

Messenger and Visitor

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A HAPPY NEW YEAR.

Since the last previous issue of this paper the line has been crossed, which, according to the calendar, separates one year from another. The third year of the new century has been completed and the fourth has been entered upon. It is a time when many are exchanging good wishes, and we heartily wish our readers one and all A HAPPY NEW YEAR! We trust this may be accepted as something more than a merely perfunctory "compliment of the season." In past years we have striven with honest purpose, according to the measure of our ability, to promote the happiness and welfare of our readers. We are encouraged by the fact that our efforts have not been without a measure of appreciation. And now again in presenting our New Year's greeting, it is with the purpose of doing what we can to implement our good wishes for those who honor us with their sympathy and support.

MINISTERS SALARIES.

The present is regarded as an era of prosperity in Canada. We are having good times. The volume of trade and commerce has greatly expanded during the past few years, the public revenues are large, the industries of the country are prosperous, harvests have been good and the products of the farms have usually commanded quick sales at good prices. There is a steady demand for labor at good wages and no one who is able and willing to work fails to earn a living. It should be considered, however, that there is a class of persons for whom what are called good times are really the hard times. Those whose dependence for living is a fixed salary find it more difficult to make ends meet in a period of commercial activity and high prices than they do when times are dull and prices are low, for a general increase of prices means that the cost of living has advanced. It is a well recognized fact that during the past ten years the cost of living in this country has materially increased. The cost of food on the average is greater by probably not less than twenty five per cent. The cost of fuel and illuminating oil is considerably greater, while in the price of furniture, stoves and most articles of household furnishing there has been a strong upward tendency.

These facts have an important bearing upon the salaries of ministers and should be considered in that connection. It is well known that the salaries of our ministers are generally small, affording little or no margin beyond the requirements of a comfortable living, and in too many instances, it is to be feared, scarcely reaching that point. This was the case when the cost of living was comparatively low, and now that it has been so considerably increased, the problem of how to make ends meet in the household economy of the parsonage must have become still more difficult, unless, indeed, there has been a corresponding increase in the salary. In a time of general prosperity, like the present, this could in many instances very easily be managed. For many churches it would doubtless be as easy now to pay a salary of one thousand dollars as it was to pay eight hundred a few years ago, and it is doubtful if the additional two hundred dollars would do much more than cover the increased cost of living. Very likely some of our churches may have taken this matter into consideration and voted an increase of salary to their ministers, but we do not remember to have heard of any instance in which this has been done, and we feel sure that there has been no general movement in that direction. It is surely only a matter of right and justice that the minister of the gospel should share in the general prosperity of the country. But if his salary is not raised in the period of good times and higher prices, it is very evident, as we have shown, that not only does he not share in the general prosperity, but the very conditions which make the circumstances of his people easier make his more difficult.

We would like to emphasize the fact that a good and faithful minister of the gospel is worth incalculably more than all he costs, even when his salary is made fully ade-

quate to his needs. We do not suppose that among those who read the MESSENGER AND VISITOR there is to be found a Christian so lean of soul as to argue that the minister does nothing to advance the material interests of the community and therefore has no right to share in the general prosperity. Even if it were true that the minister does nothing to help material interests, that would constitute no reason why his temporal needs should not be generously supplied, seeing that he gives his time and strength to the promotion of interests of infinitely greater value. But it is a great fallacy to suppose that the minister is a mere drone in the hive and a burden to be carried by the community so far as material interests are concerned. The man who preaches the gospel with power and otherwise ministers to the spiritual life of the community thereby helps everything. Apart from the supreme spiritual interests, there is no man who so abundantly earns his living—no man whom the community, with regard to its worldly interests, could so ill afford to spare—as the minister of the gospel. Remove the minister, the church, the Sunday school and other interests of a kindred character, which the ministry of the gospel fosters, and you will lessen the value of every foot of land and every piece of property which the community possesses. On the other hand, whatever strengthens the minister and makes his work effective thereby promotes every material as well as every spiritual interest of the place. There are, we fear, many of our Baptist communities in this country which have pursued a penny-wise policy in respect to the support of the gospel, a policy which has resulted greatly to their disadvantage both temporally and spiritually. If instead of making provision for their minister so meagre that, after a year or two of service, he is practically starved out, leaving the pulpit vacant for months or years, they had, even at some sacrifice, made liberal provision for the support of the gospel, the result would have been not only to foster and develop their own spiritual life, but also to make their community more moral, more intelligent, more prosperous and every way more desirable to live in. A community never makes a greater mistake than when it concludes that it does not pay to give its minister a generous support.

A PREACHER AND HIS MESSAGE.

The title of the Bible lesson in the International series for next Sunday is The Preaching of John the Baptist. Preaching is however always inseparable from the preacher, the force of the gospel message depends largely upon the personality of the man who delivers it. And it is worthy of remark that in the brief account which is given us of John and his work the character of the man is caused to stand out in bold relief. It may be well for us here to notice some of the outstanding characteristics of this great preacher.

He was evidently a man who felt himself called to a special service and who consecrated his powers unreservedly to his work. He was first and last a preacher of God's truth, and to that work he devoted all his energies. No other business was permitted to claim a part of his time and strength. One may not say that every preacher is in duty bound to follow in this respect the example of John the Baptist, but if a man possesses the qualifications which justify him in making the preaching of the truth the great business of his life his work is likely to count for more if he keeps that purpose steadily in view and suffers nothing to draw him aside from his ministry in spiritual things.

