

VI. A MINISTRY OF LIBERTY.

*Deliverance to the captives:* v. 18.

Truth shall make you free. John 8. 32.

Christ hath made us free. Gal. 5. 1.

Thoughts for Young People.

Jesus as a Preacher.

1. *Jesus was fearless and direct.* He goes to the place where he has played as a child, gone to school, and learned his trade. He tells his old companions that he is the Messiah, and this he does on the Sabbath day, when all the worshipful Nazarenes were present, and in the boldest and most direct fashion.

2. *He was kind.* No human sympathy has ever equaled the sympathy of Jesus. His auditors were politically oppressed. He came to preach deliverance to them. They were broken-hearted because of enforced poverty and disappointed ambitions. He came to heal the broken-hearted. Diseases afflicted the community then to a degree unknown within the bounds of civilization now, and the blind were more common then than any other afflicted ones. He came to restore sight to the blind. One half of the community was in daily peril from threatened starvation; he came to give good tidings to the poor. The whole nation was suffering like a bastinadoed criminal; he came to set at liberty those that were oppressed—to preach a year of jubilee to all. Even the stolid Nazarenes knew that their poverty and sickness and national degradation were, after all, paltry types and symbols of that more abject degradation which is spiritual. These temporal afflictions were light compared with their spiritual burdens. This preacher came to preach a spiritual gospel also, that should emancipate all men from all their ills and sorrows.

3. *He was gracious.* It is a singular fact that the word "grace," which the old heathens used to indicate physical beauty, is the same that the inspired writers have used to indicate spiritual beauty. We should be gracious and graceful, kind and loving, and beautiful in our spiritual lives. This divine preacher is our exemplar in that as well as in his fearless rectitude, for all wondered at the graciousness of the words which proceeded out of his mouth.

4. *His sermon was to all men everywhere.* There were no limitations to Jesus's love. Elijah went to Sarepta, and Elisha healed a man who lived in Damascus, but Jesus said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."

5. *Even this preacher is limited by the unbelief of his hearers,* and if the Lord of glory cannot do mighty works because of unbelief, why should we blame our minister if in all his endeavors he is not supported by faithful hearts and loving hands?

Lesson Word-Pictures.

Nazareth has not forgotten Jesus, "Joseph's son," so called. A long, long while he went to and from his work as carpenter, driving the saw or swinging the hammer.

Ordinary work, and yet the workman impressed people as more than ordinary. He had a grave, thoughtful air, as of one given to the contemplation of great subjects. Nazareth saw him passing into the home of his mother Mary at night, passing out in the morning, ever kind and considerate and loving, ready for service like other sons of Nazareth, and yet somehow how much he seemed above them!

One day there came by caravan or solitary pilgrim, passing through the hills about Nazareth, a story that John, the cousin of Jesus, long a strange man, had burst out of the wilderness beyond Jordan, raising the cry, "Repent ye!"

People said of John, "A prophet, a prophet!" Great crowds flocked to hear him. Many lingered to follow John the Baptist into the waters of the Jordan.

One day Jesus was missed in the home of Mary, in the workshop of Joseph, in the streets of Nazareth. He was seen at the Jordan, he was baptized by John, and he too started out as a prophet to show great power as preacher, teacher, wonder-worker.

Strange, and yet he once walked these very ways of Nazareth, had his home on one of the streets climbing the hillslopes, worked here and there as carpenter, was just known as "Joseph's son!"

Strange, very!

Nazareth would like to see him. Nazareth would like to hear him. And O, if in Nazareth's streets he would work a miracle!

Strange, this "Joseph's son!"

Time goes on.

One day the peace of the Sabbath is on the hills and in the streets of Nazareth. No husbandman "sends his team afield." No hammer echoes about the homes or shops. Business is stilled in the market place. The birds seem to sing their softer notes. People are on their way to the synagogue, moving quietly, and yet more intently than usual. And why so many? Ben Issachar stays at home when he sees a cloud coming, but stays not to-day. Miriam, mother in Israel, keeps back her foot from the synagogue if she thinks she is likely to run into a big dewdrop. To-day Ben Issachar and Miriam under a clouded sky, maybe, hurry to the synagogue.

Anything, any person, unusual expected at the synagogue? It would seem so.

For some reason there is a crowd in the synagogue.

The services are opened.

In its appointed place comes the reading of the