

Christ's New Year Message, or the Christian's Complete Equipment.

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Text:—John 20: 19-22.

New Year's day is always an interesting and important occasion. As we pass out of one year and step into another he is indeed a thoughtless individual who does not pause at least to inquire what reasons he has to hope that the new year will be a better one than the old has been. He is unworthy his birthright who does not form a resolution that there will be an improvement in the experience upon which he has entered. Among the many incentives and aids in this direction the good wishes of our friends form no insignificant factor. Solid is that heart which in response to the wish of a trusted friend that the New Year may be a happy one, does not say even though feebly: "I will honestly try to make the New Year better than the last." The more worthy the friend from whom the kind wishes come, the more effective the pressure toward a nobler life. Jesus Christ, the best friend man ever knew, is by our side with his generous New Year wish. It is: "Peace be unto you." And as we reflect upon the nobility, the love, the beneficence of the Christ, does there not come to us a deep desire that we may have in glorious measure this wonderful peace of God, and that having it we may enter during the new year into strong and beautiful fellowship with Christ in his purpose for our own life and through us for the lives of others. Christ has more for us however, than a wish. He has a message. He does not simply tell us what is his desire for us but he shows how his desire may become our experience. Our text is Christ's message to us for the New Year. It is true these words are for any season and for all time but it is equally true that this message taken into the life will ensure the experience of Christ's wish of "Peace" and open before us indeed a New Year, new in its quality of life and new in rich and happy service.

This message of Christ for the New Year, containing his wish and complete instructions for its attainment is threefold. Each section has its own distinct and essential value but the three together cover a complete Christian experience and equipment. If one is lacking there is sad incompleteness and pitiable inability. When in the experience all are normally blended there will be symmetrical character and power for Christian effectiveness.

The day on the evening of which this New Year message was delivered was a unique occasion in the world's history. The mystery of the birth of the Christ child had appeared in Bethlehem. The beautiful life had been lived with its strange contrasts, its beneficent deeds, its agonizing Gethsemane, its dark Calvary. And now, but just today, has Christ risen from the tomb; the Glorious Redeemer, the triumphant Captain of salvation. The disciples were gathered together in discouragement and fear. How great was their surprise to see Jesus in their midst, having entered the room through closed doors, and in words of supreme comfort and cheer bringing to them his wish of peace and the wonderfully comprehensive threefold message for their glad new year of confidence and achievement!

1. After the wish of peace, the first thought of Christ for his disciples was the message of his pierced hands and wounded side. "And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side." This was the guarantee of the peace the Master wished. It was the dramatic presentation of the thought of the incarnation. The advent of the Messiah was not enough; his immaculate life was not sufficient; the meritorious death would have been of no avail of itself; it was necessary that the Christ should rise from the dead, "the first fruits of them that slept." Here in these uplifted hands pierced for us and this side wounded in our stead, here verily is the completeness of the incarnation. Here is the Christ of heaven, of earth; the Christ for sinners, the Christ for saints.

In this most impressive way did Christ reveal to his disciples the basis for their peace. Peace in our own souls, peace with others, peace with God, could be ours only through the Christ wounded for us. What a remarkably clear and spiritual conception of the character of the Messiah's mission did the prophet have when he said: "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." In this manner which the disciples who were witnesses could never forget Christ made it clear once for all that spiritual life comes to men only through the giving of his life in their behalf. How distinct does he make it appear that without the sacrificial death of him whom the Father sent, there would be no efficacy in the mysteriously sublime birth or the divinely beautiful life! He was the more eager to have them fully grasp this essential truth because previous attempts had failed. When, before the consummation of the awful tragedy on Calvary, Jesus after lesson had been given concerning the uplifted Christ and the grain of wheat which remains alone except it dies, the disciples had signally failed to grasp the meaning of the teaching touching this fundamental feature of salvation. Now that the divine human life had been sacrificially given and the seal of the resurrection had been put upon this means for the restoration of human life, with prompt and dramatic impressiveness the Christ speaks to men again in a message that

surely need not be misunderstood concerning the fundamental relation between his death and our life.

