puts it into human hearts the strangest things to say and do. Love can hope and be kindly, and act wisely, where reason would despair. There's beggary

in the love that can be reckoned; but where love is large, on that life is the impress of Christ—never to be called common.

Thursday—Dutiful. Dr. Phillip was sent for, on one occasion, to go to a little village in an out-of-the-way corner of his great diocese in India, to baptize and receive into church fellowship some sixty or seventy adult converts from Hindooism. He went very gladly, examined them, and decided it wise to baptize them all. At the commencement of the proceedings he had noticed a boy about fifteen years of age sitting in a back corner, looking very anxiously and listening very wistfully. He now came forward "What, my boy, do you want to join the church?" "Yes, sir." "But you are very young, and if I were to receive you into fellowship with the church to-day, and then you were to slip aside, it would bring discredit upon this church and do great injury to the cause of Christ. I shall be coming this way again in about six months. Now you be very loyal to the Lord Jesus Christ during that time, and if, when I come again at the end of the half-year I find you still steadfast and true, I will baptize and receive you very gladly." No sooner was this said than all the people rose to their feet, and some speaking for the rest, said, "Why, sir, it is he that has taught us all that we know about Jesus Christ." And so it turned out to be. This was the little minister of the little church, the honored instrument in the hand of God of saving all the rest for Jesus Christ.

Friday and Saturday—Giving our Best. What stops our despair in this seemingly common life of ours is that we know from the Master's point of view, not what we do, but what we would do is it that exalts us. Knowing this, and encouraged by the incident of the widow's mite, what life is so common that it may not be, out of its littleness, made to be forever famous. It is paltry and faithless of us to worry over what we cannot do; it is mean of us to withhold the little because the amount of our money and the extent of our work will not receive the praise of men. There is need only of the cheerful giver and the 5,000 shall be fed; and by even two mites those who seek chiefly the praise of men will be put to shame, and the spirit of the Gospel made to be as a fire fanned by a strong wind.

Again, if ours be a position such as was that of the goodman of the house when he was asked for his hostelry, let us give Jesus the Upper Room—the best we have. So in the common routine of common life, being obedient, longing for light, loving, being dutiful, doing and giving our best, Christ will make such use of our common lives that they shall become so great as to have to go out from ourselves and be hid with Him in God.