

characters; that is, the attitude of men to Him has decided their place in the moral world. The real position of every man in the universe, to whom Christ has been revealed, is determined by His attitude toward the Man of Nazareth. The accidents of wealth, of position, of intellectual attainment, have as little to do with the matter now as then. "What think ye of Christ?" is still the all-important question. The day of judgment is always present, and men are ever judging themselves by the answer they give to this question of questions.

But one character is supremely interesting among all the interesting people who crowd the canvas of this lesson. Mary, the quiet, contemplative Mary, with her ungrudging vase of precious spikenard, is the one person who, aside from the Master, commands our closest attention. Of her were spoken on two occasions, by Him whose approbation is best worth having, words of unmeasured praise, "Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." "She hath done what she could." "Verily, I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her."

What reigning beauty, what queen or empress would not covet such praise from Him who never flatters? Yet it was accorded to this quiet, unassuming woman of Bethany. It is well worth our while to ask why it was bestowed upon her. The answer is simple and obvious. Because she chose the good part, and because her choice was so complete, so absolute, so unreserved. The choice of Christ is the most important and noteworthy act it is possible for a mortal to make. That is the teaching of this lesson.

Mary is the type of the best mystic; and for this type of character our Lord seems to have had a special affinity. His beloved disciple was a mystic. We can easily imagine Mary keeping "The Quiet Hour." We can think of her as rising up before day to enjoy the "Morning Watch" with her unseen Friend. We cannot so easily imagine busy Martha doing the same—she would be too much occupied getting the breakfast. Perhaps here we find the reason that the mystical type of character has so greatly influenced the world, because it is so akin to Christ. Thomas a Kempis, Tauler, Jeremy Taylor, Brother Lawrence, George Muller, Andrew Murray—of all of them and of all like them we can say, "They have chosen the good part"; they have found that communion was necessary to the highest service.

Once more, Mary gave the best she had. No elaborate vase was too beautiful to break, no ointment was too precious to pour, no love was too tender to be lavished on the feet, even, of Him she loved. She did what she could, and what she could was her best. Ah! I believe that is the great lesson of the incident. She gave her all, she gave herself, "'twas all that she could do." And because it was her all, her surrendered self, she heard those sweet words which assured her earthly renown and her heavenly immortality: "Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her."—*Rev. Francis E. Clark, D.D.*



LESSON 3.—APRIL 16, 1899.

Jesus Teaching Humility.

(Lesson Text: John 13: 1-17. Commit to Memory Verses 14-17.)
(Study the whole chapter.)

GOLDEN TEXT.—"I have given you an example."—*John 13: 15.*

DAILY READINGS.—Monday: John 13: 1-17. Tuesday: Luke 13: 7-14. Wednesday: Luke 18: 9-17. Thursday: 1 Pet. 5: 1-7. Friday: Mark 9: 30-37. Saturday: Matt. 20: 20-28. Sunday: Phil. 2: 1-11.

Our lesson brings us into the very holy of holies in the tabernacle of the flesh which Jesus made sacred by His presence; into the upper room where Jesus ate the passover with His disciples. It is here that He gives a proof of His love, and in that proof a lesson, not so much of humility as of the dignity of service—a lesson which the disciples of the older and of the later time need constantly to learn, to remember and to practice. This was a real act of service.

Teaching and symbolism are significant only when based on a reality. An act of lowly service teaches humility only when it is an act of service, and the dignity of lowly service can only be set forth by a real service which is both humble in its nature and yet dignified in the motive and bearing of Him who renders it. If a man should abase himself before you only that he might show himself abased, it would move only your disgust and you would be inclined to rebuke him sharply for his groveling insincerity. We cannot learn the lesson of sacrifice even from our Lord Jesus, unless we regard His life and death as a real sacrifice made with an object and necessary to its attainment, and that an object other than to impress those in whose interest it claims to be made. It is not pleasant nor reverent to think that Jesus Christ ever postured, ever did things for the purpose of impressing either His disciples or the bystanders. All that He did in every act and word was genuine and real and for the purpose for which it seemed to be intended, and all that we infer of example for ourselves, of teaching and of symbolism, if we choose still to call it so, is only our natural inference based on what Jesus really did, which was in every case exactly what it seemed to be. In this case He supplied a rite of hospitality which otherwise would have been missed both as a rite and as a purifying necessity, and thus it was an example and a lesson.

What, then, is the teaching of this act of Jesus? What is the lesson of it for these disciples? What does it mean to us all and always? It is that it is service which is dignified, and not position. This is always true and always has been true and yet it is and always has been doubted or disregarded.

Exaltation is not dignity. Kingship cannot confer it. A Nero, dressed in the richest jeweled robes of state, stands before the world forever as a mean and sordid trifle. As even English historians review the lives and characters of the kings of their land, each receives his meed of praise or blame like other men and is judged by the same standards. Our American Presidents are elected by the people to their office, whatever party intrigues may intervene, because they are accounted *dignus*, that is, worthy of the eminence. Dignity consists in worthiness and worthiness is proved by service. Exalted position has its only dignity in the opportunity well improved for wider service. Most of us can serve only a few; the head of a nation can serve all. When Luke describes this same contention among the disciples, he reports the Master as bidding them look at the lordship of earthly kings in contrast with the grading of greatness in His kingdom, where he is chief that serves. "I am in the midst of you as he that serveth," He says in word and then in deed.

If there is any limitation of this principle of the dignity of service, it is where the service is com-