And today, after centuries of misconception and erroneous interpretation, behold the wounds of the Saviour's brow and hands, side and feet, proclaiming the mighty fact of salvation through the sacrifice of the Son of God and mutely pleading with men to accept the Christ of incarnation as the only hope for their present and future well! There are nominal Christians today—it is tragically sad that there should be even one—who appear to be shocked by the mention of Christ's atoning sacrifice. They are always preaching the attractive efficacy of the life of Jesus, the appealing effect of his beneficently unique utterances. But they are ashamed of the suffering Messiah. It would be wise for all these to mark well that of those who are ashamed of Christ he will be ashamed. How little of the New Testament—not to mention the Old—would be left, or would have any meaning, if all the passages which take their significance from the atoning sacrifice of Calvary were eliminated! Without the fact which the wounds of the Saviour suggest, what is a sermon but an ethical lecture; what is a church but an ethical club; what is Christian experience but ethical training, and the Bible but an ethical book, containing the most perfect code of morals it is true, but still only a treatise on ethics which because of its nature is one among many claiming a share of our attention? O, brethren, instead of all this weak and sentimental theorizing of human preference, the New Year message of our Lord's wounded hands and side gives us unmistakable evidence that peace is ours through the eternal sacrifice; that a sermon is the proclamation of the truth as it is in Jesus in the completeness of the incarnation; that a church is a body of believers in the crucified and risen Christ; that Christian experience is a personal knowledge of the Son of God as Saviour and Lord; that the Bible is the unique and incomparable revelation to men of the one way by which sin is overcome, the highest service, the highest service attained, and heaven assured.

The statement following the record of the manifested hands and side is profoundly suggestive: "The disciples therefore were glad when they saw the Lord." Are not disciples of Christ today, too, filled with deepest joy when are pushed aside ethical theories and theories of the atonement which have no spiritual potency, and in personal relation with the Christ of Bethlehem, of Capernaum, of Calvary, of the skies, they see indeed their Lord! Well may any one be glad who sees Christ as the disciples saw the Lord. Happy truly and eternally is that one the language of whose heart is the words of the grand old hymn:—

"My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.
On Christ the solid rock I stand,
All other ground is sinking sand."

2. The second time does Jesus express to the disciples his desire that they may have peace. "Jesus therefore said to them again, Peace be unto you: as the Father sent me, even so send I you." Here is the second part of Christ's New Year message. No one can have the peace which Jesus gives by remaining satisfied to simply believe in his name. In fact it would be contrary to the spirit of a true believer to remain simply a recipient of divine blessing. It is the genius of the Christian life to help others and it is in this way that the richest peace is experienced. How happily this message of Christ applies to the thought of the New Year. If we are to have the best peace we must go to others as Christ came to us. If the New Year is to be a better one than that from which we have just parted, it will be because more completely we carry into the new year before us the spirit of the mission upon which Christ came to earth. He came not to do his own will but the will of him by whom he was sent: so will we gladly make the will of Christ by whom we are commissioned, our own. He came to reveal the Father: so will we reveal the Christ who sends us. He spoke the words given to him from above; so will we. He was obedient even to death; and verily will we be also if we truly follow our Lord. He bore the cross in view of the crown: so with us, after the cross will be the "crown of glory that fadeth not away." He was profoundly filled with the peace which he so freely offers to men: so may we have constantly the peace of God which passeth all understanding, if keeping close to the Master we give ourselves eagerly to the mission on which we are sent.

3. But even this is not the complete message which Christ has for us for the New Year. He who has received the new life which Christ made possible and by the Saviour of life has been commissioned to minister to men needs the anointing and illumining which it is the mission of the Holy Spirit to furnish. Hence we are prepared for the final clause which makes the New Year message complete: "Receive ye the Holy Spirit." This is an indispensable furnishing for service. Without it all our work is futile and we are impotent. The disciples were bidden to remain waiting upon God until the Holy Spirit should enter upon the special mission to which upon the ascension of Christ he was to be devoted. It was then that truth became potent; that Godly living became truly impressive, and testimony and preaching became uniquely effective. And it has ever been that the periods of success in the his-

tory of the church have been seasons of the demonstration of the power of the Holy Spirit. The stranger to the Holy Spirit is a stranger to spiritual ability. As well try to light a room with glass bulbs as to expect to bring spiritual illumination to men without the unction of the Spirit. As well expect a marble statue to deliver a touching oration as to think of bringing to men a Christian appeal without the endowment which only the spirit of God can give. As soon will an engine pull the train of cars without steam or electricity as will anyone bring others to God without the power which only the indwelling of the Holy Spirit bestows.

