Practical Readings in the Life of Our Lord

George Everard, 1884

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1. The Visit of the Magi

In the days of Solomon, strangers came from afar to see his glory, and to hear the wisdom that God had put into his heart. The queen of Sheba with her retinue came bringing their gifts to the king of Israel. Nor were they disappointed. The queen returned to her own land, declaring that the half had not been told, and that great was the blessedness of those servants who waited continually in his presence.

Nearly ten centuries pass by, and another company of strangers from a far-off land come to the land of Israel to seek for the King, and to lay their gifts at His feet. And they too were abundantly rewarded. Their search was not in vain. A 'greater than Solomon' was He whom they found in Bethlehem, even the Prince of Peace, the Savior of mankind, the King who would "reign over the house of Jacob forever," and of whose "kingdom there would be no end." And in finding Him "they rejoiced with exceeding great joy," even a joy that no man could take from them, and that would illumine earth and Heaven with its eternal brightness.

I see these Magi on their journey. I ask them, Why do they come? They have heard the rumor that a great king should arise in Judah; their hopes and expectations have been raised; and in their own land of the East, they had seen a remarkable star or meteor in the western horizon. But was there nothing more?

It is not easy to say. Perchance some prophetic intimation had been given. Perchance the angel that spoke to the shepherds may have carried a message also to their distant home. Or at least we must believe that a secret touch of the Spirit had drawn them to undertake so long a journey on that which might have seemed so unlikely an errand. No cost of trouble, time, or toil deterred them. Those around them may have tried to turn them back. The dangers and perils of the way may have seemed to be formidable. But, nothing hindered — from Persia, or Arabia, or beyond the Euphrates, they came to behold Him who is born King of the Jews!

And what will they find? Surely the knowledge of His birth will have spread far and wide. Probably some weeks had elapsed since the marvelous vision of angels had been seen, and the message of good tidings proclaimed, and the song of the celestial choir had revealed that in Him there should be "glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men."

And is not the name of Jesus on the lips and in the hearts of multitudes? Is not His presence sounding throughout the land? Nay, it is far otherwise. But few have cared to learn or carry the news. Simeon and Anna, and a little company of true-hearted ones, have tasted the cup of gladness, and welcomed the salvation of Israel. But the rest know nothing and care nothing about the wondrous tale of Divine love. Had He been born in Herod's magnificent palace, some mile or two from the village inn, or had He come in state and grandeur from some other land — many would have flocked around Him. But who cares for the Son of Mary? Who will pay court to Him who is born in a stable and laid in a manger?

Truly three wonders were in His birth.

"He was in the world." The glorious Jehovah, the Father's "Well-beloved, the Worship of the heavenly host, was born on earth and seen by men.

"The world was made by Him." Every object around Him was the work of His own hands.

"And the world knew Him not." Here was the greatest wonder of all! The mighty Creator came into the world which He had made — and none know or recognize His glory!

The Magi seek to discover Him. In spite of the ignorance and unbelief in Jerusalem, they are persuaded of the truth of His coming. Nothing can daunt them. To see Him, to worship Him, is the object of their search. And this they must by some means attain.

The rumor of a king of the Jews spreads fear and alarm. Herod is troubled and all the city with him. So he acts with subtlety. He will discover the evil, and nip it in the bud. He calls those learned in the law of God, and inquires of them where the Christ should be born. About this, there is no question. Bethlehem must be the place. Seven hundred years before has Micah prophesied, that from Bethlehem shall "a governor arise who shall be the shepherd of God's people Israel" ([Matthew 2:6](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt%202.6)). So Herod gave the wise men orders, and sent them on their way. He bade them go to Bethlehem and search out the child, and then return and tell him, no doubt with the secret purpose to kill the child when he had found him.

The right guidance has been given through the lips of a wicked man. And now the star or meteor again appears and directs them to the very spot where the infant lies. Their joy bursts forth, and with glad thankfulness for their success, they come to the house and fall down and worship Him. They open their treasures and offer their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh; and being warned by God in a dream, depart into their own country another way.

Long ago these Magi filled their niche in the Church of God, and did their work in the vineyard of our Lord. What honor they brought to Christ in their own land — what part they were able to perform in preparing their countrymen to receive that gospel which would be preached after the descent of the Spirit — this we know not, but can only conjecture. Meanwhile the incident abides on the inspired page of Holy Writ, and suggests to ourselves profitable and instructive teaching.

1. Christ is a Savior for all sorts and conditions of men. The angels told of "good tidings of great joy which should be to all people," and in those around the Savior at His birth we see an illustration of the fact.

Joseph and Mary — the shepherds from the plain — Simeon and Anna in the Temple — and now the wise men from the East — all came and found blessing, and joy, and hope in the new-born Savior.

Here were Jews and Gentiles, rich and poor, the learned and the ignorant; men in high position — and those in the humblest calling; those who had profited by the teaching of the law and the prophets — and those who had been living in heathen idolatry — all drawn as by a magnet to Him who came as a light of the Gentiles. It is so still. Around the now risen and glorified Savior, are found men and women once as far as possible diverse from each other.

Representatives of almost every nation upon earth are numbered among the true disciples of Christ. And from our own land we may find those drawn from the ranks of the nobility, from every profession and every calling, yes, and multitudes who once were sunk in the deepest ignorance and vice. Whoever you are, you may share the joy of the Magi and the shepherds, and take your place in the ranks of Christ's Church.

Are you a child of wealth? You may find still better riches — riches that last, riches that will sanctify whatever property you possess and enable you to use it aright.

Are you among the children of the poor? You are no less welcome. In the friendship and the love of Christ, you may possess a treasure which far outweighs all the gold and silver which the world contains.

Are you gifted with education and intellectual power, and knowledge of earth's mysteries? You may add to it that higher knowledge of the world's Redeemer, which will add a tenfold value to all other knowledge, making it a blessed instrument for the putting forth of Divine truth.

Are you but poorly furnished as to secular attainments? Yet through the teaching of the Comforter you may rise high in the understanding of the grace and covenant of God in Christ.

Are you a companion of the great, taking your place with ease in the highest circles? Only secure the friendship and favor of the very Greatest — the friendship of Him on whose will depends the life of earth's kings and princes, and when the society in which now you move has lost its attractions for you, you shall find a place ready for you among the nobility of Heaven.

Are you the lonely tenant of an attic or a cellar? Seek unto Christ, and you shall have the best company — the presence of a Father and a Savior in your solitude. Listen to the words of an aged woman in Edinburgh: "What would this garret be to me, without God?

