

The
Sermon
On The
Mount

By

W. Carl Ketcherside

The Sermon On the Mount

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by W. CARL KETCHERSIDE

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This book is sent forth with a full appreciation of my indebtedness to my good friend and brother, Hershel Ottwell, who so ably presented a majority of these sermons which I prepared, while I was absent from "The Church of Christ Hour," engaged in gospel meetings away from Saint Louis.

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THE SOURCE OF HAPPINESS

We begin today a new series of talks based upon that wonderful sermon of our Savior, which was preached upon the hilltop, and which has been universally designated "The Sermon on the Mount." It is our honest conviction that within this noble speech of our blessed Master is contained the true panacea for all the ills of the world. It holds out to us a hope which we cannot obtain from any other source. It was not only delivered upon a mountain top but it lifts the soul from the miasma and swamps of lower living and elevates it to the summit of God's grace where the pure air of eternal life gives greater energy for service.

The Sermon on the Mount is Christ's answer to the age-old search for happiness. It begins with what we call the Beatitudes. These short, pithy sayings are so designated because they begin with the word "blessed." But the very same word that is translated "blessed" is also rendered "happy," and means just that. The world is searching for happiness! You who today listen to my words are anxious to find joy and gladness. But often in your attempts to locate happiness you overlook the only source from whence it can spring!

Some seek for happiness amidst the pleasures of this life. The glittering theater with its scenes of lust and carousal, with its pictures of drunkenness and crime, entice many who feel that here they can satisfy their craving for happiness. But will that elusive quality be located in such a place? No, indeed not! You go, losing your sleep, gazing upon such sights as should shame you to stand in the presence of God, and then you return home to a sleepless bed. Night after night you return, but it is always the same. The finer sensibilities are killed within you, you become a slave to the habit of attendance; neglect the church, neglect your home, neglect everything that really counts in life. Is that true pleasure?

Then there are others who seek for happiness at the gambling table! All week they work for the wages which are paid them. Then on Saturday night in a smoke-filled room, they sit with bleary

eyes, placing the cards on the table before them with trembling hands. Often they see their money fade away, and then reeling home, they sit with remorse, knowing that those earnings should have made life easier for a faithful wife and the dependent children. Many indeed are those who have played for high stakes and have ended their careers in the grave of a suicide! Is that true pleasure? Is that happiness?

I know of some men who think, foolishly, that happiness comes from guzzling intoxicants until they are no longer either sober or sane! You can see them lolling over the bar of the neighborhood tavern, tipping the bottle in utter unconcern, and apparently unconscious of the warnings of the Word of God against intemperance. Then behold these same men as they stagger down the street, an object of disgust, as they fall in the gutter and lie there in the filth of their own vomit. More beast than human, they return home in a half-stupor to curse and beat their loved ones, making home more of a hell than a heaven! Oftentimes under the influence of the liquor they are moved to commit murder, or are guilty of a crime of unbridled lust, and for the few hours which they spent in mad carousal they are forced to spend years behind the bars of the prison. Is that true pleasure? Is liquor the "cup that cheers"? Rather, is it not a cup of tears?

The other day I read the column of an outstanding psychologist in one of our daily papers. Problems are brought to him from all over the world and he solves those problems for the ones who ask. On this particular occasion, a woman who had secured a job at a defense plant was writing a query. She had been riding home from work with a man other than her legal husband. They had become enamored of each other. They were making love clandestinely. She told of the thrill of their illegal kisses, but still she said that fear of discovery and the urgings of her conscience kept her in a constant state of inner turmoil. She revealed that she was not happy. She had confused love with lust! And there was no joy for her in her moral dereliction! Neither will there be for you, if you leave the straight and narrow way of chastity and purity!

The sweet singer of Israel, the one-time shepherd-lad, David, says in the first Psalm, "Happy is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners,

nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law does he meditate day and night." There are three actions herein mentioned. They are walking, standing, sitting. There are three conditions referred to. They are counsel, way and seat. There are three classes of persons presented—ungodly, sinners and scornful! The course of sin is outlined in these. First you walk along as advised by the ungodly. They tell you that you do not need to go to church, you only live once, so why not have a good time while on earth. They bid you to miss the Sunday evening service for the fun of the swimming pool, the show or the skating rink. And because you want to be a good fellow in the crowd, you can't resist, so you walk along with them in their counsel.

You say as you go, though, "I'm going back to church. I'll not let these things drag me away. I'll quit before it's too late and get started in again." But you don't, and the next thing you know you are standing in the way with sinners. Your former companions of righteousness have no appeal. You say they are narrow-minded, dried up old fogies, and you'll do what you please. You take pleasure in those who violate the laws of God and the laws of the land. You think it is smart to take God's name in vain and soil your lips with oaths! You think it is sophisticated to shock others who still have a little sense of decency left, by the utter abandon of your course. You make a fool out of yourself and do not realize it.

Then comes the final step when you not only walk and stand with those who are sinful in life but you actually sit down with the scornful. You ridicule the Bible, laugh at the church, turn up your nose at the gospel. You think you are having a good time, don't you? But just wait until death reaches over, taps you on the shoulder, and says, "Come along with me." Perhaps you were out with a drinking, gambling, hell-raising bunch of harebrained, harum-scarum idiots, and the car in which you were riding gives a sickening swerve, leaves the road and crashes into a mingled mass of metal, flesh and blood. When the doctor tells you in the hospital that you have just a few more hours to live, what do you do?

Do you call for the rough gang that you ran around with and

ask them to gather about your bedside and play one last game of poker? Do you summon the bartender and ask him to mix you a last cocktail before you plunge into eternity and face the judgment? No, you do not! You want the preacher that you ridiculed to come and pray for your poor sinful soul, you want the church to come and sing hymns of hope around your bedside! You call for the Bible and want to hear the passages that you once laughed at! Now, you know that the man is really happy who meditates in God's law! You learn, but you learn too late, that what you always thought was pleasure was sin—sin that will damn you in that last great day!

Now, friends, the truth is that happiness lies just exactly in the opposite direction from which our inclinations teach us to look for it. I affirm that everyone listening in today can be happy. I'll prove it to you if you'll tune in each Sunday to this broadcast. You say that it is impossible to show you how you can be happy because you are poverty-stricken. Why, bless your heart, there are people on earth today who have a million dollars and they are the most unhappy persons in the world. I'd rather be a rich poor man than I would to be a poor rich man, any day in the world. Wealth doesn't bring happiness. Often it brings sorrow, sadness, care and decay. The true riches of God—love for Him and for our fellowmen, coupled with faith and hope—these bring happiness. You can be full of rejoicing! You can enjoy life! The whole world has been created for your pleasure. Use the blessings of God!! Don't abuse your privileges. Happiness is yours for the asking! The Sermon on the Mount will give you the key to bliss and joy!

THE POOR IN SPIRIT

We have peculiar ideas of what it takes to produce happiness. Some in my audience would count themselves happy if they could get their pictures in the society page of today's newspaper; some feel that the man who can pen his name to a five-figure check must be just bubbling over with joy. Others long for a ten-room man-

sion with all modern furnishings, or sigh for a new twelve-cylinder car with gas ration appropriate to its requirements. But as we turn our attention to the sermon delivered by Christ on the mountain, we are almost startled to hear Him say, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven." What does this mean?

First, you will notice that Jesus did not say, "Blessed are the poor." There is no essential grace accruing for a man just because he is poverty-stricken. The rich man did not go to hell *because* he was rich; neither did Lazarus go to paradise *because* he was poor. It is what you do with what you have that will save or condemn you! The rich man may be proud of the fact that he is not poor; and the poor man may be just as proud that he is not rich. The pride of both will condemn them. True it is that wealth brings many additional cares and worries; true also is it that he who is divested of such troubles will more readily hear the Word of the Lord, but it still remains that no man is blessed simply because he has little money!

The other day a man said to me, "I sometimes have a notion to throw in the towel, and give up the fight as a Christian." I asked him why he would make such a statement! He declared that he became discouraged and disgusted at his attempts to quit a certain habit which he had started. He said that the harder he tried to conquer it the harder it became, but he concluded by saying, "Still I guess I've got one thing in my favor. I'm at least poor in spirit, and Jesus said that such would be in the Kingdom of Heaven." I hastened to correct him, and told him, "You are not poor in spirit at all. You are just poor-spirited. There's a lot of difference. A man who is poor in spirit would depend on the Lord and conquer anything; but one who is poor-spirited will give up when the going gets tough." No, Jesus did not say, "Blessed are the poor-spirited."

Neither did He say, "Blessed are the spiritually poor." We are distinctly told, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth, but lay up treasures in heaven" (Matthew 6:20). Now, anyone who has treasures laid up is not poor. He may be poor as far as this world is concerned, but he is rich in heaven's sight. Of such an one, James speaks, saying, "Hath not God chosen the poor of this

world, *rich in faith*, and heirs of the kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him?" We are encouraged to be spiritually rich and there is no blessing to those who are not. Perhaps you recall the story of the very wealthy lady who dreamed one night that she died and went to the gate of heaven. When she received admittance an angel volunteered to show her the place of her residence in that city of bliss. They turned down a golden street, and came to a huge, glittering palace. With an exclamation of delight, the rich dowager exclaimed, "Oh, what a perfect place. And is this mine forever?" The angel replied, "No, this place belongs to the woman who did your washing while on earth. You recall, the one who scrubbed for you on Tuesdays." Finally they reached the end of the street and there was a little hut. "Here," said the angel, "will be your home!" The woman recoiled from the prospect and, incensed, she asked, "Why does it come that my servant has a better home than I have? This is ridiculous!" "Not at all," the heavenly courier said, "you see, madam, we build these out of the materials of good works that you send up, and that's the best we could do with your material." Yes, that was just a dream, but still there's an element of truth in it. Let's strive to be "rich in good works" (2 Timothy 6:18).

What, then, is it to be poor in spirit? I answer that the term "poor" in this connection is used as the exact opposite of "proud." One might even make a negative statement of this Beatitude, "Unhappy are the proud in spirit." Would you deny that truth? I'm sure you could not! Pride caused the angels to be cast out of heaven, it committed the first murder when it filled Cain with insane jealousy, and it later tacked the arms of Jesus to the Cross, because he had condemned it in the religious peoples of that day.