It is the privilege of every believer in Jesus Christ to become a mighty power in his service through the Holy Spirit's equipment. If we are impotent without him, who can measure the Christian's power when spiritually furnished! We may be conscious that we are living beneath our holy privilege: let us seek more abundantly vitalizing contact day by day with the great spiritual dynamo, the Holy Spirit. It may be that we are restrained from service in which we feel we ought to be engaged by the knowledge of sin within us: let us avail ourselves in unlimited measure of the purifying agency of the Spirit who has been given for men. If we feel our need of heavenly wisdom let us seek divine instruction and unerring guidance from him who came to lead us into all the truth. Thus will life be pure and earnest and we shall enjoy to overflowing the fulfillment of Christ's New Year wish of Peace.

This is our Lord's threefold message for the New Year. He bids us take to heart the significance of the wounded Christ, now ever alive, as the only basis for peace man can ever find or God can furnish. He holds before us today these same marks of his exalted humiliation and with tender and strong persuasiveness they appeal to us to "believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, that believing we may have life in his name." He asks us to plan and labor for others that thus in our own lives wounded for others we may possess the secret of the multiplying peace. He shows us the one essential of effectiveness in this grand work to which he sends us; and now the Holy Spirit is waiting to lead all who seek his help into the peace and joy of Christian earnestness and power.

This is surely a grandly complete message which Christ has given us for the New Year, a message which makes his wish of peace a rich possibility for every life. Behold indeed the Saviour wounded for you; behold the world wounded in need of him; behold the Holy Spirit through the inspiration of whose indwelling wounds in the service of humanity for Christ's sake only contribute to our heavenly peace! And by you all, may the Master's New Year wish of peace be abundantly realized through the experience of his gracious New Year message, the Christian's complete equipment!

When Economy is Wrong.

BY CAROLINE BENEDICT BURELL.

A woman, according to the popular belief, is extravagant both by nature and training. The daily newspaper produces with each new season the same old jokes, reset, about her spring bonnet, or her winter furs, or her summer recreations, all pointing the same way, showing her desire to get all she can from her husband's insufficient income. One would suppose she had for her motto the words of the elder Turveydrop, to his daughter-in-law, "Caroline, frame a wish and gratify it."

Yet in actual life women are the great economists. In the home it is the wives and mothers who do the little saving and scrimping and turning and planning which puts the money in the bank. They have an innate love of making something out of nothing. They pride themselves on a cunningly devised gown made from an old one; they gloat over a retreimmed hat; they rejoice in the rejuvenated carpet; they hang a picture over the spot on the wall paper, and serve up the "left-overs" in marvelous croquettes. Like the daughters of the Vicar of Wakefield, they turn the trains of their gowns into waistcoats for the little boys. The greater the difficulties in their way the greater the rejoicing over the victory.

When economy is a necessity, nothing is more praiseworthy than its practice; but sometimes there is a false economy which masquerades under the guise of the true with destructive success. The wildest extravagance would be better than some pinchings and hoardings which cost more than they are worth.

There is the economy of the rich. This is often the habit formed when it was necessary to save, which becomes a mere stinginess in them in better days, a sort of parsimony of which one would expect them to be ashamed rather than proud, but which is always something of which they boast.

A city missionary went to the wife of a certain millionaire who had amassed his money in small sums, and asked for clothing for a family in great need. The woman said complacently: "We never have any old clothes to give away; my daughters and I make our gowns over and over, and often we have them dyed. By the time we are through with them there is nothing left." She needed to be told of the theory of the good woman who said when she found a thin spot or a tear in a garment she recognized that the