Ah, it is grand to be a member of the blood-royal of Heaven, where sins are unknown, where tears and cold garrets are forgotten, and where sorrows and stinted food are things long gone by. If I have a cold house, and not too much to eat, Jesus is a "hiding-place from the wind and the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."

Yes, whoever you are, whatever you are, whatever you may have been — if only you come with a humble, believing heart, there is a welcome for you, and a true blessing from the Savior of sinners.

2. God never fails to direct the sincere inquirer. It is worth while to notice how in various ways the Lord led these Magi until they found the Savior. First, most probably by a vague rumor, then by a star, then by the words of Micah, and again by the leading of the star. So by manifold agencies, does He still lead those who seek the Lord.

It is ever in some way by the light of Divine truth, and therefore we can never be too diligent in teaching men to know the Scriptures. By all means let us use painstaking efforts in the Bible class, in the instruction of young and old, wherever we find an open door. In doing so, we shall often discover that the Spirit has taken the guiding star of some precept or promise or invitation to lead a soul to the feet of the Savior. Nevertheless, frequently by paths we should never have imagined, does the Lord bring home the truth and save the soul.

"It seems strange," said a young servant who found Christ in a mission in Devonshire, "that the Lord should have brought me from the north of Scotland to the south of England, that I might learn to love the Savior."

A Sunday-school teacher was commending a lad for his well-learned lessons. "But you should hear the language he uses on the week-day!" was the remark of another lad in the class. The teacher said nothing, but fixed his eye on the lad thus accused. That look was the means of his conversion. It led him to confess his sin, and to seek the cleansing power of the Savior's blood.

A young Hindu, the son of a rich man in Calcutta, had frequent opportunities of hearing the truths of the gospel. But they never touched his heart. He set out for England that he might qualify himself the better to practice at the bar in India. On the way a storm arose, and for three days the ship was in great peril. But through the storm the Spirit led him to the true harbor of refuge. He thought of Christ, sought Him in prayer, and before many days passed he could rejoice in His salvation.

In London he was led further in the knowledge of Christ, and was publicly baptized. When his father heard of it, he cut off his supplies, and he would have been utterly destitute but for the kindness of Christian friends.

At length he went back as a barrister, and his father seemed softened, and received him with open arms. But it was only a trap to draw him away from the faith of Christ. Soon after his father made him an offer. "If you will give up Christianity, I will at once give up to you everything I have. You need not practice law, but can enjoy life, and live as you wish in abundance and comfort."

But his faith was firm. He had found the pearl of great price, and was willing to part with all rather than lose it.

"Not for all you have done for me," said the son, "nor for all the love which you have shown me, and which I value most — dare I deny the Savior's name."

"Then," said the father, "you are no longer my son, nor am I your father. Be-gone, and never see me again!"

So he had to leave his home and all he loved, and practice in another city.

3. Those who truly love Christ will delight to lay precious gifts at His footstool. The Magi brought their precious gifts, and you may bring yours. You may have no gold nor silver, no costly offerings, that you can present. But you can bring the homage of a loving, grateful heart. You can bring prayers and praises, humble confessions and willing testimonies of that which He has brought for you. You can give, perhaps the fruits of self-denial on behalf of His kingdom. You can give yourself, by far the most worthy offering it is possible to lay on His altar.

Let love be foremost — then the King will accept any gift and any offering.

Say shall we yield Him in costly devotion,
Odors of Edom and offerings divine,
Gems of the mountain and pearls of the ocean,
Myrrh from the forest or gold from the mine?

Vainly we offer each ample oblation,
Vainly with gifts would His favor secure;
Richer by far, is the heart's adoration,
Dearer to God, are the prayers of the poor!

2. By the Well of Sychar

"Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" [John 4:29](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%204.29)

So said the woman that left her water-pot at the well of Sychar — but was it true? Had Christ told her all things that she ever had done? Had He told her one half or one quarter of the sin she had committed? Nay, He had spoken but one sentence with respect to her past life — but a secret voice within told her the rest. To her soul it was as if every act of bygone days had come up before her, and beneath the all-searching eye of the Son of Man she stood self-condemned, self-convicted, and owning herself as she was — the chief of sinners.

We have often read the story, and perhaps have pictured to ourselves Christ sitting on the well and talking with the woman.

But let us recall it in its main features. How was it that Jesus was there at the moment when the woman came?

Was it by chance that they met? Was it simply an opportunity for doing good that the Master seized? I do not so read the story. The Good Shepherd was weary — for He had come many a mile to fetch home a lost and wandering one.

"There were ninety and nine that safely lay
In the shelter of the fold;
But one was out on the hills away,
Far off from the gates of gold,
Away on the mountains wild and bare,
Away from the tender Shepherd's care."

Everlasting love brought Him to Sychar! Everlasting love led Him to speak to her, to ask water at her hands, that He might give her the living water that alone could satisfy her thirsty soul! "He had to pass through Samaria." [John 4:4](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%204.4)

Jesus was "wearied with His journey; but was not the woman far more weary through her wanderings in the far country of sin? Long, long years she had spent in that evil land, and in the service of a citizen of that country. Now was she sore famished in heart, a stranger to all true peace, thirsty even unto death for that which as yet she knows not.

She hesitates in giving water to the stranger; for why does He ask it of a Samaritan? Is not He a Jew — and she a woman despised by His nation? How then is He willing to receive water from her hands?

But Christ does not hesitate to offer her that precious gift which He alone can bestow. He speaks to her in words that have brought hope and salvation to thirsty, longing ones in every age. "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that says to you, 'Give me a drink' — you would have asked of Him, and He would have given you living water."

Then came fresh questionings, "nothing to draw with," "the well deep," the greatness of the patriarch, and can this stranger be greater than he? All this puzzles the woman, and she opens to Him her difficulties. Then still more gloriously does He set before her the unspeakable benefit He was able to confer.

"Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him, will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life!" [John 4:13-14](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%204.13-14)

Marvelous promise! Grace beyond all measure and limit! The Old Testament invitations renewed and brought close home to the heart! Life, salvation, the blessed gift of the Holy Spirit within the soul to reveal the love of God, peace, hope, and everlasting glory — free to the sinner who will receive them at the hand of Christ! Is not this and more, bestowed upon us in this full and gracious promise?

The woman hears, yet scarcely can she conceive the meaning of the wonderful promise. Still some glimmer of the truth dawns upon her. Something can this stranger give, that she does not possess. Some spring of joy can He open to her, of which as yet she knows nothing. But whatever it is, she will ask it of Him. So the woman said to Him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water." [John 4:15](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%204.15)

Nor is her petition left unanswered. Yes, He will give her this water, and give it to her abundantly — yet not as she imagines. First must He reveal to her her own sinful self — before He can reveal to her the riches of His goodness and His grace.