The greatest example of poverty of spirit is found in the life of Jesus Himself. The Beatitudes are in themselves only word pictures of His character and conduct. Let us show you then how He manifested this divine attribute. You recall that even when the shadow of the Cross was falling over His heart, He heard His disciples arguing over who would be the greatest in the coming kingdom. At the last supper, He taught them what entrance to that kingdom really meant. He did not call for a servant to wash His feet. Neither did He tell the impulsive Peter, the doubting Thomas, or the "sons of thunder," James and John, to wash the

feet of the others. But instead the record declares, "He riseth from supper, and laid aside His garments; and took a towel and girded Himself. After that He poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded" (John 13:4, 5). At last He had made the rounds. Now He drives home the lesson. "Ye call Me Master and Lord: and ye say well, for so I am. I have given you an example that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, *happy are ye if you do them*" (John 13:13-17).

The kingdom of heaven belongs to the poor in spirit. If you want to be an inhabitant of that kingdom, you will have to leave your pride outside. And the longer you serve the Master of men the more humble you will become. It is said that in an old-time academy the students had a three-year course. In their first year they were called "wise men." In their second they were called "philosophers"; that is, those who want or wish to become wise men. In their last year they were designated "disciples," or learners. Thus was brought home to them that the more they knew the humbler it should make them. Jesus declares that the one who would be greatest in His kingdom must first become servant of all. We who are converted to Christ are on the earth for the same reason He came to earth; not to be ministered unto but to minister. We are saved to save others; loved to love others!

Humility, or poverty of the spirit not only gains entrance for us into the Kingdom of God, but it keeps us there. It is the golden strand that binds us fast to the Master. If we become boastful and proud of our Christian accomplishments we will surely fall, for "Pride goeth before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall." Have you heard that old story of the frog who made up his mind to transfer to a warmer climate? He pondered and thought, but could figure out no means of travel, until of a sudden there occurred to him a happy thought. He persuaded a couple of wild geese who were his personal friends to assist him. Then he found a string, and asked each of the geese to take an end of it in his beak. He then seized the string in the middle, and when the geese soared into the atmosphere, the frog found himself joyfully en route to the land of his hopes. However, a spectator far below,

beholding this unique performance, yelled out, "Who invented that?" the frog's pride would not let him keep still, so he opened his mouth and called back, "I invented it," and soon the stranger saw nothing but a pulp where the frog crashed into the earth. His pride brought about his fall. If you want to hold on to the kingdom you must learn to swallow your pride and keep your mouth shut. Vain boasting will lose your soul.

The carrion birds and the birds of prey build high in the mountain crags, but the singing birds build low. And they sweeten our lives by the songs they sing. Let us also humble ourselves, that, though we may never soar high in the eyes of the world, we can at least bring songs of joy to aching hearts, and gladness to lives that are filled with care. Happiness lies not in getting as much as you can *from* life but in giving as much as you can *to* life.

*"I shall not pass this way again;
Then let me now relieve some pain,
Remove some barrier from the road,
Or lighten someone's heavy load;
A helping hand to this one lend,
Then turn some other to befriend."*

"Happy are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven."

THEY THAT MOURN

One does not usually think of an individual who is weeping copious tears as being happy. If you were to pass down the street and hear the anguished sobs of one in deep distress, you surely would not consider the falling tears and shaking frame as being the result of a blessing. Yet Jesus declares, "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." What does this mean? Perhaps there is within this simple philosophy of life a deep source or spring of comfort if we can but locate it!

But first I wish to call attention to the fact that *not* all who mourn will be blessed. Jesus did not teach that they would. By way of illustrating this, we call attention to certain ones who shall be cast into hell. Of them the Savior says, "So shall it be at the end of the world; the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be *wailing* and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 13:49, 50). Yes, there will be weeping in eternal torment, but there will be no blessing for those who mourn.

There will be no comfort either for the professional pessimist! You know, there are those who like an air of funereal gloom. They search for all that is bad, and ignore all that is good in life. If it rains, they forget that the showers will revive the parched earth, and make the desert blossom as a rose. All they see is the mud that results. When someone remarks, "Isn't that a beautiful rose?" the pessimist always hastens to say, "Yes, but that's a mighty big thorn growing there by it." A person of that type cannot eat a doughnut and be thankful for it, because he is worried about how big the hole is in the doughnut. You've seen people like that haven't you? With a glum expression, a woebegone droop to their shoulders; when you ask them how they feel, they really *complain* of feeling better. They are never so happy as when they are miserable; never so glad as when they are sad. I think most of that is an appeal for attention from others. And since it is all "put on," they are like the Pharisees, of whom Jesus spoke, "Be not as hypocrites of a sad countenance; for they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to fast. Verily I say unto you, they *have* their reward" (Matthew 6:16). Indeed if your sole motive by your mourning is to attract attention of men, then you get all that you desired, when they see you, and there is nothing else in store for you.

But someone may say, "Surely, then, those who really mourn the loss of a loved one are the ones referred to by Jesus in His sermon." Not necessarily! Out in Kansas, where I once lived, there was a man whose son was killed by lightning. The boy was plowing in the field, and when a heavy rain storm swept across the prairie, he took shelter under the only tree anywhere near. A spear of lightning leaped from the clouds and struck the tree, killing the lad who had sought refuge there. The father almost

lost his mind. But when the cruel tragedy was somewhat mitigated by time, he announced his decision. He resolved never to return to church again, or to read his Bible. He declared that he could no longer trust in a God who had taken his dearest possession. His grief instead of bringing a blessing brought bitterness of soul, shut him off from his neighbors and closed his communion with God. He certainly was not blessed!

Who, then, are the mourners for whom happiness awaits? I reply that they are those who mourn because of their sins, and the consciousness of those wrongs. Now, there are some who do not mourn for their lost and undone condition. Their consciences are seared over with a hot iron. Their mind is covered with scar tissue. There is no feeling left! A man once told me that he felt a pain like lightning strike him. As soon as it had left his body, he did not feel any different. Then by chance he reached down with the blade of the knife which he held in his hand and touched his leg with it. He was amazed to note that he did not feel it. He then pricked the flesh but there was no feeling. Then came the startling realization that he was paralyzed. His nerve centers no longer functioned. And I say to you this day, if you can go places that are sinful, say things that are ungodly, and live a life of wickedness, then return home and lie down to untroubled sleep, you are spiritually paralyzed. You had better go at once to the Great Physician and receive the medicine of His Word into your sinful soul, that you might be saved.

When one grieves over his separation from God, he will be impelled to do something about it. The prodigal son was insensible to his lost condition while his money lasted, and he was wasting his substance in riotous living. But when he "came to himself" and began to sorrow over his state, he then made a resolution to do something about it. "I will arise and go to my father's house," he said, and thus his sadness was turned to joy, and the heaviness of his heart was lifted.

However, our sorrow must be genuine! We must sorrow for our sin and not just because we must pay the consequences. There are two good Old Testament examples to illustrate the difference. One is the case of King Saul, who transgressed God's covenant,

and tried to excuse it by saying that he was just accumulating sacrifices for the Lord. When he was convicted of his dereliction, he immediately began to be afraid of what the people would say about his loss of prestige and power. He confessed several times, but it was only when he had his back to the wall and thought that was the only way out. He did not hate sin, he just hated the consequences. But the other case is that of David.

The sin of David was, if anything, more grievous than that of Saul. In his lasciviousness, he committed adultery with the wife of one of his best friends, and a man who was even then out on the battlefield fighting to protect the king. Then he added to that the sin of murder. Then it was that Nathan the prophet came, and after outlining the hideous thing that had been done, pointed the accusing finger at David and said, "Thou art the man." David exclaimed, "I have sinned against God." Then to show the depth of his sorrow, he wrote one of the Psalms. It is the fifty-first, in which he says, "According to the abundance of Thy mercies, blot out my transgressions, and my iniquity. Wash me yet more from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my iniquity, and my sin is always before me. To Thee only have I sinned, and done evil before Thee. Sprinkle me with hyssop and I shall be cleansed, wash me and I shall be whiter than snow. Create a clean heart in me, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Turn away Thy face from my sins and blot out all my iniquities." After listening to this song, can you doubt the integrity and sincerity of the man who wrote it? His was a godly sorrow, and godly sorrow leadeth to repentance, and repentance brings a blessing. Hard as it is to repent and confess our wrongs, yet I affirm freely that such is the only step to God's favor and eternal reward.

Sorrow leads us to God. Mourning brings us closer to Him who will give us comfort in our sad hours. Every heart longs for a confidante. In our times of anguish we want someone to whom we can pour out the inner feelings of our soul. Christ is such an one. He is faithful, true and honest. At the gateway of the great Parthenon in Athens there was an altar erected. It was dedicated to Tears. No burnt sacrifices were permitted to be offered thereupon, no votive offerings were bestowed. But all who sorrowed might come there, and bow before it, and weep out their sorrows. It was to them a place of joy following sorrow, for they could

return home refreshed by the very tears which they shed. In just such a way can we come to God, recalling, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."

Those who mourn are also blessed because they discover the road to happiness which consists of sympathy and service to others. It is more blessed to give than to receive. Yet only those can truly experience the blessedness of giving sympathy who have walked through the same valley of despair as is now being trodden by those who receive that sympathy. Sorrow brings us closer to God, but it also brings us closer to each other. It discovers a common bond which ties our hearts together in love. Jesus uttered a profound truth when He stated the Beatitude, "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted."

BLESSED ARE THE MEEK

As we continue today our discussion of The Sermon on the Mount, I am going to talk about the most unpopular of the Beatitudes. The truth of the matter is that the average person does not think of a blessing in connection with meekness at all. Rather he feels that meekness is a decided liability, and he would be offended if someone were to accuse him of such an attribute in his business affairs. To him the meek are either contemptible, or objects deserving pity.

And insofar as the meek inheriting the earth—well, that is absolutely ridiculous in the eyes of the man of the world. He knows that it takes two-fisted, battering, dog-eat-dog tactics to inherit anything. He might be willing to admit that the meek will enter heaven, but insofar as inheriting this or any other earth is concerned, it is out of the question. It takes aggressiveness, assertiveness and energetic attack to get anywhere these days. The evolutionary theory of the survival of the fittest has caused the world to scoff at those who are meek. Yet, in spite of all this,

Jesus says that the meek are happy and will inherit the earth! What theory did he have in mind? How can we reconcile His words with our experience and observation?

