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→ SERMONS ←

THE KINGSHIP OF CHRIST.

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Draw me, we will run after Thee. The King hath brought me into His chambers: we will be glad and rejoice in Thee; we will remember Thy love more than wine; the upright love Thee.—THE SONG OF SOLOMON, i., 4.

HARK! It's Coronation Day! Jerusalem—that ancient city of high royalty—is the scene of the grand transaction! A Prince of the famous house of David is being crowned! The proceedings are unique. No joy-bells peal! No bonfires blaze! No sumptuous feasts are spread in anticipation of the temporal grandees of the realm being present! No troops, with arms and accoutrements, are in muster, great and splendid! The *King* is girt with no sword; lifted up into no visible throne; presented with no purple robes, golden sceptre, “spurs, nor orb!” Yet, never before or since has so great a potentate been invested with sovereign authority!

It is Easter Sunday! Jesus Christ has risen from the dead! This is His Day of Coronation! “The God of our fathers, having raised up Jesus, exalted Him to be a Prince and a Saviour” (Acts v., 30, 31); ‘declaring him to be the Son of God with *power* according to the spirit of holiness by the *resurrection* from the dead” (Rom. i., 4), and hence fulfilling that supernal declaration made far back in the ages, “in that God raised up Jesus again, as it is also written in the second psalm: Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee” (Acts xiii., 33).

ories! Think of the noble ones who have been with us—who have poured their affection into our hearts—who tenderly nursed us when sick—who spoke hopefully in hours of discouragement—who stirred up all the good in us, making us feel something of our own worth—who inspired us to kindness and sympathy, and to desires to be less selfish and less earthy: O what love-memories! We would not be without them. They are a sort of compensation for the agony we had in parting and for the loneliness of living on.

But what about these love-memories, when applied to our blessed and glorious Saviour—Him who has been to us the King of Love? How He has lifted us out of our sin and misery and brought us into His “chambers”; satisfying our hearts with joy and peace; inspiring us with noble purposes and pure ambitions; filling our daily life with the grandeur of His own service, even the doing of good to our fellow-men, and ever making us assured of His presence, as our friend and protector! Surely such an experience must cause us to cry out: “O King Jesus, we will *remember* Thy love more than wine!”

“Wine,” here, means the world’s most desirable things: gold; learning; pleasure; power, fame; ease; human affection. But what are all these, as compared with Him who is the King of all wills, all hearts, all knowledge, all possessions, of righteousness, and of love—the Christ of God who has saved us with His own precious blood! In all the enthusiasm of our minds and hearts, in all the transport of our redeemed souls, let us remember Jesus, our Prince and our Saviour—in prayer and the study of His Word; in the sanctuary, worshipping Him in the beauty of holiness; in deeds of love to needy humanity, ever done in His Name; at the communion table, spread in the “chambers” of His love, there fulfilling our King’s own parting words: “This do in remembrance of Me!”

GENUINE BENEVOLENCE AND ITS REWARD.*

BY JOHN HALL, D.D., LL.D., FIFTH AVE. PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, N. Y.

He that hath pity on the poor lendeth to the Lord, and his good deed will He pay him again.—PROVERBS, xix., 17. R. V.

THIS text is selected because we have to put our gifts into one fund to-day which must amount to about twelve thousand dollars, that we may carry on our work, the details of which I shall before closing recall to your minds. The statement of the will of God on such work will be a better and stronger plea to you than any mere prudential or sentimental consideration. Indeed, it is the glory of the Bible that it gives, as in combination, the purest and loftiest sentiment with the deepest practical wisdom, and it links these and other like qualities with the “faith which worketh by love.” Hence there is

* At the close of the delivery of this Sermon, a collection was taken up on behalf of the Sabbath Schools of the Church, amounting, with contributions afterwards sent in, to the sum needed.

a practical benevolence produced by godliness which we seek for in vain from mere political economy or sentimental compassion.

I. It is proper to look, first of all, at the facts or truths—for both words are fitting in this place—implied in this inspired sentence. The right of personal property is recognized throughout Scripture. It may come by industry or by inheritance. It may be by kindly gifts or by honest gain. It may be large or small. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were to their fellowmen at least what millionaires are to us. They are not censured for their wealth. On the contrary, it is among the blessings for which God is to have the glory. Wealth is a relative thing. Moderate means in New York are riches in a country town and would seem fabulous in some European and even American villages. Five thousand dollars a year many working people would count an enormous income. All which shows that the popular denunciations of wealth are wanting in discrimination. The shoemaker who can buy leather and make and sell shoes is a capitalist to the man whom he employs by the day or by the piece, though his capital may be under fifty dollars.