But how tenderly does the good Physician deal with her! He will touch the sore, but with no rough, unfeeling hand. Only a word, a single word, shall touch her conscience; but to her how much is in that word! "Go, call your husband, and come back!"

What the sight of Elijah was to Ahab — such was that word "husband" to this woman. It brought her sin to remembrance, but she would gladly conceal it if she could. She would hear no more of this. She would close the door to all mention of so painful a topic.

But it may not be. That hour she shall learn that there is nothing hidden from Him with whom she has to do. His eyes are as a flame of fire. The past and the present are all naked and open to His sight. He knows her altogether, and all her ways and works are before Him. "Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of Him to whom we must give account!" [Hebrews 4:13](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb%204.13)

Does she reply, "I have no husband?" It is but to draw forth a charge of guilt she can no longer hide. Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say that you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true." [John 4:17-18](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%204.17-18)

You have seen sometimes a vivid flash of lightning, whereby in a moment the whole landscape far and near has shone out as clear as day; though before, all has been covered by a pall of midnight darkness. This word of Christ has a like effect upon this woman. In an instant she is taken back to scenes and places well-near forgotten. Memory and conscience illumine the whole of her past history. Companions in evil, terrible breaches of God's holy law, vile and shameless conduct beyond expression — the thought of these fill her with confusion. Her five husbands as she may have reckoned them, and the story linked with each, the broken vow, the bitter jealousy and envy, the strife, the railing, the fits of anger and passion, sins of darkness of which it is a shame even to speak — whatever evil from first to last there may have been in those years of ungodliness and impenitence — all is remembered through the word the Savior has spoken to her.

If she could, she would still have desired to put away the thoughts which Christ has aroused. She attempts to turn the conversation. She inquires about the right place for worship — whether Gerizim or Jerusalem. But she only learns still more of God's requirements. He is a Spirit, and such as worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. Not Gerizim, not Jerusalem — but the altar of the heart is the true place of acceptable worship. All else is indifferent compared to this. Only he "who engages his heart to approach unto God" will be pleasing and acceptable to the Father.

But soon she learns another lesson. He is not only a prophet, as she first believes — but the Messiah, the Christ, the Savior of the world. From His own lips she learns this blessed truth, and she rejoices in the hope this assurance gives her.

Then it is that she goes forth as a messenger of good news to others. She leaves her water-pot, for she has found other water than that of the well — even the living water which Christ had promised — a spring of holy joy and everlasting life within her. And as Andrew bore witness of Christ to his own brother Simon, as Philip bore witness to his friend Nathanael — so did this woman tell to the men of her city, the treasure she had found. It was a word spoken from personal experience, and from the faith which had now arisen in her heart. She spoke of Christ as one who can tell men the secrets of their hearts, and who therefore could be none other than the long-promised Messiah.

"Come, see a man who told me everything that I ever did — is not this the Christ?" Mighty was this word of personal testimony. It did that which some of Christ's mighty miracles altogether failed to effect. Through the secret working of God's grace, the men of the place came to Christ and believed in Him. Some believed because of the word of the woman — many more because of His own word. And still onwards, through the whole history of Christ's Church, through the story of this woman, have many come to Jesus and found life eternal in Him.

What PRACTICAL LESSONS may be suggested by this narrative?

First, it is a blessed thing to know from Christ the sins of bygone years. He can wound — but He can heal. He can show to us our own sinful selves — but He can also show to us Himself as a great and merciful Savior. Therefore go to Him, and hide nothing from His all-searching glance.

Do not shrink from His probing the depth of the evil that is in you. Rather desire to know the very worst. Ask Him to try you and prove the ground of your heart. Go back in thought to the days that are past. Think of friends you have known, enemies you may have made, homes you may have visited, and places where you have lived. Recall the rooms in which you have slept, the office or shop, or warehouse or factory, or farm, where your work lay. Consider the books you have read, the letters you have written, the conversations you have held, the plans and purposes you have formed — and then quietly weigh them all in the balances of the sanctuary, and give them a just and righteous verdict on yourself and your ways. Let conscience speak out, and don't muzzle her. Don't excuse yourself by the plea of "circumstances" or "what others have done." Remember Christ knows all — and He is judge. The most secret imagination, that which was never breathed into any human ear, is before His eye — and for it you must answer before His bar.

Why then should you conceal or hide anything? Is it not far better to tell it to Christ as a Savior — than to hear it from Him as a Judge? Is it not far wiser to bring it to Him now in humble confession, that it may be forgiven through His blood — than to wait until the Great Day reveal it, when there will be no remedy?

But the second lesson I would suggest from this story, is that

2. You should look up to Christ as a loving and merciful Redeemer. Be not content with gaining a humbling view of your sins, without also finding a sure and complete forgiveness. The sin of this woman was no sooner revealed to her, than the very same hour it was remitted through Him in whom she believed. This dark catalogue of sins committed through long years — was blotted out and remembered no more against her. She left her water-pot behind, but she left her sins too!

When she went forth to witness for Christ, it was in the joyous liberty of free forgiveness, and in the comfort of that rich grace which He had poured into her soul.

It is worth while noticing the special title which the men of Sychar gave to Christ. "This is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world" (verse 42). A glorious name, for the first time used by these Samaritans, as far as we know, but taken up by John in his First Epistle, "The Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world" (chapter 4:14).

This was doubtless the faith of the woman as well as of those to whom she witnessed of Christ. Ah, believe it, anxious, troubled soul. Whatever your sin, whatever your past neglect — Christ is a Savior for the world, and therefore for you, if you will receive Him and trust in Him. Present pardon, present salvation, the present grace and help of the Holy Spirit — all are yours when you take Christ as your Savior and rely upon Him.

We might have imagined that some preliminary season of penitence and prayer would have been appointed for one so deeply stained with guilt as this woman, before that guilt and sin could be remitted. But how was it in her case? She no sooner learned to see her sin, than she saw Christ as her Savior! And in her glad and overflowing joy, she became a true missionary, and brought many of her neighbors to believe in Him.

This suggests a third lesson.

3. When you know Christ as your Savior, do not keep the good news to yourself. Let the living water overflow. Let the message spread from heart to heart. Let there be something of a holy enthusiasm about you. There may be times when it is well to leave the water-pot behind, to lay aside your ordinary work to do some special work for the Master. And be not ashamed to utter a word of personal experience. With nothing but shame and self-condemnation as to yourself and what you have been — you may yet glory in Christ and what He has done for you. Thus telling of His free salvation, you may be able to draw many a sinner to His footstool.