I wish to say that I think too many individuals mistake what meekness really consists of. I recall a comic strip character who used to appear in our Sunday paper. He was called the timid soul. His name was Casper Milquetoast. He lived in constant fear—of his wife, the neighbors, his employer, and the world in general. Now, some thought his chief characteristic was meekness. But it was not. There is no appeasement, no compromise, in those of whom the Savior spoke. Meekness is not cowardice at all. Do not ever get to thinking that it is. It is just the opposite. It is bravery of the highest sort. Let us prove that statement.

Do you know what a man is most afraid of on earth? It is the fear of being thought a coward. Now, I was afraid of the dark when I was a youngster. I always conjured up visions of unfriendly creatures inhabiting the shades of night, just crouching in convenient places, ready to grab me. I always ran and jumped from the middle of the room into the bed, to keep whatever was under it from grabbing me and yanking me under also. But an uncle cured me of that fear. One evening when I was protesting against going out into the dark, he said, "I never thought that you'd be a coward." I doubled up my fists and straightened up my shoulders and went boldly into the dark. Surely I was afraid of it, but I was more afraid of being called a coward. Haven't you seen boys tear into those who were older and larger, and fight like wildcats, just because someone yelled "fraidy-cat"? It takes courage of the highest degree to stand before the mob and let them *think you are a coward*, when you know you are but obeying a Higher will. Jesus had that kind of courage.

Moses was the meekest man in the Old Testament. We are told that in Numbers 12:3. Yet this was the same Moses who in righteous indignation dashed the tables of the law to the ground and broke them, when he was confronted with the idolatrous calf of gold which Israel had made. This was he that held up his hands to secure heavenly blessing on the forces that were fighting against the Amalekites. There was not an ounce of compromise or fear of men in the constitution of Moses.

The meekest character of the New Testament was our Lord. He so describes Himself in the wonderful invitation which says, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart." Yes, He was meek, but in His very meekness there was strength. He had no bluster, bluff or loud yelling in His life to attract attention to Himself. He did not strive or cry, neither was His voice heard in the streets. But He was not cowardly, as witness His facing of the entire mob in Gethsemane when all His companions fled.

Some people believe that strength must be noisy. That is not correct. The power is not in the thunder, it is in the lightning. The thunder never hurts anything. It isn't the boom of the cannon but the well-directed shot that counts. True strength is in the quiet things of life. The heart makes little sound, but every twenty-four hours it exerts enough pressure that if it could be put in one tug it would lift a huge locomotive a foot off the rails. The limbs of the tree make no noise, yet each day they draw many pounds of water from the earth to a great height to sustain the trunk and to produce fruit. Sometimes noise is nothing but a smoke screen to curtain fear, as in the case of Peter, who cursed and swore, when he denied his Lord. But Jesus, the meek and lowly, calmly acknowledged that He was the King of the Jews, though He knew what it would cost Him to do so.

Meekness is nothing more or less than gentleness. The man who is happy though meek is merely one of God's gentlemen. And someone has defined a gentleman as being one who is "as gentle as a lady, and as manly as a man." I think that is a very apt way of putting it, don't you? A gentleman must be humble, sincere, courageous and consecrated to his convictions. All of that is a part of the meekness demanded by the Christ. It was the depth of His conviction coupled with a burning zeal for the purity of His Father's house which caused Jesus to knot a whip of thongs and drive the money-changers from the temple. And when He overturned their tables, drove out the oxen and lashed the backs of the fleeing parasites upon religious societies He was still meek! His was the meekness that rises to an emergency. It was not the kind of sob-sister, milksop weakness that causes us to pursue a

policy of appeasement with evil of every kind. There is a need for the kind of courage which Christ demonstrated even in this day. Social wrongs need to be righted; commercialization of religion needs to be halted; the temple needs cleansing. Why do you not assert yourself for God, and

*In the world's broad field of battle
In the bivouac of life;
Be not like dumb, driven cattle,
Be a hero in the strife!*

But you still may question me, "Do you believe that those who are meek will inherit the earth?" I certainly do believe that! I believe there is a time coming in the new heaven and the new earth when only those who *are* meek will be present. Those who are not meek will not enter that blest and happy abode. Do you ask me what makes me so sure? Then my reply is that I believe it because Jesus said that it was so. He has never misrepresented a thing. His words have ever been true. I share in His promise to the meek, because I know that He is not slack concerning that promise. I know that love is a greater force than armed might. I know that meekness will eventually triumph. Even our own observation proves that.

If fierceness and strength were most powerful, then there would be millions of lions and tigers on earth, and lambs would soon cease to exist. But instead, even in the natural realm, there are thousands of lambs for each wild beast of prey. That principle holds true in the field of government also. It is being demonstrated even as I speak upon the gory fields of France and the blood-drenched islands of the far-flung Pacific. We did not desire this war. Our nation would rather have lived at peace with all nations. We even decided upon a disarmament program, hoping that it would produce a world condition, whereby men of all colors could sit under their own vine and fig tree. But there were those who scoffed at our meekness as being weakness. They felt that democracies were producing a group of glorified sissies, who could not and would not defend principles of justice and right. But those traitors to the common good are being driven like cringing beasts to their own lairs and will be destroyed by those who meekly prefer to be at peace with the world.

Even Napoleon, who set out to be a world-conqueror, was forced to admit the superiority of Christ and His methods. Sitting there upon the lonely isle of his banishment, looking out across the blue waters, the disappointed general declared that he had attempted to establish a kingdom by force, and now was *forlorn*, forsaken and forgotten by even those whom he would have made great. But Christ, through the power of love, had established a kingdom which held the respect of peoples of all nations. The meek and lowly, not by killing others, but by humbly submitting to death, had become the most powerful character in all the universe. Some day He is coming again, and when He does, I know that the meek will inherit the earth which He has prepared for them. Blessed are they!

HUNGRY AND THIRSTY

A few days ago I visited a patient in the hospital. It was just about time for the noon luncheon to be served. I remarked that I had come at a very opportune time, if I could just pretend to be a patient also. But the sick man said, "It wouldn't do you a lot of good, if you had no more appetite than I have." Well, I had a pretty good appetite as I usually do, and all of a sudden it occurred to me that even an appetite was a blessing we do not appreciate until we lose it. It's that way with money, loved ones, and even time. When we get to the place that we have lost that which appeared commonplace, it all at once takes on a value we had never noticed before.

Thus when I left the hospital corridor and returned to my automobile I tried to jot down in my mind some of the blessings of a good appetite, inasmuch as I knew that soon I would be talking on the words of Christ, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." Among other things I came to the conclusion that appetite leads to action. Have you ever seen a hungry youngster just in from school? I recall when

I went to school up in the state of Illinois and had to walk two miles home. The nearer I got to the orchard which betokened our place the hungrier I became, and the hungrier I became the faster I went. Nothing I have ever eaten since appealed to me half so much as that good old homemade bread spread with butter and blackberry jelly.

But you must realize that man hungers for other things besides bread. For instance, he has a thirst for knowledge! The intellectual being cries out for sustenance just as does the physical. Who has not read the story of Abraham Lincoln and his aspirations to learn? Lying flat on his stomach before the flickering fire in the fireplace, he figured his sums on the old wooden shovel. Often he walked miles to borrow one book. When he was in the store at New Salem, Illinois, he kept his law volumes near his hand. He studied at night by the dim gleam of candlelight. His thirst led to action, and he was filled. He became President of this republic, simply because he refused to quench his burning appetite for knowledge.

Then there is another hunger also. It is that of the spiritual man, or as Paul calls it, the inner man. The Savior said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). Show me a man who is really hungry for God's Word and I will show you a man who will take steps to fill that void in his life. I knew a man down in the Lead Belt of Missouri once, who was wild, reckless and devil-may-care in his life. His speech was full of profanity, his chief aim in life seemed to be the embarrassing of those whose minds were pure by the telling of some ungodly, filthy, immoral tale. But finally he came in contact with the gospel. When he tasted it, there arose a gnawing, craving hunger in his soul for more of that Bread of Life. He carried his testament with him and in the changing room he slipped it in his wet, dirty overalls which he wore underground. He read it at noon by the flicker of his carbide miner's lamp and read it before he went to bed at the close of day. Then he became possessed of a desire to tell others of his great discovery.

In spite of the fact that he lacked the training of schools, he

told the story of the Cross wherever he found one who would listen. Eventually he found himself in the pulpit, and at last from coast-to-coast he preached the wonderful words of salvation. Today he lies sleeping beneath the sod of a Kansas hillside, but his work goes on. The one who prepared this sermon would not be on earth today were it not for that one. Neither would this sermon be sent forth to listening multitudes had it not been for that one man's hunger for the things of eternity. God has prepared a gospel feast for all of you—but only those who are hungry will find their way to the table. The others may be content to fill their bellies with the husks that Satan casts out—pleasures, wealth, worldly pride and the cares of this life. Why is it that those who go to the table three times daily will starve their souls and become spiritual skeletons?

A good appetite is the best sign of health! Almost the first thing the doctor asks you when he begins his examination is the question, "How is your appetite?" When the appetite becomes jaded, and one is indifferent about his meals, it is a good indication of some maladjustment inside. And that holds true spiritually also! Show me a man who never reads his Bible, who never studies the sacred truths of the ages, who isn't interested in what his brethren have written, and I'll show you a man who is spiritually weak. His loss of appetite is an indication that his soul is out of tune with the Lord.

But someone may say, "I have no hunger for the Bible, because I cannot get anything out of what I read." Generally, you'll find those who make such an assertion are spiritual nibblers. They've never really sat down to a full gospel meal. They pick up the Bible and read a verse here, then idly turn the pages and read another. Then they pick up the newspaper and read a little, then thumb a magazine awhile, then listlessly pick up the Good Book again. That's like a little boy eating a cracker at 11 o'clock, a couple of cookies at 11:15, a piece of candy at 11:30 and an apple at 11:45, then coming to the table at noon to declare that he doesn't have an appetite! Give the Bible a chance! Study it like you would your arithmetic or any other book. Let it speak to you in systematic fashion! Do not scrap it to suit your moods. Then you'll develop a hunger for it.

