

The Quiet Hour

Rev. Canon G. OSBORNE TROOP, M.A.

THE WALK TO EMMAUS.

THE inestimable privilege of walking with God is wonderfully pictured in the walk to Emmaus. Cleopas and his unknown friend little dreamed, as they set out from the Holy City on their 7½ mile walk, that they were to be accompanied by their Risen Lord. But He knew they were going, and His love planned for them a sweet surprise. When as a seeming stranger He "drew near, and went with them," they were communing with each other under the shadow of their great sorrow, and carrying in their desolate hearts a buried hope. But even before they knew Him, His presence turned their sorrow into joy. By simple and natural questions He drew from them their sad story of the Crucifixion, with the despairing concession—"We hoped that it was He which should redeem Israel."

Then He took up the story with the startling exclamation—"O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe, after all that the prophets have spoken! Behoved it not the Messiah to suffer these things, and to enter into His Glory?" And thus began the matchless Bible Lesson, which was to make for them the Old Testament shine with "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ." How little we realize that Christ and the first Christians preached the Gospel from the Old Testament, and how few of us can do it even now!

To the Divine Teacher the Jewish Scriptures were the Supreme Court of Appeal. "Beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. And during all this time, though their hearts were burning while He talked with them by the way, and opened to them the Scriptures, yet "their eyes were holden that they should not know Him." "And they drew nigh to the village, whither they were going," and with the delicacy of a perfect gentleman "He made as though He would go further." But they could not bear to let Him go, "and they constrained Him, saying, 'Abide with us for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.' And He went in to abide with them." Then came the open revelation. "It came to pass, when He had sat down with them to meat, He took the loaf, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew Him, and He vanished out of their sight."

As new men, their hearts overflowing with eager joy, "they rose up that very hour," and hurried all the way back to Jerusalem to make known to the rest of their company their wonderful experience. In one sense they two went back to the city alone. He was no longer visibly with them. But, after all, He was still as really their companion, as when first He "drew near and went with them." Never again would they walk without Him. His "Real Presence" had become to them a perpetual and abiding reality. What fresh light it all threw upon His memorable words—"Where two . . . are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them!" Aye, and the humblest individual believer is never really alone. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love." "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

Men judge us, by our actions, God by our motives.

There is no reason why the flight of time should mean the flight of happiness. Each changing period of life, like each changing season, holds its own peculiar joys and beauties. Though the years take much away, they also have much to give us. How many of our fearful outlooks would grow bright if only we realized what we profess to believe—that the God of the past is also the God of the future! "He will never leave nor forsake." Trust Him!

REV. T. H. IBBOTT.

The Bible Lesson

Rev. Canon Howard, M.A., Montreal, P.Q.

Third Sunday after Epiphany, January 25th, 1920.

Subject: How John the Baptist Prepared the Way, St. Luke 3: 1-20.

1. High Sounding Names. What an impressive array of names we find in the beginning of this lesson! Students searching in old volumes can discover something about them, but the ordinary man knows nothing of them. St. John the Baptist's name is known, and his works are known wherever the Gospel has gone throughout the world. Besides that, the influence of John still lives. Why is this contrast? Because the power and authority of John was moral and spiritual and because of his deep, true loyalty to Jesus Christ. *Moral and spiritual power is enduring.*

2. St. John's preaching. He preached the primary things, Baptism, Repentance, Remission of Sins, these were his themes. They are great and fundamental. He told the people to turn away from sin and to seek the forgiveness of God. He also directed them to be baptized as a sign and seal of repentance and forgiveness. Christian Baptism his superseded the baptism of John. Together with repentance and faith it is one of the primary things in the Christian religion and we have no right to separate it from them or to regard it as unnecessary. (See Heb. 6: 1-2.)

3. His appeal to the prophets. The quotation is from Isaiah 40: 3-5. The central idea of John's ministry is that of preparation. He was the forerunner to announce the coming King. The message he brought was a warning to be prepared for the King's appearing. In speaking of the wilderness he meant the barren waste of Jewish life in his day. He tried to awaken these people to a realization of how unready they were to meet their long-expected Messiah.

4. The response to his preaching. There were multitudes who came to hear him. They were also moved by his words and presented themselves for his baptisms. Some among them were sincere but, from verses 7, 8 and 9, we judge that many lacked true repentance and regarded the baptism as a ceremonial act which many were seeking.