NOTHING TO PAY!

Nothing to pay! ah, nothing to pay!
Never a word of excuse to say!
Year after rear you have filled the score,
Owing your Lord still more and more.

Hear the voice of Jesus say,
"Truly you have nothing to pay!
Ruined, lost are you, and yet
I forgave you all that debt!"

Nothing to pay! The debt so great;
What will you do with the awful weight?
How shall the way of escape be made?
Nothing to pay! Yet it must be paid!

Hear the voice of Jesus say,
"Truly you have nothing to pay!
All has been put to my account,
I have paid the full amount!"

Nothing to pay! Yes, nothing to pay!
Jesus has cleared all the debt away,
Blotted it out with His bleeding hand,
Free and forgiven and loved you stand!

Hear the voice of Jesus say,
"Truly you have nothing to pay!
Paid is the debt, and the debtor free,
Now I ask you, Lovest thou me?"

3. By the Lake of Galilee

He said to Simon, "Launch out into the deep waters, and let down your nets for a catch."

Simon answered, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets." When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Depart from me, O Lord; I am a sinful man!" [Luke 5:4-8](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke%205.4-8)

A few fishermen are standing, on the shore. It is early in the day, and these men have passed a night of fruitless toil. All night long have they been casting in the net — and yet they have caught nothing to reward their efforts. So mending and washing their nets, they prepare at the right time to renew their work.

But One comes near whose work is a counterpart of their own. He, too, casts in His net, and in preaching the gospel seeks to draw many to Himself. He enters into the boat of Simon, and there speaks to the people assembled near. Then He bids the fishermen go forth again, and let down their nets for a catch. At His command, they gladly put forth.

The word of the Master is enough. They have begun to learn His power, and they shall learn it still more. All things obey His will. The birds of the air, the beasts of the field, the fish of the sea — must all fulfill His purpose. So do they find it here by the lake. Never, for many a long day, had they such a haul. The net was full to overflowing. One boat is insufficient to receive the spoil. So they beckon to their partners who were in the other ship that they should come and help them.

Then a holy awe steals over tie mind of Peter. He catches a glimpse of Christ's majesty and glory. He feels himself utterly unworthy of such a Presence. "Who is this Mighty One? Who is this that has power over all that passes through the paths of the deep? And who am I, so sinful and polluted, that I shall abide near such a one? Depart from me, O Lord; I am a sinful man!" But Christ reassures him. Fear not, you are mine, you shall not perish. Nay, more. You shall be a fellow-worker with me. Henceforth a nobler toil than heretofore shall engage your thought. You shall catch men, and so grasp them as to save them to life eternal.

So Christ prevailed over the fish of the sea, yes, and over the fishermen too. For He caught them and secured them in His net of love. They became willing captives of Him who called them. For they rose, and forsook all, and followed Him.

Let us go back in thought to that scene by the lake. Let us think of Him who there manifested His power. Let us think of the men in their boats and their plentiful supply of fish — and then speak to our hearts the LESSONS it may all teach us.

1. Think of the considerate bounty of our gracious Master. It was one of the beautiful features of our Lord's character. He was ever thoughtful and considerate of the needs, feelings, troubles, and anxieties of those around Him. Through those days that He tarried before He went to the grave of Bethany — He was even thinking of the sisters in their deep grief. When at the marriage feast at Cana wine was lacking — He did not fail to supply them. And now that Simon has lent Him his boat for a time — he shall be no loser. A rich and bountiful reward shall be his. A catch of fish shall recompense him which would amply have rewarded the toil of a week.

Never, never imagine you can be a loser by anything you willingly yield to Christ. Nothing done for Christ, given to Him, or

 suffered for His sake — but shall come back in rich blessing. Time, money, labor, effort spent in His cause — all will be abundantly repaid. Not seldom will it return in comfort and prosperity and honor on earth — but always in peace of mind and treasure in Heaven.

And learn another lesson here. Be very considerate for others. Take no labor, without giving fair remuneration. Think of the necessities, the temptations, the difficulties, the trials of those around you. Beware of forgetting things that need to be done. Be considerate of the feelings of those who live with you. Never drop words of vitriol, words that may burn, irritate, and vex the husband, the wife, the brother, or the sister at your fireside.

Be considerate for the souls of others. Let servants have opportunities for worship on Sundays and on week days. Think of our postmen, our railway servants, our cabmen — and do what you can to reach them with the Word of God. Be considerate for the poor and the sick. Study how you may wisely alleviate their misery and need. No one can tell the harm that is done by lack of consideration for others. Debts are left unpaid, to the ruin of the creditor; or over-toil is inflicted on those whose health fails under it. In a thousand ways wrong is done, and pain and injury caused, not by any willful purpose of evil — but simply by lack of due thought for those connected with us.

2. The darkest night may usher in the brightest day. Never had these men a night of more fruitless toil, of more utter disappointment — than when our Lord came to them. And never had they more joy in the success of their work, than when He sent them this catch of fish.

Many a dark night may be appointed for you. In temporal matters or in spiritual — dark, weary, sorrowful hours may be yours. Many a heavy burden may be laid upon you, many a secret trial, unknown to any but yourself and your Savior — may cause you fear and anxiety. Many an effort for the good of others may seem in vain. But hope on, and never give up.

Light will arise by and by, though the night may be long and dreary. Wait patiently, persevere in prayer — and all shall yet be for the best. You have learned, like these fishermen, how utterly helpless you are without Christ, and that without Him every effort must fail. You shall learn that Jesus will come in due season, and then He will do beyond your utmost expectation.

"Do you ask — when comes His hour?
Then when it shall aid you best,
Trust His faithfulness and power,
Trust in Him and quietly rest:
Suffer on and hope and wait,
Jesus never comes too late!"

3. A holy awe and fear in Christ's presence is the best preparation for Christian discipleship.

See that strange fear that came over Peter. Why should he thus shrink from Christ's presence? What was the connection between the prey he took out of the lake, and his cry "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" Surely it was Divine grace at work. A consciousness of a Divine glory in Christ, awoke him to a livelier sense of his own sin. It is ever thus with those taught of God.

See Job, the "perfect" man: "Behold, I am vile!" "Now my eye sees You — therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

See the Prophet Isaiah when he saw the vision of Jehovah's majesty: "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips — and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty!"

Blessed are those who so fear! Blessed are those who are penetrated through and through with a sense of their own sins and shortcomings! And blessed are those who follow on to know the joy of full pardon and of the favor of Almighty God.