Of course there are others who do not know what an appetite for truth is because they have never tasted it. One must learn to appreciate the word of the Lord. I recall the first time I was given an olive! I thought that it was a cross between a green persimmon and an oversize garden pea soaked in weak vinegar. But I ate one, then another, and now I confess that olives hold a great appeal for my taste. You can cultivate a taste for the things in life that are solid and substantial. But you cannot do it by sitting around all of the time with a comic book or a love story magazine in your hands. The apostle says, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby, if so be ye *have tasted* that the Lord is gracious" (1 Peter 2:2, 3). I believe sincerely that if you will actually taste the goodness of God, His mercy and His grace, that you will find a hunger developing in your soul; a desire to know more and more of His Will. We invite all of you to become students of the greatest Book in the world today.

You are surely missing something, if this day you have lost your appetite for the good and spiritual things of God's house. Have you heard of the story of the crane that was picking up snails in the mud along the bank of a pond which contained stagnant water? A beautiful swan came floating down out of the clouds and alighted by the side of the crane. "Where did you come from?" asked the crane. The swan replied, "I am from the heavenly skies of blue." Immediately he began to tell the crane of the beauty and glory, the peace and purity of the upper realm. "Are there any snails there?" asked the crane. When the swan replied that there were not, the crane had no wish to hear any more. He went back to his paddling and dabbling in the mud. And that is the way with a lot of people on earth. So long have they been raking their minds through trash and filth that they have no ears which will listen to the story of God's blest abode for the saints over there. We are persuaded, though, that you who listen in this day have higher aims and aspirations than to "waste your substance in riotous living." We point out to you who hunger amidst the husks of the world that "there is bread enough in the Father's house to spare."

You cannot get too much of God's Word! You may not be able

to digest all of it at once or even much of it. But your capacity will increase as you continue to eat at the table of God, and soon you will grow in grace and in the knowledge of Our Lord! But first you must have a desire for that kind of food. Create that desire this day. "The world has nothing new to give; it has no new, no pure delight. Oh, try the way that Christians live! Be saved, oh, tonight!" Today for all who are hungry and thirsty, there comes the call of the ages, "Come, for all things are ready; come to the feast!" Will you be among those who will become a child of God today? Then your hunger and thirst will have become a blessing indeed.

THE PRIORITY COMMAND

Jesus had just called a politician from his office as collector of revenue, and requested the man to follow him. In his gratitude for the favor bestowed, the official made a feast for the prophet of Nazareth. He invited his former fellow-officers, as well as a great many who were looked upon as sinners by the Jewish religious sects. Jesus sat down to eat with the motley horde. The Pharisees stood like hungry wolves outside the happy circle, and lifted up their voices in carping criticism. Finally Jesus, with a touch of irony perhaps, turned and said unto them, "They that are whole need not a physician but they that are sick. If ye had known what the Scripture meant which says that God will have mercy and not sacrifice, you would not have condemned the guiltless." Thus he taught the grand lesson that mercy is required above sacrifice. It comes first! It has an A-1 priority in God's system of government, and without that quality in your life, all of the things you do for the Lord are absolutely worthless.

What can we infer from this statement? We know that sacrifices were commanded under the Old Testament. In what way does mercy take the precedence over such sacrifices? Let us suppose that a man was on his way to the temple at Jerusalem, but as he goes along he hears the cry of an animal in distress and goes

to investigate. He finds that an ass or ox has fallen into a pit. God required that the man stop, even if it were upon the Sabbath day, and lift the animal out of its precarious position. The Old Testament specifically provided that even if a bird fell from its nest, a pedestrian must stop and place it safely back in its haven of refuge before proceeding. Even if he did not get to the temple service at all, he was required to show such an act of kindness. What good would it do to go and offer upon the altar of the Lord if one had turned a deaf ear to the piteous cry of suffering by the way?

That same thing holds true today! God expects His commands to be obeyed, but mercy must come first in discharge of our duty. If I am on my way to the service of the church, and a man comes running to ask my aid because his mother is dying, I must turn aside and show compassion, and thus demonstrate that the religion which I preach is also a matter of practical service. If I refuse to show mercy to others, I have no right to expect mercy from God. As a matter-of-fact, God cannot show mercy to an unmerciful person and still be God, for this is contrary to His nature and principles of justice.

Mercy is important! Some of the most powerful stories which the Savior used for illustration are centered around this thought. Take the case of the man who went down to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of raiment, and wounded him, leaving him half-dead. A certain priest went down that trail, but when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. Then a Levite also went along the road, and when he saw the victim, he came and looked upon him, and then he too passed on by, without extending even first aid, much less second or third aid. At last the despised Samaritan came, but when he saw the wounded man, he had compassion on him and ministered to his needs. Now, friends, the priest and Levite were the religious leaders of the day. They stood before the people and preached to them, taught them, and exhorted them to serve God. They were the clergy of that day, and to them the world looked for spiritual guidance. But they miserably failed in the test of human kindness, and the struggle to be just!

Of course if this case had been reported to the police at Jericho they would not have bothered the priest, neither would they have arrested the Levite. They would have made a search for the robbers but would never have considered taking these respected religious leaders into custody. Yet in this story, Jesus puts those men in the same category with the robbers. He makes no distinction between them. At the bar of God's judgment they will stand condemned with the ones who beat and battered the man and took his possessions. There are many today who go to church regularly, who give of their money to support the preaching of the gospel, who make long and loud prayers, but who will stand with the priest, the Levite and the robbers in the last day, and for the same reason. They have learned the meaning of sacrifice, but they have never learned the significance of mercy.

The religion of Christ consists of a dual responsibility. It carries with it an obligation to serve God and help our fellowmen. Here is the Scriptural definition thereof, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this; to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (James 1:27). One may be morally clean, but if he does not help those who are needy and show mercy to the destitute, he is not a Christian. Again the record says, "If a brother or sister be naked, or destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled: notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?" (James 2:15, 16). Do you know of a better passage to show the difference between empty profession and the practice of Christian virtue?

In that pattern for prayer which the Master taught His disciples, you recall that he inserted the phrase, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us." Then He states, "For if ye forgive not those who trespass against you, neither will My Heavenly Father forgive you your trespasses." The forgiveness of Heaven toward each of us is conditional. It is based upon the quality of mercy which we show to those about us. Have you heard of the woman who went to the butcher to buy a pound of steak? He gave her short weight, as was his nefarious custom. When he handed her the meat, he asked her to bring him a pound

of butter next day. She did so, and he threw it on the scales, exclaiming, "Madam, this is only thirteen ounces of butter." The woman replied, "I do not know about that. I lost the pound weight from my scales, so I just used the steak which you gave me as a balance." You will receive in the last day the judgment that you mete out to others in this day. If you were weighed against the mercy you have manifested in your life, what would be the result? Too often, we expect mercy from others, without manifesting it ourselves. Listen to the illustration Christ gives of that.

A certain king asked for an accounting from all his servants. It was found that one owed ten thousand talents, an amount so large that it could not possibly be paid. The king ordered him sold into slavery together with his wife and children. He further demanded confiscation of all his property to apply on the debt. The servant, hearing this decree, came and fell down before the master, and worshipped him, saying, "Have mercy, lord, and I will pay thee." Then the master was moved with compassion, and loosed him and even forgave him this tremendous debt.

But that same servant went out and found one of his companions who owed him an insignificant amount, and he laid hands on him, grasping him by the throat, and demanding his money. When the man protested that he could not pay, he cast him into prison. But some of his fellow-servants knew about it and they came and related the incident to their lord. The master was wrathful when he heard it and called the first servant, saying, "Thou wicked man, I forgave the debt you owed me because you so desired; should you not have had compassion on your fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?" He then ordered the unmerciful man turned over to the torment which awaited such characters. But the application of this story to us today is found in the closing words of the Savior, "So likewise shall my Heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye *from your hearts* forgive not everyone his brother their trespasses" (Matthew 18:35).

The thing which will be most missed in hell will be mercy. It is the thing that men will cry for first, and the thing which they will desire the most. When the rich man lifted up his eyes in hell

he did not ask for water first, but rather his exclamation was, "Have mercy, Father Abraham!" He who turned his back upon the crippled beggar whose body was running with sores now pleads for notice. He who on earth would not cast a crust of bread to a pleading mendicant now begs a drop of water! But torment was his over there, because he had let others be tormented over here. Unless we learn to share the bounties of God with others on earth, He will not share His eternal grace with us in heaven. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." The key to God's mercy is in your heart today. Unlock that heart and let other men share your love, and God will give you the riches of glory some day.

PURE IN HEART

The beatitude which we are discussing today asserts, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." Now, the word "pure" really means "unmixed." So a pure heart is one that has no foreign elements to truth mixed in with the Word of the Lord which is contained therein. God has always demanded of His people that they keep themselves free from entangling alliances with the world, that they be a pure, separated, consecrated people.

The lesson of purity was taught in various ways under the Old Testament dispensation. For instance, the devout Jew was not permitted to plant divers kinds of seeds in the same plot of ground; he was not permitted to wear a garment of mingled wool and linen; he was not allowed to breed his cattle to another kind, for hybridizing was forbidden by the law of Moses. Thus the wrong involved in admixture of two elements which were not alike was constantly brought home to him.

The prophets considered God's people as being gold or silver, and the sins which they committed were looked upon as dross. Thus persecution was considered a refining fire, which burnt up and consumed the dross and left the people pure in heart. The great Babylonian captivity which lasted for 70 years was God's

means of driving idolatry from the minds of His chosen ones that their worship might be unmixed and pure in His sight.

We have the word "sincere" used in connection with "hearts" from time to time. It is an interesting word. Originally it was from two words which taken together mean "wax free." It referred to honey that was strained and purified, with the bees' wax or honeycomb extracted. That left the honey pure or "sincere." So it is that a "sincere heart" is one that has been purged of every element except the truth of heaven. It is only such a heart that will gain admittance to God. A hypocritical, insincere, pretentious person has no promise of recognition before God's throne. To all such He will say, "Depart from Me, I never knew you." It is most important then that we possess pure hearts in heaven's sight.

It requires a struggle to maintain our purity in these days of evil, and yet it is also true that the greater the evil about us the more the old world needs the testimony of a pure life for Jesus. Once when I was hunting in the swamps of the southland, the thought came to me that surely a more dismal place could not exist. The water was stagnant and foul, snakes slithered off of low-hanging tree limbs, turtles plopped into the marsh. All around was desolation! Then suddenly as I pushed my way through the tall cane that was growing so thickly, I came to a small open place. It was alive with water lilies, pure and gleaming white. They seemed to me as a symbol of our lives on earth. We can remain pure even amidst the immorality of the universe. We can let our lives shine for Christ.