If there were no property recognized by God the Eighth Commandment would mean nothing. To take a horse or a house would be no more than breathing the common air or enjoying the common sunlight. It is because there are rights of property that there are duties and responsibilities linked with its possession.

II. In the second place, poverty is recognized in the Bible. It is not needful to quote familiar texts. It is little to the point to ask, "Did God mean men to be poor?" As well ask, Did God mean them to be sick, rheumatic, consumptive, paralytic? Sin entered into God's world, against God's warning, and misery came after it. We should distinguish, however, between poverty and what we have come to call "pauperism." I once knew a family of father, mother and four children—all pious, God-fearing, honest, independent. The parents and three of the children are gone, "asleep in Jesus." The surviving member is a Christian man. All the property they had any time in forty years could be bought out for five hundred dollars; but they have been respectable and respected. They were not paupers. They were not brought to their place by idleness, drunkenness nor other vice. They worked and would have been ashamed to beg. Christ and his disciples were in poverty, but they were not "paupers." They had some property, for Judas kept the bag, and some of them owned boats. They did not beg. They were poor as many an apostolic man is poor to-day, dispensing spiritual things, like Paul, and not counting it a great thing to reap of the hearers' carnal things.

III. In the third place God means that the wealthy should use wealth for the good of the poor. How could He put this more strongly than by adopting the language of our human life and making Himself surety for the repayment of the value of good done to the poor? We say "good done," for it is not gifts in money only that are contemplated. We take the Revised Version of the text—"and his good deed will He repay him again." The man who says

to a mendicant: "You should not beg, you should work. I'll not give you a cent; I'll give you work," and who so lifts up a loafer, if he does it in the right spirit, is carrying out the meaning of this text.

If one went to one of you in your office to ask you to lend money to another, you would naturally and properly ask: What is the security? Who indorses his paper? He gives you a name you never heard. You would say, and properly: I must know and have faith in the security. And the want of this faith on the plane to which our text carries us is the great check on benevolence, as the possession of it is its true fountain. Many men do not say in words: I do not believe in God; but they do in fact. He is not real, personal, almighty to them. They make no account of Him in their plans. They go on their way without regard to Him. A speculator out West sends you a printed prospectus of his way of making a fortune. You do not print a refutation of it. You drop it in the basket. You do not so believe it that you act on it. And you would say if a friend asked you about it: "I have no faith in it." So men—too many of them—even in New York, treat God's promises. They do not know Him and His attributes. When they are explained they, possibly, set it aside as "dogma." That He hates sin in thought, speech or life, and will punish it, if it be not put away, that He loves goodness in any form and will recognize it, they do not take in. The former is unwelcome truth. They do not like a God of holiness whose wrath is revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. They would rather have "nature" or "law," or that one side of the character of the Infinite Jehovah which they call "Benevolence." Ignoring His law they credit themselves with much goodness and in heart disregard the other side. Now it is from faith in God, knowledge of Him, and consequent love to Him that the "pity" of the text springs—the pity that God will recognize. A man gives you a nice religious paper, with his "kind regards." It contains the advertisement of his business. That is the motive. If it has no other is it love, or pity, or regard? And precisely so, on the authority of the Spirit, by Paul, you may give all your goods to feed the poor and yet you are nothing. You are wanting in the faith working by love which God requires; and the deeds of which He promises to repay.

From the beginning of organized Church life, regard for the poor has been one of its features. What modern nation has as careful and thorough protection against pauperism and provision for the poor as had the Hebrews? How soon the New Testament Church developed this same spirit! What was the duty of the deacons in the Apostolic Church? They were not ordained preachers waiting for advancement to the "priesthood." They were not ruling elders in the Church. They had a distinct office and work, with character, relations and duties fixed in the Apostolic Epistles. When Paul and Barnabas were sent out as delegates to Gentile churches, Peter, James and John told them to remember the poor, which, Paul says, they were forward to do (Galatians ii., 9-10). So the people of Achaia are commended, and the Galatians urged to imitate their example and applauded for their zeal

in ministering to the saints (II. Corinthians, ix., 1-5), So the Corinthians are directed to make a weekly appropriation "as God hath prospered," in I. Corinthians, xvi., 2. The Hebrews are popularly credited with giving a tenth. In point of fact they were required to give far more; but the Christian standard is higher still, "as God hath prospered."

