



SERMON.

Our Neighbour's Faults.
By REV. RICHARD W. HILLY, D.D.,
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"Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and behold a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye."—Matt. 18: 1-5.

You will recognise at once where these words are taken from. They come from the best sermon that was ever preached. That is, indeed, not much to say, when we consider that it was preached by Him who was the source of wisdom, who called Himself the Truth, and whom men saw at once, and confessed to be, no common teacher, but a Teacher sent from God. Now, amongst other names by which our blessed Lord was spoken of in Scripture before He came, there was this, that He should be called the Prince of Peace. He came to make peace between sinful men and God the Father, who hates sin, but in the midst of it loves the sinner still. He came also to make men at peace with each other. Instead of being full of envyings, burnings, jealousies, and such-like, He sought to make them at one with Himself and at one with each other. With this in view, He gave them a new commandment, that they should love each other. He called men his friends. If He saw a storm at sea He said, "Peace, be still." If He saw a man torn by an evil spirit it was the same Voice that called the sufferer to be still and peaceable and in his right mind. Jesus, then, loved peace and harmony. The heaven that He had quitted was the abode of peace and harmony. He wished to make the earth the same. This will explain why so much is said, in this Sermon on the Mount, about peace and love and goodwill, and all those habits and virtues which prevent or destroy them. The world was to be, and is, His Kingdom, and He will some day come and claim it. But it will not be fit for Him till the whole world is a "Society of Friends," and He is the Common Friend of us all. The world is His family, for which He was content to be betrayed, but it will not be the family which He yearns to see till all men are become brothers, and He is the elder brother, around whom the younger ones crowd. Of the passages in the sermon on the Mount that are of this peace-loving and peace-making character, the verses which I have read from one. They are so simple that it might be said that a child can understand them without explanation. Exactly. For that very reason they need exposition, lest from their apparent simplicity they escape attention. Jesus dwelt with His Father before He came amongst men. That men might feel fully sure that He understood their hearts and ways, that they might get confidence to trust in Him, He came and lived amongst them like a workman. He lived in the house of Joseph. His reputed father, He went about dressed like a working-man, worked at His trade, would go out to His work or do it at home as His business called Him. He would pass His evenings after His work was over with His family. He would hear plans of livelihood discussed. His brothers and sisters—for we have good reason for believing that He had some—would talk as young men and women do talk after working hours are over. Neighbours would drop in, and He would hear their talk. He might very likely return their visits, join their meals, walk out with them on fine evenings, and have all that intercourse that passes between neighbours.

The Habit of Backbiting.

At the time He is now speaking He is thirty-three years of age, and, therefore, supposing Jesus of Nazareth had been only a man, He was quite competent to speak as a man of experience. He knew that men did and said, because He had seen and heard it as a man. He was competent to advise about it, and reprove for it, because He was more than a man. Now one thing Jesus Christ had observed in this life of seclusion before His ministry was this: that when men and women meet together their talk is much about their neighbours. Of course this cannot be helped, and to some extent it is right. We live in a society, and must feel interested in each other. We should not be human beings if we did not. But the Christ observed that when the neighbour was passed in review, it was not his virtues that men talked about; they were not thinking how it might be possible to do him a kindness, but it was just the opposite. If a poor man had a bodily misfortune, perhaps it was laughed at. If he had some fault in his character, this was talked of over and over again. It was a splendid piece of music that one never tired of hearing. If he had a misfortune in his business, instead of being sorry for him, the calamity seemed to give them pleasure—"Serve him right!" "I said it would be so!"—as if it were a delight to see one in pain, a delight to tell of misfortune coming on a man.

It is this habit and this style of talk that our blessed Lord had observed, and refers to here. Whenever men and women taught us together there is the same inclination, the same thing going on, except they have been taught differently. But because it was the opposite to what he wanted to see because if this were ever encountered, men would never become friends and brothers, the Christ taught us differently in this sermon. To do this the great Teacher first teaches us that such judging our neighbours is wrong. It is wrong because, in the first place, we are often wrong ourselves. Christ says, "Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, and behold there is a beam in thine own eye. A mote is a small speck; those small specks

that we see in a ray of light from a sun-beam. A beam is of course a log of wood. The Master says, at all the time that you are looking at this very, very small fault of your neighbour, this small speck of dust, you have a fault of your own as huge as a lump of wood. How can this be? In this way. We know very well that in every action is not so much what we actually do as the difference. The poor widow who threw two mites into the treasury was considered as having cast in more than the rich men who cast in their gold pieces. The great Teacher did not mean by that to say that two farthings were more than a gold piece, but it cost her more to part with it, and it was this motive that made her action the greater. If then it is the motive that makes the worth of an action, how can we tell our neighbour's motive? We see him do an action, and we may find fault with him, and call it bad. Perhaps if we knew why he did it, we should find that he was right, that he had the best intentions.