Let us continue to send forth our ideals regardless of what may occur. Sometimes it may seem that we are obscured by the greater weight of sin and ungodliness about us, but we can still do our best! I recall a trip which my family and I made to the west coast of our country once. We sat down on a high rock bluff above the sea. Immediately below us a clear river poured into the ocean. At high tide the ocean covered up that pure water and it was mixed with the brine, but always when the tide went down, there it was still sending forth that pure water as before. It kept on flowing regardless of the consequences. We can keep on testifying

of the value of a righteous life, it makes no difference what external circumstances may confront us!

Let us notice some of the things which we must exclude from our lives in order to have pure hearts. The first I mention is hypocrisy. We read, "Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, *hypocrisies*, and envies, and all evil speakings, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby" (1 Peter 2:1, 2). A hypocrite is one who pretends to be something that he knows he is not. As long as wilful deceit exists in a heart that heart cannot be pure. Let us be careful to exclude all pretence from our lives, as unbecoming to the Christian profession.

Another feature which renders a heart impure is a love of worldliness. There are those who want to hold to Christ with one hand and to Satan with the other. They attempt to justify their conduct in certain things by saying, "I really do not see any harm in it." Friends, when you step into a store to buy an article you will notice that it always has a trademark. Every manufacturing organization has a trademark. The purpose of such is to identify the originator of the article. It seems to me that Satan's trademark is the label "No harm." I never knew a person who wanted to do evil but what he attempted to justify the procedure by declaring, "I don't see any harm."

But here's what the Bible says, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever" (1 John 2:15-17). It is as true as true can be that Christ will not take a second place in your life. He must either occupy the throne room in the temple of your life, or else He will withdraw. It is essential therefore that you heed the admonition, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above. Set your affection on things above and not on things on the earth" (Colossians 3:1, 2).

Occasionally we hear persons who talk about "worldly Christians." I insist that there is no such thing. Even if someone points

out to you one whom he designates by such a title do not believe it. You have heard about the old gentleman who went to the zoo for the first time. He came eventually to the place where the rhinoceros was kept imprisoned. His eyes opened wider as he looked at the strange, ungainly, misshapen beast. Finally, turning around, he shook his head, and turning away, muttered, "It can't be true. There is no such animal." And I tell you that there is no such thing as a worldly Christian. There may be and I know there are some "worldly church members." But if a man is worldly he is not a Christian and if he is a Christian he cannot be worldly.

I really feel that most of us could have pure hearts, if it were not for the fact that we are afraid of being laughed at. If we could bring ourselves to the place where we hate defilement, until we would be willing to suffer the sneers and reproaches of the world rather than become guilty of sin, we would win the victory. All of you have heard of the ermine, that little animal which has fur of perfect white. This dainty little animal spends most of its time endeavoring to keep that fur from being soiled. The instinct of protection from defilement is so strong within it that it will actually suffer capture rather than become dirty. Trappers know this, and take advantage of the fact. They smear the paths which the ermine travels with filth, and set their traps to the side of the paths. The animal in an attempt to keep itself unspotted, falls into the traps.

It is a part of pure and undefiled religion to keep unspotted from the world. To do this one must not merely have an aversion to wrong but he must hate it—hate it with every fiber of his moral being. Christ hates evil. He said to a certain church, "This thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate" (Revelation 2:6). Jude says in his epistle, verse 23, "Others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh." Do you detest sin? Do you despise it? Or do you sit and sigh that you cannot indulge in it, because you are now a professed Christian? The great apostle Paul said he counted his past life a loss; to him it was as dross which had clung to the gold, that had to be purged before the gold could shine out in its pure brilliance. Do you consider the days you spent in sin that way?

Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people. Christ has gone to prepare the place; it is up to you to prepare yourself to dwell there. No one else can do that for you! You have a choice to make! On one side is the world with its allurements and pleasures; on the other is the pure life of a child of God. What is your choice? "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Will you be among that number, when the saints go marching in?

THE PEACEMAKERS

We feel that it is very appropriate indeed to discuss with you the Beatitude which we have selected for today. It reads, "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God." The world which has been involved in such a cruel struggle is now turning its mind to the subject of peace. There is increasingly less talk about armament, and more on the topic of postwar planning! It is easy to plan a war! It is difficult sometime to plan a lasting peace. Any hot-headed fool can cause strife, but peace is the result of calm, deliberate, sincere and humble thinking.

Before we proceed further, let's consider what this statement of Christ does *not* say. It does not teach "Blessed are the peacemakers." You know, there are certain ones, even in the church, who are not content to work unless they can set the pace. They want to be leaders, and if they cannot be, they refuse to do anything, except grumble and criticize those who are directing things. A short time ago, I knew of a young man in a certain church in South Missouri who served notice on the leadership that he did not want to be placed on the program another time. When asked his reason, he declared that he thought the leaders were partial. On a certain occasion they had called on another to work twice before giving him an opportunity. Thus he was serving notice that he wouldn't work at all, unless he could work in his own way.

Many who aspire to leadership have few qualities commending

them for the position. Yet churches have been broken up, factions have been started, lives have been ruined and souls doomed because of the jealousy, envy and general "littleness" of many who will not run unless they can set the pace. Indeed it is true that such are not peacemakers, but rather they are "pieces makers"—making pieces of the church which Christ died for.

The Bible does not authorize us to teach that peace is of prime importance! The doctrine of "peace at any price" is not a Scriptural doctrine. As a matter-of-fact there is something which must always precede Scriptural peace, and without it, that peace will not be lasting or enduring. That something is "purity." We read in James 3:17, "The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable." Thus there are certain things worth more than peace. Patrick Henry, in his stirring pre-Revolutionary speech before the House of Burgesses, asked the question, "Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased with chains and bondage?" He knew that liberty was worth more than peace. So is purity in God's sight! And that is why the Churches of Christ cannot unite in compromise with many others who claim or contend they are striving for the same things as we contend for! There is a vast difference between securing a just peace and reaching an unjust compromise.

Peace is not necessarily "tolerance." We hear that word used over and over again in these days. Those who stand out against evil, who uphold the Scriptural discipline taught in the Bible, who feel that the church should withdraw its fellowship from adulterers, drunkards, idolaters and other evildoers are accused of being intolerant. Well, friends, Jesus was the "Prince of Peace" and yet He was one of the most intolerant persons who ever stood on earth, when it came to sin. It is true that He was compassionate, kind and forgiving. But He held no brief for sin. He hated sin while He had mercy on the sinner! When His disciples came and told Him that the Pharisees were offended at one of His remarks, He said, "Let them alone, they be blind, leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind they will both fall into the ditch together." He indicted the religious leaders of His day for devouring the inheritances of widows, then making long prayers for a pretence. He called certain men wolves, foxes, dogs and swine, because they

possessed and manifested the characteristics of brutes. He was not a compromiser, and those who follow His recipe for peace cannot afford to negotiate a peace which will place them in the light of having disregarded God's principles.

We must always remember that before we can bring peace to others we must be at peace with God, resting securely on His promises. You recall that a few weeks ago our American boys fighting in Italy entered the city of Florence, famed throughout the world for its beautiful treasures of art. In a certain place in that city two pictures hung side by side. One portrayed a stormy sea, with its lashing, rolling, heaving waves, and with black clouds and ominous streaks of lightning flashing across the sky. In the midst of the tossing waters was seen a human face, wearing an expression of agony and the deepest despair. The other picture also presents a sea as fierce in its stormy depths and with the same dark clouds; but out of the midst of the billows a rock rises, against which the water dashes in vain. In a cleft of the rock can be seen growing tufts of grass, while sweet flowers are nodding their fragrant heads. In the midst of these a dove is portrayed sitting calmly on her nest, quiet and undisturbed by the wild fury of the storm. The first picture is called "Distress" and aptly depicts the condition of the world of mankind when hope is gone and despair comes surging into the soul. But the other is called "Peace" and it appropriately demonstrates the serenity of the Christian, at peace with God and his fellowmen. The same wave may beat against him, the tempest may roar and the lightning flash, but he is calm, as he nestles in the bosom of the "Rock of Ages."

It is easy to attain peace if both parties will agree to be governed by the will of the Lord. I am sure you have all heard of the statue which stands in the mountains between Argentina and Chile—a huge figure of the Christ. These two countries were about to go to war over a narrow strip of land. They were finally persuaded to submit the case to arbiters from other nations who would act as a committee to make peace. When they had finally reached a non-aggression pact, the armies of both sides melted their weapons and made this huge statue of Christ, erecting it on the border of their countries, high in the mountains. It was

unveiled and dedicated to World Peace on March 13, 1904. On the monument these words are inscribed:

Sooner shall these mountains crumble into dust than Argentineans and Chileans break the peace to which they have pledged themselves at the feet of Christ, The Redeemer.

The first act therefore of a peacemaker is to be certain that he is at peace with God; then he should attempt to bring others to a recognition of the sovereignty of God. Unless we realize that there is a higher power which will some day call us into account, our acts and deeds will be solely the products of our own wisdom and conscience, and there will of necessity be conflicts, and peace will depart. James asks, "From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?" (James 4:1). It is the duty of the peacemaker to strip the garments from the lust that wells within us to cause strife, and let us see the reason for strife revealed in all its naked ugliness, that we may flee from it!

Fighting represents an effect. For every *effect* in the world there must be a *cause!* The duty of the peacemaker is not only to bring about a cessation of immediate hostilities, but to go further, and dig deeper, and to remove the cause. Otherwise the work done will be only *transitory*. If a well has poison water, it will do no good to paint the pump! The Bible does not say, "Blessed are those which are whitewashed"; but rather, "Blessed are those who wash themselves white in the blood of the lamb." Peacemaking is not the art of covering up; but the art of revealing. It requires understanding, a sense of humility, a spirit of love.