IV. Let me commend to you, my hearers, the Bible form of benevolence. It is hearty. "Draw out the soul to the hungry"—that is the evangelical prophet's way of putting it. It is worth while to study the ethics of Deuteronomy (chapter xv.) on this whole matter of charity. It is illustrated in the Lord's picture of the Good Samaritan who sacrificed his comfort, put the sufferer on his saddle and walked himself, gave his personal service, his money and his credit. The "pity to the poor" is in view of God, the Divine Father, the all-wise Law-giver, of Christ's example, of the Spirit's teaching and moving. It is not from the "luxury of doing good," nor a combination of pleasure and charity, but from a regard to God who takes the service as rendered to Him. The memory of this tends to keep pride, vanity, ostentation, ambition out of the whole thing, for who believes for a moment that God will accept our offering polluted by these? "O Lord Jesus! I do this for Thee," said the missionary's wife, as she tearfully parted from her children on the ship, they to go across the ocean, she to go back to toil for the heathen. This is the kind of pity for the poor which the Lord will in His own way and time, repay. This is the safest of all investments. It is a sort of treasure in Heaven. Great companies and organizations may break down. Property may be depreciated by a thousand forces; your so-called "real estate" may become a burden, and when you are dead and gone, society may give curious study to the inwardness of your life, as it stands out in graphic newspaper reports of contests over your "will:" but what is put in the Lord's hand, has behind it not the Government of the "U. S." or of Great Britain, but the Governor of the Universe.

V. Now, my brethren, we come to look at the bearing of all this upon ourselves to-day. You have many a time in your closets before God, and in fitting ways before men, acknowledged how much God has done for you in the age and land we live in, in the State, in the family, in the church, in the home, in the separate life of each. We have all calls upon us to which we are bound to respond, where the giving does not come, and should not come, under the public eye. What is done there is done under the prompting of natural affection, perhaps from the kindly influence of old memories, and in this department, where help is not a temptation to idleness and sin—there should be generous goodness. But to-day we are thinking of our own people—*our own people* in the sense of their being fellow-citizens, and fellow Christians. Our homes were once nearer to them than now, and of course our Church had to follow with our homes. In consequence, we cannot give as much personal aid as once was given. How many of you can look back to the time when you taught and worked in the familiar King Street and Seventh Avenue, and when you climbed the steps of the school-building in East Fourteenth Street

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Loafing in the Vineyard.—We fear members may be found in all churches chargeable with this defect in their Christian life. It may not be wholly their own fault. Some of their defection may be attributed to their want of training in Church work. On their union with the Church no particular work was assigned, either by the pastor or other officers, and through timidity or sluggishness of disposition or some other cause they did not seek work for themselves,—work adapted to their tastes and to their several capacities. They consequently slid into a wasteful use of their time as professing Christians, their vows began to sit more lightly upon them, and that reasonable service which they owed to God as a thankoffering for His saving grace was not rendered. This class of Church members gravitates more and more to mere formalism, lends no helping hand to push forward the Redeemer's Kingdom, and eventually be-

comes cumberers of the ground or loafers in the vineyard. The remedy lies principally with the officers of the Church, in assigning to every one his work, when membership is formed, and by loving watchful oversight afterward securing a continuance in well-doing as each member holds on his course and waxes stronger and stronger. This should insure freedom from loafers.

Disgracefully Rich.—It may be impossible to assign the proper limit to the accumulation of wealth by any individual, because so many things must be taken into consideration in forming a judgment and in coming to a decision. The proper limit may not be the same in the case of each individual, because, through multifarious interests the means of some may have become so diversified and intertwined, that it requires large capital to conduct these varied businesses successfully, and until the business is contracted and concentrated, large wealth may be necessary.

But in ordinary cases it should be laid down as a fundamental principle that all means accumulated over and above the necessities which a man's business requires and the proper provision which he ought to make for his family, are means that ought not to be retained by him, but ought to be used in seeking to elevate, relieve and evangelize his fellow-man. To go on making and holding without giving as God has prospered, is to manifest a spirit of selfishness both before God and man, to ignore the claims that God's cause has upon his wealth, and to pass by the necessities of his fellow-men as did the priest and Levite of old. Such a course is ungodly and inhuman and ought to stamp this modern Dives as disgracefully rich. The blunt, outspoken Apostle James in the first verses of the fifth chapter of his epistle dealt faithfully with such men—verses which these disgracefully rich ones should learn and inwardly digest.

The Spirit in the Wheels.—The tendency to multiply machinery in the working of the Church seems to be on the increase. The inventive genius is continuously at work on this line, and every little while we hear of some new piece of mechanism introduced which is destined to work marvellously for good. There are doubtless some good traits in every one of these new elements in the rotatory system of church work, but there is danger of so complicating the machinery, that it will fail in producing the desired effects, or will divert the attention of the parties participating, from the main object to some minor or possibly some selfish aim, and thus generate formalism, self-righteousness or other phase of spiritual pride. It should never be forgotten by pastors and leaders in church work, that this mechanism needs ceaseless supervision to keep it from running off into lines unbecoming Christian professors, to see that it has the special unction of the Holy One, and that the Holy Spirit Himself is always in the wheels.