Look at the contrast in Peter at the second catch of fish. He had meanwhile learned to know more of Christ — more of His love — more of His forgiving mercy. And what is the result? At the first catch of fish, he would have Christ depart from him — at the second catch, he is so eager to get near to Christ, that he casts himself into the sea, and swims to shore. Forgiven, saved, conscious of the Savior's free and abounding mercy — perfect love has cast out fear, and now he delights to be near the Savior who has dealt so tenderly with him.

What says your heart? Is there a consciousness of sin, but not yet an assurance of pardon? Or is there a simple indifference about the whole matter?

The heart has been compared to a pendulum vibrating between two points. In many cases you find at times strong convictions, inward dread, a sense of guilt and unpreparedness — which makes it tremble at the thought of death and judgment. But again these all die away, and a still heavier sleep of carelessness pervades the soul.

And if men go no further than this, what is the sure outcome? There is an hour when men can be careless no more. The solemn realities of eternity must break in upon the soul. Then eternal self-reproach, eternal despair, must be to such a one as the worm that never dies.

But learn to know Christ as an all-sufficient Savior. Come to Him as both willing and able to save. Trust Him for full cleansing through His blood, and for the help and grace of His Spirit. Then indifference shall give place to holy zeal — and fear and dread shall be swallowed up in love, joy, and peace — and this shall be the pledge of the eternal blessedness which shall be your portion for evermore.

4. The story gives us a few helpful LESSONS for Christ's fishermen.

Remember there are two fishermen who are ever busily at work.

There is one who by every means strives to catch souls to their utter destruction. He has his co-workers everywhere. He has his nets and lines thrown out in all directions. By ten thousand wily arts, he allures and entices the young and the old, the rich and the poor. There is the bait —
the sin that is so sweet to the natural heart,
the hour of carnal mirth and self-indulgence,
the dazzling pursuit of wealth,
the special attraction that leads a man wrong —
and by these means, multitudes of precious souls are snared and taken, and perish.

But there is another Fisherman who is at work also. He too encloses men in the meshes of His net, and holds them fast with bands and cords. But His work is to save and not to destroy. His bands and cords are mercy, grace, and love. He takes them captive that He may preserve them from all evil and bring them to eternal life.

Once I noticed some men catching the fish in a small pond. What was their purpose? The pond was drying up through the heat of summer, and they were taking the fish to place them in a moat always full of fresh, pure water.

Just so, I thought, does Christ take men out of the world, where everything must shortly fail — and places them in the deep ocean of God's eternal love, where they shall be satisfied forever with His joy.

And in this sweet captivity of Christ, there is the only true liberty. He takes men captive, to set them free. He draws them to Himself, that He may deliver them from the bondage of sin. He saves them from the yoke of the enemy. He frees them from a guilty conscience, the power of bad habits, the fear of death, and at length from all the consequences of former evil.

Then, by a strange transformation, the fish whom He has caught, become His fishermen. Peter was caught himself, and then was sent forth to catch others. Those who know the blessedness of His love, join with the Master in letting down the gospel net. Saved souls must become winners of those yet in the deep waters of sin.

So Christ's voice speaks to you if you are His: "Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a catch." Go down into the sea of carelessness, ungodliness, and sin. Carry with you the gospel message. Go from street to street and from house to house, and tell men of Christ's power to save, and His tender love towards mankind. Go among the sons of toil, go among those in higher position if the door is open. Go among the children and the young folks. And wherever you go, speak bright, helpful words of Jesus, and tell of all His pity and loving-kindness.

And how shall you best do this work?

Fish in all waters, fish in the open sea, in the river, in the quiet stream — as you can. Where you least expect it, you may do the most good. From the most unlikely quarter — you may gain the most precious spoil for Christ's kingdom.

Choose out the most likely seasons — yet reckon no season untimely. Make good use of . . .
times of sickness;
times when sorrow has visited a home;
times of solemn awakening, when the Spirit is abroad;
times when you can get a quiet talk with a man by the wayside;
sacred seasons, like God's holy day, when the heart may be somewhat prepared to receive a word.

A word earnestly spoken amidst the noise and bustle of the world may not be lost. "Instant in season and out of season" ought to be the spirit of every Christian worker.

Fish with the line, when you cannot with the net. You may not be able to preach to fifty or five hundred — but you can drop a word in season to one by your side. God makes great use of personal, individual dealings with souls.

A kindly question,
a striking illustration of truth,
a verse of God's Word,
a home thrust of some kind
— may awaken a sleeper, guide an anxious one, or strengthen and build up one who is weak in the faith.

Never despise the units. One by one God brought to Himself the great multitude which no man can number. Though it is but a little ragged child — never neglect the opportunity of benefitting one soul. Remember Heaven's arithmetic, "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

Look for definite blessing. A fisherman looks often to his net or his line, and is not satisfied unless fish are taken. And shall we not equally look for distinct blessing on our work? The pastor among his flock, the teacher in the class, the visitor in the district — ought not each and all to pray for and expect plain manifest proofs of the working of God's grace? Do your part faithfully, expect great things from God, and you will not be disappointed.

Imitate the fisher's patience. Peter and the rest had toiled all night, though their toil had been all in vain. I have seen a fisherman on a rainy day stand in the middle of the stream, nor has he gone home until nightfall, that he might make the best of a favorable opportunity. So should Christian workers have long patience, whether or no they see the success they desire. Sometimes the noblest trophies of the gospel have been won, after the work has appeared almost hopeless — as in New Zealand and in China.

Above all, remember that the only sure success is from the presence and blessing of Christ. This was the great lesson of the miracle.

Work without Christ cannot prosper.

Work with Him cannot fail.

It is His power from first to last that effects anything real and abiding. Remember Pentecost. A great catch of fish was indeed that day swept into the net. But how was it? Prayer had been unceasing. Christ was working with the Apostles. The Spirit had descended, and hence the work was done. Therefore look to Christ alone. Lean on His Word and power. He alone can make your work effectual.

"Lord, use me for Your glory,
Whatever the service be.
You are the altar where I lay
The work I do for Thee;
And 'tis that sacred touch of Thee
Which hallows all for me."

4. The Man Who Had Great Faith

A Roman centurion has a servant sick. The servant is very dear to him, and he longs for his recovery. He hears of the mighty works of Jesus, and believes in His power to heal. But he shrinks from going to one so holy and so great. Filled with a deep sense of his unworthiness, instead of coming himself he sends the elders of the Jews to Jesus. Though by birth a Gentile, he had "loved their nation," and "had built them a synagogue." So that we may be sure they would be willing to do him a kindness, and go on the errand on which he sends them.