The fact that peacemakers are to be blest does not give you a clear right-of-way to mix in every fuss that comes up, just because you think you may have the skill to settle it. I'm sure you've heard of the neighbor who attempted to reconcile a quarreling husband and wife, only to have both of them turn on him and combine their forces to beat him up! But when you are called upon to act as an arbiter, remember to do it impartially, without bias or prejudice. Have the best interests of both belligerents at heart

and strive to place yourself in the position of each. Then you'll be able to fathom the reason for the grievance in both cases. Above all, realize that we are on earth too short a time to spend it in quarreling, bickering and fighting with each other. Let's make peace with each other, rather than make pieces out of each other.

SALT OF THE EARTH

Did you ever hear the expression that "So-and-so is not worth his salt"? I am sure you have! But do you know how that originated? I want to tell you. It comes down to us from the ancient days of Rome. At that time salt was a scarce and valuable commodity. Soldiers were not paid in cash, but instead they were handed a bag of salt. We have a word in our language today, with which most of us are familiar, that came from that practice. It is the word "salary." Notice the first three letters—s-a-l. The word means "payment in salt." That which we purchase in boxes for common table use today was of immense worth in the days of Christ.

Perhaps He had that in mind when He declared that His disciples were the "salt of the earth." If you are a Christian today, you are precious in the sight of God. Your very character is of immense value to Him, and you should cherish righteous living for that reason. I remember that one of the New Testament writers says, "Let your adornment be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price" (1 Peter 3:4). So Christians are called "salt" because of their preciousness.

Too, it must be recalled that in the days when our Savior was upon the earth, they had no antiseptic solutions as we can buy at any drug store or corner grocery today. When men were wounded, they realized the value of purifying the sore, for they had learned that if neglected, a gangrenous condition would certainly result. But there were no patent medicines available to them—they had

neither sulfa drugs nor penicillin. Virtually, the only thing which the ancients knew of was salt—and when a man was wounded on the field of battle, they drew out the spear or sword and tamped the gash in his body with that substance. And while it makes us grit our teeth to think of the suffering which must have been entailed as the salt came in contact with the open wound, we are forced to admit that it served its purpose and no doubt saved many lives.

Christians exist on earth for the same reason today—spiritually speaking of course. It is the duty of every child of God to make the world a better place to live in. He is a constant bulwark against the spread of evil and sin. If Christians cease to hold out against sin, it will become a tidal wave to sweep the world into oblivion. But is it not amazing that a great many who profess to love the Lord are trying to pattern their lives as nearly as much as possible after the world? Think of the members of the church today who are swept off their feet by all the absurd, ridiculous, crazy fashions which are invented. In spite of the injunction that as becometh those professing godliness, we are to dress modestly, there are many who cater to the lust-inspired, Hollywood-invented, demoralizing fashions that make them appear silly, and a laughing-stock for sane-minded individuals whose minds are not in the gutter.

How many members of the church think they can chase around at night clubs, wining and dining the hours away, never preparing for death and eternity which is to follow! The theaters are filled, places of worldly amusement are crammed and packed to capacity with those who take a fling with the devil on Saturday night and are too sleepy to try and go to the House of God on the first day of the week! How few there are who really have the courage of their convictions! How few can say "No" to the crowd and say it emphatically! Most of us are like dumb-driven cattle, we are led to the slaughter of our souls, just because the crowd was headed in that way. Unless we get back to sane, sensible, sober Christian living, what will there be to purify the world? Jesus says, "If the salt have lost its strength, then how will the earth be affected for righteousness? Such salt is no longer good, but is fit only to be

cast out, and there trodden under foot by the passersby." I wonder if you got that statement? Did you notice those words "cast out"? It is possible for those who once were recognized as salt and exerted a good influence to lose their spiritual strength and be cast out! So the second way in which Christians are like salt is in their purifying powers!

I rather surmise that many of my listeners this day are in the country. And perhaps most of those who listen in the city are from the country, and wish they were back there. In any event, when I tell you about this next event, you will all be familiar with it. Do you remember "butchering day" on the farm? I do! It was always preceded by a sort of hurried expectancy, when we lived on the farm. The evening before, Dad took pains to get everything ready and in shape for the next day. And when that day came, everyone was up early so the chores could be done, and breakfast dishes cleared away ere the neighbors came to help in the task. Now, I remember distinctly that one of the important items always necessary in the handling and curing of the meat was salt. Why, do you ask? Because salt was a great preservative! In the days when embalming was unknown, or impractical because of its lack of development as yet, even human bodies were packed in salt to guarantee their preservation during their transportation from one place to another.

Now, Christians also exert a preserving influence upon the world! The world stands today not because of the evil of the many but because of the righteousness of the few! The value of a righteous life cannot be estimated by man. Even Jesus said, "What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Thus we can see that one soul is worth more than all the earth and its mighty works. Call back over the pages of sacred history, and note the times when righteous men and women preserved the earth, or that portion of it upon which they lived.

Had it not been for the influence of eight righteous persons at the time of the flood, the world of mankind would have been completely obliterated. But because of the constancy of one man, who was perfect in his generations and who walked with God, the

world was spared! Take the case of Sodom and Gomorrah, at the time of their impending destruction because of their terrible wickedness. Abraham, knowing that his nephew lived in those cities, pleaded for their preservation. God told him that if ten righteous people existed therein, the whole area would be saved because of their lives. But they could not be found, and fire and brimstone rained from heaven in just retribution for the ungodliness that existed in the plains of Jordan.

When Balaam attempted to curse Israel, and his cursing words turned to blessings in his mouth, he conceived a method by which God Himself would be forced to destroy His people. He taught Balak to place the fairest of the foreign women in front of the camp of Israel that they might seduce the men of Israel to worship their false gods, and bow before their idols. God sent a plague upon the people and the camp was ravaged by it. But Phinehas the son of the priest, by his consecration to God, saved Israel that day. God acknowledged that the zeal of Phinehas hath saved Israel this day. The zeal of one man who loved the Lord saved the whole congregation, and stayed their punishment.

To be a preserving influence, Christians must have the strength of their convictions. They cannot save the world by compromising with it. They must cry aloud and spare not the evils indulged in by the world about them! But yet, it must be recalled that salt has another quality, one even more universally recognized than those previously referred to. It is to make our daily food more palatable; to season it, so that we may partake of it with enjoyment and gustatory pleasure.

I am sure that I speak the truth when I affirm that Christians are to also make the world a better place in which to exist by pointing out the true pleasure that all of us should rejoice to participate in. It is our duty to flavor and season the lives of those about us until they will derive pleasure rather than sorrow from living. There are those who are sick and need to be comforted; those who are weak and need encouragement; those who are under the shadow of a cloud of discouragement, and need to have the sunshine of God's love beam into their hearts. Just as the salt flavors the food we partake of, so should we seek the chance of

helping those about us to attain to higher joy. And just as the salt must lose itself in that which it seasons, so we must also lose ourselves in service to others. Let us not call attention to ourselves but to Christ the Lamb of God, and let us point a sorrowing world to Him, who loved us and gave Himself for us.

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

The ancient Persians worshipped as their chief god a deity whom they called "Mazda." You will recognize the name, because it has become the trade designation for certain light bulbs. It is a very apt trademark too, for it means "light." But the ancient Persians were not the only ones who glorified and worshipped light, as a god. Almost every other nation has done the same, at some stage in its history. The sun god "RE" was prominent among the Egyptians, and even the Hebrews when they apostatized from the one true God, bowed down before "Shemesh" as the sun was called in their language.

We all acknowledge our debt to light. The universe could not exist without it. The sunshine aids everything that grows and the earth would become a void if the sun were long eclipsed. Just as the material world requires light, so does the spiritual. And Jesus is the chief luminary of that realm. Of him it was declared, "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. . . That is the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (John 1:4, 9). Upon a certain occasion when a multitude assembled about Him, Jesus remarked, "I am the light of the world; he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12). Therefore, coming to Jesus is the equivalent of coming to the light. We would think that all men would be anxious to do this.

A number of years ago, the papers were filled with accounts of the attempt made to release a man from a cave. In his hunting and exploration he had crawled back into a previously unexplored

cave, and his leg had been pinned by a falling rock. Now, that man, Floyd Collins, died there in the darkness of that cave. But suppose after several weeks in that darkness his interested helpers had been able to release him and bring him to the light. What would you have thought, if under such circumstances, he had turned and immediately dashed back into that black interior? Surely you would reason that he had lost his mind in his imprisonment! Yet, do you not know that there are millions today who spiritually prefer to walk in darkness rather than in light? What is the reason for such action?

We turn to John 3:19, and find this, "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because *their deeds are evil*. For everyone that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved."

Now, Christ was the light of the world as long as He remained in it. That is, He was the light of the world *directly*. But He could not always remain on earth, therefore He said, "Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth" (John 12:35). The question naturally arises, "Who is the light of the world now?" Since Jesus is no longer on earth, how, or through whom does He shine? We can best answer that question by hearing Him in The Sermon on the Mount, as He speaks to His disciples, "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid" (Matthew 5:14). From this we learn that Jesus shines today through our lives and hearts. We are the light of the world.

This does not mean that we have any power to originate light of spiritual truth, for we have not. But there are two kinds of light—natural and reflected! We are the reflectors of the teaching of Christ. The world cannot see Him literally now, but if we live as He lived, then when they look at us, they will see a reflection of those great ideals for which He lived and died. It is essential that we keep those reflectors always polished, or else the light will

be imperfectly sent forth, or it will be distorted and give forth an incorrect image. We must keep ourselves unspotted from the world. If we allow our lives to be tarnished by contact with sin, there will be that much less of the pure light of the gospel to lead souls to the Master.

Note also that we must be like a city that is set on a hill. This means several things. In the first place such a city at night is clearly visible from all sides. So the Christian must let his good works radiate forth and act as a beacon to all who may be lost, or floundering in the depths of sin. Have you ever been driving in a strange, wild country at night, hoping for a place to stop and spend the remainder of the darkened hours? You know how welcome is the sight of the aura of light which betokens the fact that you are approaching a town. Just so it is that the pilgrim who treads the rough road of this life takes on new hope when he sees the Christian friendliness that emanates from your heart and lightens the way home for him.

A city on a hill is also elevated. Christians are to live a high and holy life. We are not to live our allotted days in the swamps and lowlands of sin. There is as much need for you to live above sin as there is for you to build your house on a good foundation, rather than on a quaking marsh. But it is not easy to scale the peaks of righteousness. It is much easier to drift aimlessly through life, but it does not pay to pursue such a course of least resistance. The hilltops of life offer you greater perspective, provide for you a richer, fuller, more abundant life. But remember that

*The heights by great men, reached and kept,
Were not attained by sudden flight;
But they, while their companions slept,
Were toiling upward through the night.*

It is true that a city set in a valley might have just as many lights, and they might be just as strong, as if the city were perched on a hill. But we are forced to admit that they would not have nearly the scope of influence as if the city were elevated above the surrounding plain. Do not be content to live a lower life. Plant your feet on higher ground!