Sermonic Martinets.—These are sometimes brought to the surface and their real nature displayed when they have an opportunity of exercising their cold, rigid criticism upon some preacher whose successful ministry demonstrates that his pulpit efforts surpass those of the critics, as the stature of the giant overtops that of a dwarf. But these martinets have no words of commendation for any man's pulpit exercises, though he be popular and justly regarded as among the best preachers of the truth, who does not conform his pulpit preparations in all respects to some supercilious rules which the martinet himself favors. The spirit of his criticism would insist on the observance of its rules in the elucidation and declaration of the word though souls were perishing around, and though God's Word were as a fire in the bones of the preacher as he seeks to declare to these souls the message of salvation. The success

of those whom God has honored as His own instruments in the salvation of souls—some of whom never read any system of Homiletics, who never sat at the feet of these Homiletical Gamaliels, and who never think of the rules of these sermonic martinets—is a heaven-ordained reproof of this Procrustean type of criticism. Yea, even though John among the disciples should say in the spirit of these martinets, "Master, we saw one casting out devils in Thy name and we forbade him, because he followeth not with us"—did not shape his address to the demoniacs according to our homiletical rules—he would receive this rebuff from the Saviour, "Forbid him not."—don't do anything that may injure his good work, don't expose his non-conformity to our methods of address in his speeches to these demoniacs—"for there is no man which shall do a miracle in My name, that can lightly speak evil of Me. For he that is not against us, is on our part."

Warmth and Sympathy.—Both are necessary in the training of young converts. They cannot reasonably be expected to grow and be in good spiritual health without them. They need them as much as babes do when lying as infants upon the mother's lap. The Church, as a mother, should so care for her children, giving them the warmth of her heart, the protection of her loving arms, the nourishment that the sincere milk of God's word yields, and the sympathy that a little weakling claims from one who sustains to it the maternal relation.

Extra-Biblical Theology.—It seems strange that while millions are perishing in every land, the thoughts and time of so many should be occupied in discussing speculations that confessedly are outside of biblical certainties and in seeking to push them as dogmas into the creeds of the churches. The secret of the first human sin consisted in being more curious to know hidden things than to perform known duty.

before we had an edifice of our own? I am glad to say that there is growing up in these fields a company of workers, not yet, however, strong enough to compass all that is to be done. We have three ministers of the Gospel at work, as I am here, with morning and evening congregations, and with a Sabbath-School roll in the three places of 1,543 pupils. The work known as "Kindergarten" is done in all three on Saturday, and the rich and the poor come together in praise and prayer, the children learning the details of womanly manual work and the elements of Christian truth, through which we can be made pure and noble.

And this is not a thing of yesterday. At the Seventh Avenue meeting two weeks ago, we had teachers who have worked there over thirty years, and never were they happier or more hopeful than at this moment. Parents—hundreds of them—are taught their duties in the Church services, and their spirits are helped as are yours by the Word, sacraments and prayer—God's ordinances—and they are aided in the work by faithful Sabbath-school teachers. You remember the excitement that stirred the minds of men over the anarchists in the prison at Chicago, and you can guess how much that terrible episode cost the State. I saw a brief biography of the seven who stood out in the front. Not one of them had had parental or other teaching; most of them were early left parentless; they had to fight their way; found the battle hard; got to feel that society was their foe; and they had learned nothing of God and Christ, and the life for which earth's trials under God's discipline prepare us. Poor, neglected, friendless—they fell into courses which, while we blame, we cannot but pity the victims. We would fain save others from all that, and what the State or city cannot do, or does not attempt, the Church of Christ must take in hand. Think of human nature left without positive help or hope, conscious of some power, craving for enjoyment—as we all do naturally, knowing half-truths about a common origin and the brotherhood of men—gazing on the outside of our luxury and indulgence—sometimes sinful and costly indulgence—gazing upon it from the depths of its own poverty and despair, and you can see how strong the appeal may be for violence, desperate measures, bloodshed—anything that will change its conditions and right its imagined wrongs.

PERSONAL EFFORT (*Every one over against his own house.*—NEH. ii., 28).—
 I. It is implied that every one has a place of residence—what ought to "be his own house" and a home. II. The opportunities of city life—opportunities of service. Jesus "must needs go to Jerusalem." There the wants of the land were crowded and concentrated. III. Look at the leader of the work. How enthusiastic! How helpful in word and work. IV. Look at the work. How dull, monotonous, commonplace! But Christ's service requires it. V. This work gave the city its security. *Every man diligently repairing over against his own house.* VI. The work becomes fascinating when it is undertaken and carried on for Jesus' sake.—*Rev. Mark G. Pearse.*