They come to Jesus and entreat him for the centurion's servant. They tell Him of his dangerous condition, "paralyzed and in terrible suffering." At once Christ promises to come and heal him. But from this too the centurion shrinks. He reckons not himself worthy that Christ should come under his roof. This would be far too great an honor for one sinful as he. And there was no need. Let Christ but speak the word and it shall be enough — his servant will be healed. For are not all things at Christ's beck and bidding? If he himself can command his servants, and at his word they come or go, or do whatever he may say — then shall it not be even so with Christ? What are sickness and health, disease and pain, life and death — but His servants, His ministers, to do His pleasure, and to fulfill whatever He may appoint?

Jesus beholds this man's sure unhesitating faith in His word and power, with delight. He has seen nothing like it. Who could have looked for such a spirit from a Roman soldier and a Gentile? As if a man went through his vineyard, and scarcely a handful of fruit rewarded his toil and pains — and then went forth into the uncultivated wilds and found a vine covered with richest clusters — thus did Christ regard the faith of this centurion. "When Jesus heard this, He was astonished and said to those following Him: I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith!" [Matthew 8:10](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt%208.10)

As Jesus ponders the faith of this man, there arises in thought before Him, a great multitude of Gentiles — once strangers to the covenants of promise, who by a like faith should press into the Gospel kingdom and share all the glories that pertain to it. "I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of Heaven." [Matthew 8:11](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt%208.11)

It is as though Christ would point to the centurion and speak somewhat in this way: "Behold yonder Gentile! Once far off, by faith in Me he has become a true child of Abraham, and partakes of all the privileges of my covenant and kingdom. Nor is he alone in this. See in him the first fruits of the Gentile world. See in him a type of ten thousand times ten thousand who from every land shall be brought into my fold. From the rising to the setting sun, from every nation, and language, and people, and tongue — shall the incense of prayer and praise arise, and sinners be brought near to God through faith in Me."

But Christ added another word, and it was a solemn one. By faith those once far off should enter His kingdom, while the natural seed of Abraham, the favored children of Zion, through their unbelief, should be thrust out. "But the sons of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." [Matthew 8:12](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt%208.12)

The story of this centurion is full of INSTRUCTION.

It teaches us, first of all, that a true genuine faith is the one door into Christ's kingdom. Jesus puts His finger on this one thing. Because of the centurion's faith, Jesus received his petition, healed his servant, and numbered him among the true Israel of God.

True, there were other points in the man worthy of Christ's commendation. He was evidently a good, kind master, for he cared for his servant's welfare. Nor can we doubt, if this were so, that he was equally conscientious in the other relationships of home life. Moreover, he had an affection for the Jewish nation. He valued religious privileges, and as a proselyte, he would attend the synagogue worship. He was a man of a liberal and bountiful spirit, for at his own cost he had built a synagogue for them. He was also a man of profound humility. He had discovered something of his own sinfulness, and had reckoned himself utterly unworthy of coming to Christ, or of Christ coming to his house. But Christ said not a word of all this, though no doubt He saw and approved it. He singles out the man's faith, and extols its mighty power, and thereupon speaks of him as a citizen of the heavenly kingdom.

Let us learn to estimate the value of a true faith aright. Without it, it is impossible to please God. Without it, the most showy works, alms-deeds, gifts, or efforts, however useful to others, are but "dead works" in the sight of God. Without it, there can be no forgiveness, no true holiness, no entrance into the heavenly Jerusalem.

But what is this faith which is so precious to God's sight, and so profitable to the soul? It is not a flower that grows in nature's garden, but is the direct work and operation of the Holy Spirit. It looks up to Christ as the very Son of God, and relies upon His word of promise as sure of its accomplishment. In the case of the centurion there was but little knowledge, compared to that which we possess — but as far as he knew, he showed a marvelous confidence in the word and power of Christ.

In our case faith necessarily goes much further. It regards the death of Christ as the only ground of pardon, and His resurrection as the sure pledge of His divine mission. It brings a man face to face with the Savior, and learns to trust Him as the One Mediator and High Priest of His Church. It is a mother-grace, ever bringing in its train a fair group of daughters — love, joy, peace, patience, prayer, praise, all good works, and faithful and devoted service. Very especially does this faith prove its reality by cleaving fast to the Savior and abiding in Him.

An old Christian in Africa was once asked, "Suppose Jesus will not receive you, what then?"

"Won't receive me! but I won't let Jesus go. If he thrust me away," making the motion with his feet, "I'll take hold of His feet and lie there still, but I won't let Him go. I'll tell Him, Did you not come to save me? Who am I trusting to but you? Where else can I go? Am I not a sinner, and you the only Savior? No, Jesus, I will not let you go — you must save me!" The old man then clasped both arms on his breast and said again, "I will not let Him go!"

Let me ask you who read these words, What do you know of a faith like this? "Do you believe in the Son of God?" When conscience reminds you of sin, do you humbly confess it and fly to Christ to cleanse you in His blood?

When troubles come — do you make Him your Refuge, and leave them all with Him? When care and anxiety weigh upon you — do you cast your burden on Him and rest in His love?

Without this living faith, which is the fruit of the Holy Spirit — all else is in vain. You may have a right creed, and a zeal for truth — but this will not save you. You may have a character before men for all that is virtuous and of good report — but this will not save you. Nothing brings salvation, but true genuine faith that binds you fast to the Savior.

Because of their unbelief, the Jews were rejected and their beautiful city brought down to the ground. Because of their unbelief, many who bear the name of Christ will be cast out and never, never enter the city of Light and Joy. It is written: "He who believes on the Son has everlasting life. He who believes not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him" ([John 3:36](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%203.36)).

But there is another lesson I should like you to learn. It is a great privilege to aid in the work of Christian missions. Christ tells us of the blessed outcome of His work. The Gospel feast shall not be spread in vain — nor shall the Savior suffer and die upon the Cross in vain. "He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied." From east and west, from north and south, from far-off isles and distant continents — shall the children of God be gathered together to form the general assembly and Church of the first-born.

Very marvelously during the last eighty years, has this purpose of the Most High been moving on to its fulfillment.

The wandering Indian tribes of Northwest America,
the swarthy African,
the busy and active Chinaman,
the cultivated intellects of India,
the inhabitants of the scattered islands of the South Seas —
all these have their representatives in the native churches which have arisen of late through missionary enterprise.

But who will come forward to aid in this blessed work? It will be accomplished in its season — but will you share the toil, the self-sacrifice it involves, and the honor it will bring?