A city on a hill is in a purer, clearer atmosphere! I recall reading not long ago concerning two portions of the same town. One was built upon a high hill above the river. Here a cool breeze was always blowing and the air was fresh. The other portion of this town was built close to the river bank and under the protection of the hill. But it was noted that those who lived down near the water's edge were more frequently ill than the others. It seemed that typhoid and malaria ravaged that portion of the town. At last, it was determined that the cause of this was the fact that mosquitoes bred in the stagnant backwater, and attacked viciously those who lived near. But they did not bother the residents in the upper town because there the wind and constant draft was not to their liking.

Where are you living spiritually this day? Have you pitched your camp amidst the stagnant pools of refuse of the world? Are you dwelling where your family will have only the profanity, the immorality, the ungodliness of life to influence them? Or are you letting your light shine from the hilltops of life? Move out of the ruts of this existence. Lift up your eyes to the hills from whence cometh our help. Climb the steepes and unfurl the banner of Christ so that all the world may see Jesus in you! Do not be a coward, running from yourself! But make your life a strong, consecrated force to lead others to take their stand for the Master of the universe. Let your light shine!

In old England, before the days of street lights, lanterns were hung in some of the church steeples at night, and others were suspended in front of dwelling-places. This made it possible for those who were forced to pursue their way late at night to be guided to their destination. The watchman going his rounds would cup his hands and shout "Hang out your lights!" That is the call of Christ today, "Let your lights so shine!" The purpose of those lights in ancient England was to help others. That is why we are to let our light shine also. But still it remains true that you cannot hold a light for another without deriving benefit from it yourself. And those who live for the Savior are not only helping others, but they are also assisting themselves to a fuller and more radiant life.

I want to plead with you this day to examine your heart. It is the reflector of life and light. Is it tarnished? Is it spotted with

sin? If it is, then take the polishing rag of gospel truth and go over it and remove the rust and soil, and let your light shine! The blood of Jesus Christ is the perfect cleanser for all evil. The record tells those who were once Christians but have now drifted away, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7, 9). Your loved ones may be looking to you for light to help them over the rough places in life. Do not hide that light. Open up the shutters barring your heart and let the truth of heaven radiate out.

BASKETS OVER YOUR LIGHTS

We have learned the meaning of the term "blackout" as applied to cities and industrial plants during the war. Today, I wish to discuss with you a spiritual blackout which is condemned by Christ. He paints for us a verbal picture of one who lights a candle when darkness descends upon the earth, and then places that candle under a bushel measure. The light glows all right, but it does no good. Soon it will even be extinguished, for we know that light cannot continue without oxygen, and when all of the supply of that element is consumed under the basket, the light will go out. How absurd it would be for one to light a lamp and then put it under something which would totally eclipse its rays! Yet, that is exactly what many are doing today, with the influence they possess, which could be used to guide men to higher living. Let us consider some of those things that men use to hide their lights.

I mention first the basket we shall call *wealth*. A man can hold a dollar so close to his eyes that he can shut out even the light of the sun. And he can hold it so close to his heart that it will keep any good work from shining forth from that heart also. Jesus says, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth." He tells us that one reason for this injunction is the fact that worldly wealth is perishable. "Moth and rust doth corrupt and thieves break through and steal." But there is also another reason why we should not

center our affection on worldly treasure. Here it is, "For where a man's treasure is, there will his heart be also" (Matthew 6:21). This simply means that our whole life will be wrapped up in our gold! And yet, that money is only good for what it will purchase of happiness for others. You cannot eat it! Looking at it will not keep you warm in winter! It will not provide shelter until it is spent! It is said that during the siege of Jerusalem, by the Roman leader Titus, that many of the wealthy Jews cast their gold into the streets. It was worthless!

Understand, now, there is nothing wrong with money in and of itself. The Bible does not affirm, as many ignorantly teach, that money is the root of all evil. But it does tell us that "*the love of money is the root of all evil.*" I presume there is not a crime on earth today that has not at sometime by someone been committed for money. Not that all crimes are committed for money, but *all kinds of crime* have been. A man cannot be covetous and be a Christian, for covetousness is idolatry, and an idolator cannot please God. Jesus declares that "it is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). If you have been guilty of hiding the light of Christian love under the bushel of wealth, bring out that light and let it glow in helpful service to others this day. Then you will really start to live.

Others hide their light under the basket of *pleasure*. Their whole aim in life is to have what they call "a good time." Under the guise of need for recreation they indulge in many things that are not becoming to a child of God. I affirm that the word *recreation* is made up of two words: "re" and "creation." Anything that does not revitalize, reanimate and recreate man in a moral and spiritual way is not "recreation" at all. Did you know that it is possible for a person to be dead while he is still alive? That is true, for Paul declares, "But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth" (1 Timothy 5:6). A few years ago a man taught the doctrine that "millions now living will never die." He is dead now! That doctrine which was taught was false, but it is a true doctrine that "millions now living are already dead." For there are millions who are living in pleasure, and they are dead while

they live—dead to Christ, dead to all that is worthwhile in achievement and accomplishment!

In that list of things which are given as signs of the last days in which perilous times shall come, one completes the list. It is "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God" (2 Timothy 3:4). Of such it is said that they have a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof; and it is further affirmed that their folly shall be manifest to all. There are some who feel that they can go to church on Sunday morning, then dance the rest of the Lord's Day away, or spend their time in idle gambling. All of the good that is done in their attendance at God's House is nullified by their vain pursuit of things of this world. The Good Book says, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever" (1 John 2:15, 17).

Now, I want to mention a third basket under which some hide their lights. It is that of *envy*. How many times churches have been wrecked, hearts broken and the cause of Christ made shameful in the eyes of humanity by reason of this sin! Think what it has cost the world. It was envy that motivated the first murder. It steeled the arm and stilled the conscience of Cain as he drove the life from his brother, and spilled that brother's blood on the hungry earth. It was envy that moved Saul to attempt to kill David, when on three occasions, with no other provocation, he flung the javelin, only to have David by divine providence escape from his hand. It was envy which caused Christ to be delivered up before Pilate, and that Roman procurator was aware of the fact as he sat on the throne of judgment.

I'm sure you have seen those who refuse to work for the Lord unless they are given a position of prominence. But their very envy and their jealous disposition completely disqualify them for a position of trust. Envy is the mark of immaturity. It indicates that one is still in a juvenile state—that he has never grown up. Now,

many envious persons, could they but stifle that littleness, would be excellent workers for the Lord. They could utilize the power which is translated into hate and make it accomplish great things for the Lord. But they are hiding their light under a bushel. They place personal feelings ahead of the Cause for which we all should strive! I know men who cannot think of anyone else directing the singing. They break out in a rash of goose pimples when another is before the public, for fear that one will receive more praise than they. Thus they undo all the good that could be done!

Then, again, there is another light-concealing basket. It is that of *carelessness* or *indifference*. Those of you who have been to famous Yellowstone Park have enjoyed the campfire talks by the rangers, I am certain. I recall that one night, near Old Faithful geyser, the one in charge made a talk on the destructiveness of forest fires. He painted a vivid picture of the growth of a thousand years going up in billowing flame in a few minutes. Live creatures were burned to death or driven from their homes! The countryside was denuded of its beauty and verdure. And then, after an impressive pause, the ranger said, "Most of this wilful, wanton desolation can be traced to one word, "Carelessness." How true that is!

Christians become careless as to their associates, not recalling the old adage, "A man is known by the company he keeps." Soon their reputation is hurt, and their light no longer shines for Christ. They become careless of their talk, profanity slips into it, and listening souls are driven from the service of the Master. They become careless of their church attendance, and eventually it is easier to remain home than to go to God's House. But one cannot long be idle or unemployed. If he does not work for Christ, he will soon start working for Satan. Jesus recognized this principle when He exclaimed, "He that is not with Me is against Me; and He that gathereth not for Me scattereth abroad." One does not need to kill another in order to go to hell; he does not need to be an adulterer, a thief or a liar. He cannot escape the flames of eternal punishment if he dies with those things unforgiven in his life. But he need not be any one of those to be lost. He can be lost just as easily by being *nothing*; by doing nothing! Neglect

will send more people into everlasting condemnation than any other sin. And it is more dangerous than most because of its subtle approach, and its innocent appearance.

The world needs your light today! It should shine forth brilliantly to aid others. Jesus says, "Neither do men light a candle and place it under a bushel, but upon a candlestick, and it giveth light to all that are in the house. Let your light so shine that others seeing your good works may glorify your Father which is in heaven."

IMPROPER MOTIVES

One of the outstanding features of The Sermon on the Mount is the stress which it lays upon the motives behind our various acts. The world in general does not judge one by this standard. If a man gives a million dollars to some charity project, his name and the deed are emblazoned upon the front page of every newspaper in the land. No one stops to ask if he did it purely because of the advertising he received from the act, or in order to receive the praise of men. Instead he is hailed as a philanthropist and the rest of the citizenry are urged to follow his noble and uplifting example. But the Bible recognizes the inner thought which prompts the things we do, and it is upon that motive and not upon the size of the deed that God will judge us.

Therefore, when Christ sat at the temple treasury and watched the various individuals cast in their money, He affirmed that the poor widow who cast in the two mites gave more than all the rich who literally threw bags full of money into the collection booth. They did it for worldly honor, she did it because she loved the Lord. They gave of their abundance and did not miss it, she gave all that she had.

No place makes more clear this distinction than Christ upholds than the wonderful chapter on charity, the thirteenth of First Corinthians. In unparalleled boldness, Paul asserts, "Though I

bestow *all my goods* to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." It is what you think in your heart when you do an act of kindness that God is interested in. Since the background is more important than the deed, let us examine the Savior's teaching on that subject this day.