Another characteristic to be remarked in John is his rugged simplicity. His raiment, his food, his whole manner of life showed that wealth, ease, luxury had no power over him. The vision he had seen of the coming Lord and the coming kingdom had so filled and controlled him that the things which men for the most part so eagerly seek after had no power over his imagination. This doubtless was a characteristic essential to the great preacher's success. Dr. Alexander McLaren has well said: "The man who is to preach repentance with power must be clear of all suspicion of hankering after silken raiment and living delicately."

Two other traits are prominent in John the Baptist—traits which every preacher of the truth needs to possess. These are courage and humility. His was a courage which could denounce the hypocrisy of the Pharisee and the Sadducee and which could look the adulterous Herod in the eye and say to him—Thou hast sinned. But much as we admire the courage that could so sternly denounce iniquity though clothed in the robes of respectability and authority, we admire still more the humility which prostrates itself before the Man of Nazareth. It is here, in his loyal recognition of Jesus as Son of God and his willingness to decrease that his Lord may increase, that the great prophet is seen at his greatest.

John was a preacher of Repentance. "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" was the substance of his message. But the preacher of repentance is necessarily also a preacher of righteousness. Men needed to repent because they had been living a life of sin. The paths needed to be made straight because the people had been walking in crooked paths. The preacher of repentance is also a preacher of mercy, for it were but a bitter mockery to call upon men to repent if to their repentant confessions there could be no answer but that of stern justice. John's preaching was with power, because of his assurance of the reality of things as yet unseen. He felt in his prophetic soul the ap-

proach of him from whom nothing could be hidden and before whom all shams and hypocrisies would stand revealed. He plainly saw and he sternly declared that salvation was not by profession or heredity. The puritanic Pharisee and the learned Sadducee must not think that they could take the kingdom of heaven under their patronizing care. For them, as for others, the door into the kingdom was that of repentance and amendment of life, and they must understand that it was within the power of God out of the most unpromising material to raise up children to Abraham.

The day of the great prophet of the wilderness is past. The way of salvation is clear now, and the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than John. But the day for the preacher of repentance is not passed. This age has its sins that need to be forsaken, its crooked paths that need to be made straight, its multitudes that need to be aroused to the appreciation of the supreme importance of spiritual things, its Pharisees, its Sadducees and its Herods who need to be reproved concerning their hypocrisies and iniquities. And, perhaps more than anything else, the world has need to-day of preachers of repentance—real prophets of the Lord, not such as demand to be clothed in soft raiment and to live delicately, but men under so profound conviction of the supreme importance of the things which belong to the kingdom of God and so possessed by his Spirit that they shall be as voices crying in the wilderness and in such tones that men will not be able to shut their ears to their words. It is as true to-day as it was in John's day that the axe lieth at root of the trees, that One is coming whose fan is in his hand and who will thoroughly separate the chaff from the wheat. It is as true now as then that there is an essential difference between wheat and chaff and that their destinies are as different as their characters.

Editorial Notes.

"In any town in which there are two Baptist churches," says *The Watchman*, "certain unique duties of fellowship and co-operation rest upon the two congregations. A single cloud of envy or suspicion should never be allowed to arise between them. It is vain to talk about the closer co-operation of all Christians, if those of the same faith and order are alienated." These remarks will, we suppose, apply with equal force in the case of communities in which there are more than two Baptist churches. It certainly does seem that the relations between neighboring churches of the same faith and order should be much more intimate and cordial than is usually the case. We have heard it remarked that in a certain town the relations between the different Baptist churches are not more cordial than those which exist between the churches of different denominations. There ought not to be ground for such a statement.

The British army authorities report a marked deterioration in the classes from which the recruits come, and experts declare that the main cause of the deterioration is the use of cigarettes. General Lyttleton commanding the British forces in South Africa declares the majority of recruits sent out to be physically immature and of a low standard of intelligence. One officer says they will require three years of good feeding before they will be capable of a good day's work, and another thinks they have never done a day's work in their lives and do not intend to if the can help it. Dr. Farquaharson, who is an experienced student of the situation, quotes a leading authority on public health—Prof. Caskin—in the declaration that juvenile smoking is the principal cause of deterioration. The professor gives the following formidable list of symptoms produced by the habit: Chronic hoarseness, lack of appetite, dyspepsia, pallor from impaired blood, formation of rapid and intermittent pulse pain in the region of the heart, difficulty in breathing and disinclination to partake of healthy athletic exercise.

It is evident that the effectiveness of the prohibitory liquor law in Maine depends very largely upon the character of the officials whose duty it is to see that the law is enforced. In Portland where, under the late Sheriff Pearson, the law was enforced with great vigor, there is now, it is said, under a Democrat sheriff, a great change, a number of dealers being permitted to carry on their business under certain regulations and liquor being freely obtainable even on Sundays. In Bangor, on the contrary, where for many years the saloons were wide open, the law is being enforced with comparative strictness. Six liquor dealers are in prison serving sentences of six months each, imposed by the court that adjourned last week, while like sentences are suspended over about one hundred others, to be enforced in the event of their ever again engaging in the liquor business in Maine. A score have fled from the city and dare not come back, knowing that jail awaits them, and from all classes of liquor law violators the county of Penobscot collected at the August term of court \$12,000 in fines, making, with the \$32,000 collected last February, when the present enforcement wave set in, the sum total of \$44,000 for the year.

The despatches in reference to the situation in the Far East continue to be of a conflicting character, but it must be said that on the whole the outlook for peace has not grown more hopeful. The despatches from Paris, and still more those from Berlin, generally predict a peaceful out-