Unseen Virtues.

To give an instance which the preacher knows to be an actual fact: A merchant of his acquaintance was thought to be very selfish with his money. He was known to be very rich, and lived something like a rich man; yet when asked for subscriptions he gave always a small sum—he gave £5 when his neighbours thought he ought to give £20. He was, therefore, very selfish and miserly, and bore a nickname in consequence. Everybody was looking at this mote which seemed like a beam. This went on for years, and he was generally disliked. One of his neighbours, who respected him on all other points, was determined to bottom the matter. He learned with difficulty, and after careful inquiry, that during all these years this much abused man was supporting handsomely a large family of poor relatives. He educated them well, put them out in life with no niggard hand. They lived in another place, no one, not even his intimate friends knew; he never spoke of it, but he did it for years.

The same inquirer found, too, that a real case of benevolence was put before this rich man, and he was told reasonably what he ought to give, the rich man often gave it. So here was a man who all men were abusing, because they did not know enough about him. They saw him give only small sums, but did not know the motive; whereas he was just one of those really benevolent men that the blessed Saviour would love to see. Now suppose one of these neighbors had his own examined. We will suppose the neighbor to have been giving large sums to subscriptions, and been very proud of it. But he did it to be thought well of—to be talked about. Is that real benevolence? It is just such a case as the Saviour would often give us. He would say to this latter man: "You are trying to persuade men that you are benevolent, and you are not. You are a hard man to those about you, but are full of hypocrisy, and this your gift is not meant by you as a gift, it is meant as a bribe to buy a certain reputation." Now here is a case which shows how possible it is to be worse ourselves, and so it points out the wrong of looking out for our neighbor's faults. The fault-finder was worse himself; he was looking at what appeared a small fault in his neighbor, and he had a greater one of his own; his neighbor was only a speck of dust, and his own was as huge as a beam of timber.

The Saviour gave us another reason why sitting in judgment on our neighbors and their sayings and doings is wrong. We are not only often worse ourselves, but we do it from a wrong motive. If we saw our neighbor's fault and grieve over it because all sin is grievous in our eyes, because it is an offence against God and we do not like to have him offended, then there might be some excuse. There might be some excuse, too, if we grieved because our neighbor will suffer harm in consequence in the long run, and we don't want him to suffer harm. But this is not our motive. It is not that we hate sin, for were he proved to be innocent of it we should try to find something else. It is not that we love our neighbor, for who ever shows love to a friend by making his character as black as possible? It arises often from ill-nature. Some people have born in them the love of doing harm; put before them a way of doing a man a good turn and a way of doing him an evil one, and they will rather not stir themselves to oblige. It arises often from envy. We feel that a man is better than ourselves; we know it; we see that others esteem him more. We then long to bring him down. Instead of lifting ourselves up to his purity we try to bespatter his character with mud. Our conduct arises often from jealousy. We are struggling to get the respect of our neighbors and rise in the world; our neighbor is struggling too, and we are not generous enough to wish a rival God-speed; and thus in our jealousy we would deprive him of his fair character. For all these cases there is a vile motive, and so our action is bad and detestable in the sight of God. We are professing to point out our neighbor's fault as if we scorned it, and we don't scorn it; we are hypocrites; we are rather pleased that he has a fault to gaze on; and we stand staring at and turning it over, and magnifying it, and the sight gives us positive pleasure.

For these two great reasons does our blessed Lord warn us against sitting in judgment against our neighbor's faults. He shows us why it is wrong to do so, because we do it from a wrong motive; we profess to hate his sin, and we are playing the hypocrite. We don't hate it; and we have all the time a worse fault ourselves. The blessed Master bids us cease doing this. Away with such bickering and envy and jealousy. The Redeemer bids us be at peace and love amongst men. He wants a family united in love, and would see everything that is affectionate and charitable and kind.

Self-Criticism.