It was a saying of the great Columbus: "The highest honor man can have, is to be a conscious instrument in the hand of the Most High for the accomplishment of His purposes."

If he reckoned this true in his discovery of a new world — then how much more is it true of those who go forth to recover for God a world lost in idolatry and sin!

Christian brother or sister, be assured that God calls you to this work. "Go work today in my vineyard," is still the message sounding in our ears.

It comes to us through the tale of misery that yet reaches us from unhappy Africa, and the terrible slave-traffic that yet debases it.

It comes to us through the open doors that are set before us in every quarter of the globe.

It comes to us through the preparation already made for the work in the two hundred versions of the Scriptures ready to our hand.

It comes to us through the evident success already granted to our efforts.

It comes to us by the Holy Spirit revealing to us the love of Christ, and bidding us for His sake go and preach His Gospel to the uttermost parts of the world.

And remember, "what you do, do quickly." Time is short — your own life is but a shadow. Souls are perishing. Doors are often shut because we will not enter in.

Let me give you a proof of this. Years ago a tribe of Indians sent a request for a Christian teacher. Six times they sent year after year, but the answer was returned that English Christians had not given men enough training or money to break fresh ground, and it was impossible to grant their request. The seventh year a teacher was sent, but only to return. The tribe refused to receive him. They would not believe Christianity was true — or a teacher would have been sent before. Moreover a fierce war had broken out, and they could not now give heed to the instructions of a teacher.

Alas, for lost opportunities, for doors shut through our negligence and apathy. Alas, for the multitudes who live and die without ever hearing the Savior's name! Alas, for our guilt in permitting our brothers and sisters in far-off lands to pass into eternity without one ray of that bright and blessed hope which cheers the dying Christian.

Let not this guilt be yours. Be a faithful laborer in Christ's harvest-field. Offer to Him — yourself, your means, your influence — to be used as He will in this good work. Then shall you be able to claim the promise. "He who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit unto life eternal" ([John 4:36](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%204.36)).

5. The Faith of the Canaanite Woman

"Then Jesus said to her: 'O woman, your faith is great; it shall be done for you as you wish.' And her daughter was healed at once." [Matthew 15:28](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt%2015.28)

Thus did Christ put the crown on the faith of one who asked but the crumb — yet He opened to her the heavenly storehouse, and gave her the very finest of the wheat, and by His word of commendation set her forth for all future time as one of the great heroines of the kingdom of Heaven.

This woman was a mighty conqueror. As Jacob by the brook wrestled with the angel, and gained the blessing which he so earnestly sought — so did this woman contend with Christ and achieve a great victory.

But who was this woman? Wherein do we see her faith? Let us look and we shall soon discover. Five or six huge barriers, high walls, mountains of difficulty — stood between her and the object she sought, but her faith overleaped them all.

For, first of all, we should notice that this woman was not only a Gentile, a heathen, a stranger to the covenants of promise — but also a Canaanite, a descendant of those destroyed as under the curse of God. A very unlikely one, we might have thought, to gain blessing from the Lord. But this did not keep her back. It might humble her, but it did not hinder her from coming to the Savior.

You may be like the woman in this. You may have been very far from God. You may belong to a family where there has been little religion. Your parents may not have walked in the ways of godliness. And you yourself may have been wild and wayward, heedless and thoughtless about Divine things. You may be one whom no one would ever have thought likely to become a Christian. But let nothing of all this turn you aside. If you desire the favor and blessing of Jesus, it shall not be withheld.

Then there came another barrier. Christ was hidden. He came into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, and went into a house, and "would have no man know it" ([Mark 7:24](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Mark%207.24)). But faith overcame this barrier. This Syrophenician, whose daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of Him, and came and sought Him out.

The savor of the sweet ointment betrays itself. The fragrance of Christ's presence and grace cannot be hid from those who can discern it. True, there are some in the midst of privileges, with the richest means of grace, with an open Bible, and a gospel preached in all plainness — who yet, through their unbelief, learn nothing of His goodness and love. But there are others, like this woman, from whom He cannot be hidden. They have few opportunities, they have few helps, but faith seeks after Him, and finds Him, and rejoices in His free salvation. It will probably be found hereafter, that among the very holiest and most devoted of God's saints have been many who, like this woman, like Obadiah in the household of Ahab — have had everything against them in the position in which they were placed.

Thus this woman came to Christ and found Him, and earnestly besought Him for her young daughter. She had faith in Him as the Son of David, and had full confidence that He had power to heal her child. So she put the matter into His hand. She told Him her great trouble and sought from Him the mercy that would remove the burden. "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is suffering terribly from demon-possession." [Matthew 15:22](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt%2015.22)

Then another barrier stood in her path. Christ was silent. He gave no sign of hearing or regarding her cry. She might have exclaimed with Jeremiah, "When I cry and shout, he shuts out my prayer." She might have pleaded with the Psalmist, "Be not silent unto me, O Lord."

Surely this was a trial. She looked for Him to hear her at once, as He had been accustomed to deal with others. But he seems to turn a deaf ear to her sorrow and her prayer. But she does not go back — she does not give up her suit. Again and again, like Bartimaeus, she casts herself upon His mercy and grace.

And does not Christ still prove His people in the same way? Many earnest, believing prayers are offered day by day, which yet gain no apparent answer. The petition is offered in all sincerity, and yet the burden is still as heavy and the sorrow as great as before. There is no change. The husband still yields to the same temptation — or the son or daughter is as wayward as ever. Means are yet straitened, tears too often fall, cares and anxieties distress the mind — and week after week, month after month, the prayer of God's child brings no plain response. Yet be not dismayed. Though the vision tarries, wait for it. True prayer may have a long voyage to our sight — but the ship will come back one day laden with good things. Therefore "hope in the Lord and wait patiently for Him." If Christ is silent for a season, He will yet open His mouth in blessing. "Blessed are all those who wait for Him."

Then came a positive repulse. Though not spoken to herself, it was spoken in her hearing. The disciples plead against the woman. They are tired of her importunate cries, and they ask Christ to grant her request: "Send her away, for she keeps shouting at us." Then comes a word that would seem to shut out all hope: "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." His work, while on earth, was with the Jewish people. How, then, shall He bestow His favors on those for off?

And is there not sometimes a barrier like this in the way of anxious souls? Even Christ Himself in His Word, seems to suggest a hindrance. The doctrine of God's election is found in Holy Scripture, and not seldom it seems to hide Christ from the soul. There is a whisper, "What if you are not one of the elect?" And so, every promise, every invitation, seems to lose the comfort it should afford in a fear of this kind. But this woman would not cease her prayer, neither must you.