St. John's words to such were strong and very stern. He pointed out to them two truths. (1) He declared that fruits worthy of repentance are the only proof of a true repentance. Repentance will show in amendment of life and in no other way. (2) He indicated that they had no hereditary exemption from the necessity of repentance, amendment of life and baptism. That they were descended from Abraham would not save them. There are no privileged classes with God. He regardeth not the persons of men but to all alike He sends the offer of His grace. This was a hard saying for these proud Jews but one which they greatly needed.

5. Practical religion. When St. John told them these things and that they were like a tree with the axe already touching its roots, as the woodman measures his first blow, they began to ask what they must do. What are the fruits worthy of repentance? He first spoke generally, as in verse 11, on the need of practical goodness and helpfulness. Publicans or tax gatherers and also soldiers asked about their special cases and St. John directed them as to the kind of conduct which would agree with the new and better life to which they felt themselves called. Religious experience does need outward expression. Fruits must come as the result of more abundant life.

6. Pointing to the Christ. The message of John the Baptist so stirred the people that they wondered if he were the Christ. St. John, therefore, directed them to the coming One and stated his own unworthiness in comparison. He spoke of Christ as baptizing with the Holy Ghost and with fire and also indicated the fact of judgment and separation which must ensue from the presence of the Lord. Many other things not here recorded (vs. 18) he also said in preaching to them the good tidings. He did not hesitate to denounce the sins of the powerful Herod. John was indeed the greatest of the prophets. No fear of man ever kept him from declaring the truth.

When You Come To Think Of It

By DOWNEASTER

IT is hard to realize that we have entered upon the second year after the great war. It is now a thing of yesterday. Soon it will be a thing of the day before yesterday, next a daily fading memory. Then we will have middle aged and grey headed fathers telling their boys of their experiences in France, then venerable grandfathers doing the same by their grandsons. The ranks of the veterans will begin to rapidly thin out, their periodical parades will steadily dwindle. A few years more and the veterans of the great war will be pointed out on the streets as survivors from another age. Then one by one they will go the way of all flesh and a generation will arise to whom they will be as ghostlike and unreal as the original U. E. Loyalists, or Waterloo heroes are to us to-day.

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The New Year finds, I think one may hope, a perceptible improvement in the world situation, with a vast amount, however, of leeway to be made up yet. The elections in France are decidedly reassuring and labour conditions in England, are for the present, visibly improved. England is evidently getting back to work. The exports, for November were a little more than double those of October. Conditions generally seem more settled on this continent. Bolshevism though apparently enjoying military successes is, according to all accounts, rapidly losing favour with the Russians as an economic system. This might have been anticipated, but the price paid, and yet to be paid, to find it out seems tragically, if not enormously excessive. The tempest still blows with devastating force and will undoubtedly continue to blow, but I think I am safe in saying, that there are indications that it is beginning slowly to abate, and, up to a certain point, the slower the better.

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The partial retirement of Sir Robert Borden from the premiership is undoubtedly regretted by the majority of Canadians, irrespective of party leanings or affiliations. As far as I know Sir Robert hasn't a personal or even a political enemy in Canada or anywhere. If he has I never met him. During the last forty-five years, in fact since Confederation, I have only known one Canadian statesman—Sir John Thompson—who rivalled him in general estimation. Though unlike some of his predecessors, the object of passionate personal attachment of his followers, he has from the beginning held their unwavering regard and confidence, and commanded at least the respect of his opponents. Sir Robert will chiefly be remembered by the Coalition Government, a wonderful achievement for a country like ours, where party feeling runs so high, and due solely to his own personal efforts. There was only one man in Canada able to do it and he did it. Sir Robert Borden's shining quality is and has always been from his earliest manhood a capacity for hard, concentrated work. Everything he has accomplished during his career as teacher, lawyer and statesman, has been effected by this means. He is an outstanding example of the fact that character rather than cleverness is the first requisite for success, that integrity and straight dealing will carry a man, slowly it may be, but surely, to his goal.

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Remember that true prosperity is not so much a state of pocket-book as it is a state of mind. To be truly prosperous one must feel prosperous. Spiritual prosperity is not something that comes and goes with the tide of worldly events. It is an abiding assurance that inspires confidence, health and happiness. Do not allow the glamour of other people's worldly opulence to discourage you. There are riches in the secret place of the Most High within you, far surpassing those on the outside. "Seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."—Selected.

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