Up to this we have been told what not to do; the Master then goes on to teach

us what we are to do. First, says the Christ, "pluck out the beam out of thine own eye." He bids each man to look at himself, to examine his own conduct; if he sees anything amiss in his neighbor, just to observe whether the same fault is not in his own bosom. We have a good instance of this in the New Testament. You remember, at the Lord's Supper, the blessed Lord said to His disciples, "One of you shall betray Me." "What! shall one of us be a traitor to his Friend? Who can it be?" They are silent for a time. Each man looks into his own heart; can I be capable of such a crime? He is thinking not about his neighbor, but himself. Then each asks Christ, "Lord, is it I?" That is what the Christ means us to do, each man to pluck out his own beam. We shall find that enough to do. A besetting sin is not got over in a day, nor in a week. It will not be got over by once looking after, or by once thinking of. It will need all our watchfulness and all our care, and we shall find little time for watching that of our neighbor. When thou hast done this, Christ says, thou shalt see clearly to put out the mote from thy brother's eye. Thou shalt see clearly; for thou shalt then know whether it is a fault or not. You will have got into the habit of making allowances; of thinking there may be some good motives in your neighbor's mind which at present you do not know. Before I charge him with a fault I will be quite sure, make all inquiries, and ask him whether he meant to do what is said of him. By seeing clearly in this way, the fault will be found to be much smaller. Thou shalt see clearly. Yes, for thou wilt do it kindly. Instead of rushing in haste to attack my neighbor for a sin, I shall remember the grief of my own sin; how much it pained me; with how much difficulty I got the better of it; the long struggle it was; have I got the better of it now? Now my neighbor may be struggling in the same way, all this time that he is getting abused. He may know his fault, and may be striving hard against it too. I will see clearly and speak to him kindly, and tell him of his fault in such a way as I should like to be told of mine. Thou shalt see clearly. Yes, having tried against my own, I will give my neighbor the benefit of my assistance, of my experience. I will tell him how I struggled against my fault; what remedies I took to recover from the disease of sin; I will soothe him in his sickness; help him in the fight, and rejoice when he has pulled out the mote from his eye.

Brethren, let us deal thus with our own faults, and so with our neighbors, and we shall find the truth of the Psalmist's word, "How good and joyful a thing it is to dwell together in unity." CHRIST ON EARTH. The Story of His Life, Works and Death Simply Told. Easter is a more joyful festival than Christmas. "The day of a man's death is better than the day of his birth." On the day of his birth all men were looking at him with cold and marble embrace of winter. To-day all nature is reviving—the sun is wheeling in high circles through the sky. The velvet flowers are yearning and panting to express their beauty and exhale their fragrance on the air. The sun of righteousness hath arisen with healing in his wings. Every song is laden with resurrection gladness.

The facts are, Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea. He grew to be "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." "He spake as never man spake." "He went about doing good." Divinity streamed through the exercise of His miraculous powers. His earthly history was briefly written in these words:—He was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried.

Though thirty-three years of age at His death, it was only during the last three years of His earthly life that God was manifested in His wonderful personality. During that time He impressed His character so distinctly upon history that for purity and humanity, for true nobility and divinity it stands out in bold relief as the character in all history which is a perfect example, the embodiment of all that is good and divine. He was the one character which, if imitated, leads into all truth and into eternal life.

The third day He arose again from the dead and lived as before among His disciples for forty days. Death had not changed His character or His personality; it was "the same Jesus." The same human voice, the same loving words, the same wonderful words of life, the same revelation of the immortality of the soul, the same earnest exhortation that they should go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. Then, in the sight of His disciples, He ascended into heaven, having promised to send them the Holy Spirit to help them in winning the world to salvation.

These, then, are the four great historical facts, abundantly authenticated. Christ lived thirty-three years on the earth, was crucified, dead and buried. The third day He rose again from the dead, and, as the same Jesus, lived forty days upon the earth. He ascended into heaven.

He gave and is giving still His Holy Spirit to His church, which is ever increasing on the earth in peace, purity and power, and which will ever continue to grow until the knowledge of the glory of the Lord shall cover the earth as the water covers the sea, and until "He shall come to reign, whose right it is."

From Christmas to Easter the church celebrates the earthly life of Christ; from Easter to Christmas His glorious resurrection and ascension.

THE CHURCH AND ITS WORKERS.

The Rev. Dr. Bolton declares that "one of the best things that can happen to a minister is to have a fire in his study every ten years, which will burn up every scrap, manuscript, and sermon he has."

Cardinal Howard, the only English cardinal now living, is insane, and during the past three years has been under restraint in England, immured in one of the wings of the Duke of Norfolk's ancient castle of Arundel. There is no precedent to direct

the sacred college in the question as to whether the loss of reason involves the loss on the part of one of its members of his vote at the conclave.

If Boston does not witness very soon a marked religious and moral uplifting it will not be the fault of the church workers of the city. There is not a denomination which has not entered upon some line of practical work among the people in its vicinity or in the crowded sections of the city. The work has not been exclusively religious, but has touched both the physical and social needs of the masses.

James A. Spurgeon, who is to carry on the ministerial duties at the London Tabernacle, is a younger brother of the late famous preacher, and has for some time been assistant pastor of the great church. He also has a church at Croydon, but for many years past most of his time has been devoted to superintending the agencies at work in connection with the Tabernacle. He has the reputation of being a good business man.



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