In Matthew 6:1, He cautions, "Take heed that ye perform not your acts of righteousness before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven." Now, let us analyze that statement. Jesus does not say that it is wrong to do acts of goodness. He encourages us always to do good unto others, both by precept and example. It was said of the Master that, "He went about doing good." And neither does He command us not to do such deeds before men. It would be impossible for me to feed a hungry man without his knowing it. It would be impossible for me to clothe a man in need without his knowing it! But the point that we must stress is contained in the words, "*to be seen of them.*" The idea of doing good simply to be praised for such acts is repulsive to the Lord. He who has that as his only motive has no reward of the Father which is in heaven. But why is this true?

Let us notice that in the chapter, three distinct acts of righteousness are referred to. They are giving of alms, prayer and fasting! Neither of these is to be done for public show, or as a spectacle for the world. So we read about the first, "Therefore, when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, they *have* their reward." Let us just suppose that you decide to help a needy person. First you hire a bugler to go downtown and stand at a busy intersection. He blows the bugle, and when a crowd collects, he announces that you will be along soon and give five dollars *to a needy person you have found on the street. Soon you come and there before the crowd you carefully draw a five dollar bill from your wallet and waving it in the air so that all may see, you drop it into the outstretched hand of the destitute one! Will you receive a reward? Certainly! You'll receive exactly what you*

asked for, the attention of men! But that's all you'll get, because God isn't going to give you anything more! You have your reward! You get just what you asked for—no more.

If you desire instead the reward of heaven, there is a way by which you may obtain it. Listen to this, "But when thou doest thine alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth, that thine alms may be in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret Himself shall reward thee openly." I shall never forget that in a series of meetings which I was conducting, a certain one who loved the praise of men decided to contribute a twenty dollar bill to the collection plate on Lord's Day morning! Instead of quietly depositing it therein, he took out his billfold, held it up to the light and extracted the bill. Then he sat there with the bill held up in the air where all men around could see the denomination of it, and finally rose and dropped it in the plate when it was going down the row of persons in front of him. He let his left hand and all his neighbors know what he was doing!

Now, there are two kinds of devotions which we render to God. One is public and the other is private. It is wrong to reverse them. Occasionally one is called on to direct the audience in prayer, but he murmurs so low that no one can hear him. The audience does not even know when to say "Amen" at the close. Sometimes a person like that will justify himself by saying that he was talking to God. But if he is talking only to the ears of God, it is a private prayer, and it is wrong for him to offer it in public. If it is a public prayer, it should be made public, that all may follow!

Then, I knew another type of man! He enjoyed private prayer, but he always opened the door to his room, and prayed with such fervor that the whole house could hear him. Some of those about the place thought he was wonderfully religious, and one old sister with a pious look said, "I tell you, he is the most devout man I was ever around. You can hear him praying every morning and night. Sometimes I just stop and listen to his eloquent words addressed to God." That man was praying a private prayer publicly, and while he started by addressing God, he had both his ears cocked to hear the praise of men, and his voice adjusted so that all could hear.

Jesus says, "When you pray, you shall not be as the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."

In continuing the topic of Scripturally approved prayer, we also learn that Christ commands, "When ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do; for they think they shall be heard for their much speaking." The babbling over and over of set phrases a certain number of times contains no virtue. Prayer is not a recitation, anyway, which you learn and sing off to God in a monotone. Prayer in the Scriptural sense is an expression of the heart's desire (Romans 10:1). It is not a question of how long you pray, how many times you repeat a ritual, or how much talking you do. The question with God is whether or not you are sincere, without pretense, and honest in your asking! Why write out a prayer and read it for the Lord? Is it possible that He cannot read English? The thought is ridiculous! Let us, then, in our devotion talk to God as our Father. Let us walk with Him in such close companionship that we may address Him intimately. It is not hard to sit down and talk to our earthly fathers! We enjoy the visit with them! Let us learn to enjoy visiting with God as well.

The old Mosaic law was principally ritualistic! While it demanded the right objective, yet at the same time it dealt little with the motive or thought processes governing obedience. Thus the scribes in their reading and teaching could glibly inform all and sundry that the law says thus and so. But they could not go beyond the act or the command governing it. Jesus went right down into the hearts of men, and probed those innermost recesses of the soul, demanding to know why we do the things we do. That's why The Sermon on the Mount was different. "He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes." Let us not forget this day, that He will sometime judge us all! What will your heart reveal when its secrets are bared to the prying eyes of the universe. When God's searchlight is turned on your soul, what will be the result?

THE TRUE TREASURE

We are all treasure seekers! From the boy who dreams over the familiar story of "Treasure Island" to the grizzled prospector who shuns society to search for the million dollar lode, we all thrill to the idea of wealth. Because of this tendency in the human family, many have been gullible targets for the fakers and get-rich-quick artists, who take advantage of human weaknesses and prey upon the unwary. Why are we so desirous of building up huge stockpiles of gold and silver? Is it because we are all miserly, and like to see the yellow gold trickle through our fingers, like Silas Marner in the story which bears his name? I do not think so!

Is it, then, that we want to be in position to purchase everything we desire and have freely to spend upon all that our hearts covet? I doubt it, for I know that many of those who have worked unceasingly to amass a sum of money are more conservative spenders than those who are merely trying to make others believe they are rich. If I were called upon to assert my opinion as to the reason for this seemingly universal craving, I would say that it originates in man's wish to have security—a bulwark against the ravages of time, the threat of destitution, and the hopelessness of old age!

Can we purchase that security with gold and silver? Many apparently think that we can, but in this final talk concerning The Sermon on the Mount we shall see what Jesus had to say concerning the question. Listen to His words of eternal wisdom, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matthew 6:19-21). Here is a direct command not to lay up treasures on earth! Why not? Let us see!

In the first place, Jesus affirms that there is no security in wealth on earth after all. Our own experience teaches us the truthfulness of that. We personally know those who have invested their money in stocks and bonds, looking forward to a quiet and protected old

age, only to awaken some day to the fact that they were poverty-stricken and helpless. We know of the tragedy of failing banks, with the resultant aftermath of suicides and sorrow. The wealth which can be seen by human eye is transitory. It is here today, and gone tomorrow. The apostle affirms, "The things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:18).

Jesus was talking about two kinds of earthly wealth; metal and textile—or money and clothes! In the case of money, rust might eat it away and consume it, or thieves might break through and steal it! In the case of clothing, moths would eat the fabric and render the garments useless. But rust never bothers my money a lot! Do you know why? It is because I must keep in circulation what little I have, and the rust is worn off of it by the hands through which it passes. Nor do the moths bother my clothing a great deal. You see, they do not eat fabrics that are being worn, but those that are placed away where they are not in use by anyone. So Jesus shows us that we should not hoard money or clothes, purely because of a pride in possessing them, but rather we should put our wealth to work for the Lord.

But there is also another reason why we should not lay up treasure on earth. To me, it is the greatest reason of all. It lies in the fact that all of us let our affection rest upon our treasure. Whatever our treasure is, that is what we worship. Wherever our treasure is, there will our hearts be also. And since God will not accept a second place in any man's heart, it is evident that one cannot serve both God and mammon. We must thus make a choice between the wealth of the world which is *temporal* and *temporary*; and that of heaven which is *spiritual* and *eternal*.

Perhaps you'll ask why it is such a terrible thing to worship money, or to make it a god in our lives? To that question I reply that it is a law of life that whatever man worships, he will become more like that each time he worships. If he bows before the shrine of the great god Wealth, his heart will become cold and hard as the lump of gold which he worships. He will do anything, say anything, be anything to secure his god! True is it, indeed, that "the love of money is the root of every kind of evil." Not money, but the love of it. This does not mean that every evil on earth is

committed because of money, but it means that there is no type of evil in the world which men will not commit because of their love for money.

Isn't it foolish to worship a metal which other men have digged from the earth, and off of which they have knocked the clay and dirt in order to make it shine? Money is powerless in itself to aid any of us. Suppose you were shipwrecked with a bag of gold your only rescued possession! You'd be in a worse predicament than if you did not have it. You could not swim with it, and it would only serve to drag you down to death in the briny deep. If you managed to get to a life raft with it, it could not keep you warm at night, it would not be fit to eat, you could not drink it in your thirst. I'm sure that you'd come to realize that it was worth but little when taken out of the marts of trade and commerce. If you died upon the raft, you could not take even a dollar with you into the next world!

In the fabulous story of "The Golden Touch," King Midas learned that many things were more precious than gold. When he was assured that everything he touched would turn to gold, his joy became unbounded. He sat down and the chair turned to brilliant gold; but when he lay down and his bed did likewise, he was not so sure but what he would rather have had his feather bed. But the rude awakening came next morning when he started to eat. His spoon turned to gold, and he was happy that he had not lost his touch, but when his cereal turned into a lump of gold in his mouth, he thought perhaps it was carrying the thing a little too far. Then he stooped over and kissed his precious little daughter. Her form became rigid, and she turned to gold before his eyes. Immediately he prayed that the golden touch might be removed from him. He had learned by experience that the things we love most in life cannot be purchased with base metal.

True treasure must have these characteristics: It must be eternal, or it will disappoint us when it flees away; it must not be subject to others and their power, or else they may take it from us; it must be such as is worthy of the affection and love of one who is made in the image of God, and who therefore cannot stoop to worship that which is beneath his Creator. In view of this, there is just

one treasure that will satisfy the Christian. It is the golden promise of eternal life!

There is ample of this to furnish all who desire it. None will be turned away, none will be left out, who honestly and truly seek for glory, honor and immortality, for the Bible says that to all who thus seek, God will award eternal life (Romans 2:7). One of these days life will be over for us here on earth. The songs of the birds, the sight of flowers and trees, the voices of our loved ones will be heard no more. We shall close our store or office for the last time, we shall make our last deposit at the bank. Then, what lies ahead? It depends upon the preparation we have made! Are you preparing for the life beyond this vale of tears, this world of sorrow!

The Churches of Christ exist to help you plan your life, and your future, so that eternal glory will be your great and final reward. Our only hope is heaven—our only plea is the Bible—our only interest is your soul! We ask you to get acquainted with us and our efforts to restore the New Testament church on earth. Investigate our position, and see whether or not it is in harmony with the New Testament. May God be with you and help you to make the right and proper decision, for eternity depends upon that choice!

Let the principles enunciated in The Sermon on the Mount be your guiding star through life, and as you live in harmony with the philosophy set forth by Christ, you will find life growing more pleasant day by day, and His truth will sustain you through the years of trial to come.