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→*SERMONS*←

THE FOUR WISE THINGS.

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There be four things which are little upon the earth, but they are exceeding wise: The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in the summer; the conies are but a feeble folk, yet they make their houses in the rocks; the locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them in bands; the spider taketh hold with her hands, and is in kings' palaces.—PROV. xxx., 24-28.

THE wise man hath said, that "Wisdom is the principal thing"; and therefore he exhorts us, with all our getting, to "get wisdom." Many also are the sources from which lessons of wisdom may be drawn. "Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets; she crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates; in the city she uttereth her words."

Indeed, everything is full of the lessons of wisdom. The heavens declare the glory of God, and invite us to His praise. The firmament showeth His handiwork, and bids us tremble at His power. The earth is vocal with instruction. The mountains, hills, oceans, and isles, bespeak His glorious name and preach of the honor due to His majesty. The fowls of the air, and the lilies of the field, are sweet expositors of providence, urging to faith in Him who sends the sunshine and makes the rain. The stork, and the crane, and the turtle, and the swallow, each in its place has a lecture for man. And crawling unnoticed on the ground, creeping among the rocks, mustering in the deserts, and busy in neglected corners of our dwellings, as well as in academic halls, from the desks of our sanctuaries, and in the writings of the Holy

redemption. I trust in God, and rest in Him completely.

"I believe in Manology. I want to know how I am to treat God and my family and my neighbors and myself; and what the Scriptures teach me to do I will preach to you. I love God with all my heart, my mind, my strength, and my neighbor as myself. I do not love anything, or think about anything, nor labor for anything that God has any controversy with, and I will treat my neighbor as I would expect he should treat me."

Such teaching as that will win the attention of any intelligent people, and it is the subject of universal conversation throughout the city. He goes straight to the point.

Mr. Jones is a successful reaper. Some of his statements seem extravagant, but change complexion after you have heard him.

In social life he is overflowing with good humor and commendable wit. Those who know him best value him most highly as a chosen servant of Christ.

THE RELATION OF THE PASTOR TO MISSIONS.

BY JOHN HALL, D.D., LL.D. (PRESBYTERIAN), NEW YORK.

Unless the pastor has at the start an unusually large congregation he should do personal mission work. I am sometimes puzzled to know what a vigorous young minister does with himself, when he is placed in charge of a very small congregation. He is educated, and has a vigorous constitution. How does he employ his time, with a church 50x30 feet, and a congregation of fifty families and a membership of about eighty? Probably in writing the most eloquent, splendid, transcendent discourses; but his light shines where it is not appreciated. Young pastors so situated should do active missionary work. Let us suppose one to be settled in some quiet New England or New Jersey village. He will find few places where there is not a floating population who have no definite connection with any church. Let him be a missionary to them. How can he? Let me draw a little from my own experience. You are asked to conduct a funeral in some household not closely allied with any church. Ask them incidentally whether they have any church connection; if not, invite them to your church and Sunday-school, it will often lead to their conversion. Upon some such occasions you may be introduced to relatives of people belonging to your church, who will ask you to call and see them. Take them at their word, and do not lose sight of them until you have them under gospel influences.

In such ways missionary work can be done just as genuine as that accomplished upon heathen soil.

If the Church is to do the work committed to her by her King, she must be aggressive. The necessity for this is increasing every day. We have papers to satisfy the intellectual curiosity of our people, entertainments to minister to the taste for pleasure; social arrangements, benevolent and quasi-benevolent; some sensible, some sensuous, all tending to the development of a selfish, proud, arrogant, mean individualism against which the Church must contend. Added to this is the influence of foreign unbelief. The Church must do aggressive work to counteract all this. Let us suppose you are settled in a city of ten thousand inhabitants with many churches, and a constituency in this Church which includes a number of country people round about. Say from your pulpit that you will on such a day visit this or that district, and will preach at the house of Mrs. So-and-so in the evening. Devote the day to visiting and reach the appointed house in time for tea, where you will probably find a company of neighbors awaiting you. In the evening the people whom you have called upon will come; preach informally, and in course of time they will say, "He is in earnest; it is a shame we do not go on Sunday to hear him preach from his pulpit." You will gain many adherents

in this way. Men gifted with apostolic fervor and piety will not be content to prepare one sermon and lecture a week. If we have the piety of the early Church, we, with the blessing of God Almighty, will be able to achieve results of the same kind.

You can do a great deal for missions in your pulpit. Preach upon the subject, not only upon stated, formal occasions, but at other times. The Bible is full of missionary subjects. The epistles of Paul cannot be expounded faithfully without frequent reference to missions; neither can prophecy be understood apart from this subject. Talk about missions occasionally when there is no collection to be taken up, though do not yield to the ordinary prejudice against "begging sermons." Bring the people into constant living contact with the truth and they will not be thinking of the collection.

My ideal of missionary preaching is to incorporate with all my teaching the great truths about missions; the duty of the individual Christian and of the Church to the world; and thus lodge the great principles of the work in the minds of the people, so that the soil will be prepared for the presentation of the claims of the separate fields of China or India in the more formal missionary addresses, and the giving will be more intelligent. That pastor poorly performs his duty toward missions who reads a profound theological essay upon "The Distinction between Supralapsarianism and Infralapsarianism," or upon some other equally live topic, and then merely announces that the customary collection for foreign missions will be taken up. Have the courage of your convictions, and lay upon the conscience of the people the question whether they will be active or apathetic in this work. Constant reference to this subject will make the people better, large-hearted, more spiritual and consecrated.

Some will say that this will do very well for wealthy churches, but their congregation is poor, and their own regular expenses can hardly be met. Such an objection may be well meant, but it does not reveal an accurate knowledge of human nature. By placing the demands

of the mission fields before the people their sense of responsibility as stewards will be deepened; their hearts will be enlarged, and the local interests will gain in proportion to this increase in liberality, for it is not so often the means that are lacking as the will to give. There is much of criminal ignorance or negligence among nominal Christians regarding the claims of missions. The sooner such are made to understand their responsibilities the better it will be for the Church. The pastors should be leaders in educating them to a higher standard of duty and cultivate a spirit of large-hearted liberality. I have found many of the most liberal givers are those who earn their bread in the sweat of their brow. It is no uncommon experience for me to receive a letter from a hired servant regretting that she would not be able to come the next Sunday, as it was her day to stay at home, and enclosing perhaps five, and in one case ten dollars, for the foreign missionary collection. I would rather lose all the wealthy carriage-owning people than this class, who form the strength and glory of the Church. I wish nothing better than that you should look upon people as men and women; never mind their wealth. Make them all, rich and poor, feel that the field is the world, and they will be your firmest supporters in your home work.

His Way.

God lets us go on our way alone
Till we are homesick and distressed,
And humbly then come back to own
His way is best.

He lets us thirst by Horeb's rock,
And hunger in the wilderness,
Yet at our feeblest, faintest knock
He waits to bless.

He lets us faint in far-off lands,
And feed on husks and feel the smart,
Till we come home with empty hands
And swelling heart.

But then for us the robe and ring,
The Father's welcome and the feast,
While over us the angels sing—
Tho' last and least.