Be assured God's election is never opposed to His loving call. Obey the call, accept the invitation, take hold of the great "whoever believes" — and you shall find peace and life, and thus you shall make your own calling and election sure.

Closer and closer this woman creeps to the Savior's footstool. She falls down at His feet and worships Him. She pours out her whole soul in one short and fervent petition, "Lord, help me!"

Make this prayer your own. In trouble or temptation, discouraged and cast down, however it may be — yet draw nearer and nearer to the Savior. Hear His gracious promise, "Fear not, I will help You," and then cast yourself upon His kindness and compassion. Again and again, let the humble cry arise, "Lord, help me!"

"O help me, Jesus, from on high,
I know no help but Thee;
O help me so to live and die,
As yours in Heaven to be."

But there came yet another repulse, and this, to human judgment, the unkindest cut of all. He seems to treat the woman with contempt. He speaks of her as one utterly vile and unclean. He calls her a "dog," and suggests that it is in vain for her to seek Him further: "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs!" [Matthew 15:26](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt%2015.26)

Strangely rough and harsh words from One who had the tenderest heart that ever beat in mortal frame!

He seems to be another Joseph — uttering rough words, binding one brother, and putting all in prison, and yet only caring for their true welfare.

But how does she take this word? Does she resent it? Does she turn away, declaring she will never again seek His aid? Nay, she still cleaves steadfastly to Him. She still pleads for some favor, however small. And more than this: she takes the very arrow which Christ had shot at her — and shoots it back from the bow of faith. She takes the very name of 'dog' as the reason why He should grant her request. "True, Lord, yet even the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table." Marvelous humility! wondrous faith! And both these silver cords intertwined in a

 plea which could never be rejected: "Yes, master, true — I am but a dog. I am a sinner, and vile and unworthy. I know it, and I own it. A Gentile, too, I am — and have no claim on You for children's bread! But, Lord, may I not taste the crumbs? When Your children are satisfied — may not I come for that which remains? I dare not ask to come first — last of all and least of all I come — yet, Lord, even for me let there remain something of Your goodness and grace."

And if you would prosper in your suit at Jesus' feet, let this be your spirit. Take the very lowest place. Whatever conscience may tell you, do not hide it or excuse it. Shaped in iniquity, born in sin, guilty of manifold transgression, with a heart by nature averse to that which is good, and prone to that which is evil, what can you do but humble yourself in the dust before Him who knows you altogether?

"Not worthy, Lord, to gather up the crumbs
With trembling hand that from Your table fall,
A weary, heavy-laden sinner comes
To plead Your promise and obey Your call."

But ever remember there is a "yet." You cannot be in such an evil case, but there is a ground for hope if you will look for it.

Are you a great sinner? Yet Christ is a great Savior, mighty to save those who trust in Him.

Are your sins very heinous? Yet scarlet sins may be made 'white as snow,' for Christ's "blood cleanses from all sin."

Is your heart dead and unfeeling? Yet He will take away the heart of stone, and give you a heart of flesh.

Is your faith weak, your repentance too slight, your love but a flickering spark? Yet His "grace is sufficient" for you, and He can give you the Holy Spirit as the spring of every virtue that you need.

Christ delays no longer. He has seemed to neglect or to chide her, but now He will give her more than she can ask or think. Nothing too good, nothing too great for faith like hers. If for a moment He caused her grief and distress, forever afterward should she rejoice in that which He bestowed upon her. Her prayer is heard, her daughter is healed — all she can desire shall be hers. And life for evermore was her portion also. All this is wrapped in the Savior's word. "O woman, great is your faith, be it unto you even as you will."

"O hearts that hunger through the world,
But never taste true joy,
Behold, the Fount from whence it springs,
All pure without alloy!

Lo, from the heart of Christ it comes,
All tranquil and serene,
And through the heart which stoops to drink,
It flows a constant stream.

"O hearts that hunger through the world,
All broken, pierced, and lone,
Whose dreams of peace and earthly love
Are faded, lost, and gone!

Come hither now, and taste the bread
By Jesus freely given:
The Bridegroom of the soul embrace,
And taste the joys of Heaven!

"O hearts that hunger through the world,
But never speak their grief,
Whose weary feet have wandered far,
But never found relief!

Look through His wounds to Jesus' heart,
A hidden balm is there,
Whose virtues, when by faith applied,
Will kill all grief and care."
W. Poole Balfern.

6. At the Feet of Jesus

Holy Scripture abounds in promises to the humble. With such, Jehovah makes His dwelling-place, "For this is what the high and lofty One says–He who lives forever, whose name is holy: I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite." [Isaiah 57:15](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa%2057.15)

"He exalts the humble and meek."

"He who humbles himself shall be exalted."

"God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble."

To take the lowest place, to sit down in the lowest room — is the sure road to true peace on earth and a throne of glory hereafter. By this path our Master went before, and we must endeavor to walk in His footsteps.

For this purpose, let us keep close to the Savior. For all that we need, let us abide "at His feet." And to assist us, let us consider the example of four who did so. Luke in his gospel tells us of each of them. And as we study the conduct of each, we shall find the same humility, though considerable variety in the other graces which they thus exercised.

1. Let us look at the feet of Jesus, as the place for the LEARNER. As Saul of Tarsus sat at the feet of Gamaliel and learned much of Jewish lore — the Christian must sit at the feet of Jesus, and he shall become an apt scholar in all the wisdom of the heavenly kingdom. We see this in the story of Mary of Bethany. We read that Martha "had a sister called Mary who seated herself at the Lord's feet and was listening to His teaching." ([Luke 10:39](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke%2010.39)). And was there ever a better student in divine knowledge? While her sister was hard at work, desiring to honor Christ by providing for His need — Mary sat quiet and still, calmly drinking in the words of grace and wisdom and love that flowed from His lips. His words sank very deep. She was filled with faith and love and reverence and holy joy and strength of soul. She was prepared for days of sorrow that lay before her. She learned well the lesson of His love, which led her in future days to bring her box of ointment and anoint Him for His burial.

Like Mary, come to the footstool of Jesus. Be a willing pupil in His school. Ever hearken to the voice that speaks to us from God. For the written Word is to us, in place of the teachings of the Incarnate Word. In the four gospels we have the storehouse of that wisdom which fell from his lips when on earth. In the Old Testament we have the gospel in the bud, the grandeur of the divine character, and the source of many of His illustrations. In the Acts and the Epistles we have, in all their fullness, precepts and promises and truths revealed by the Spirit for the edification of the Church in all ages.

And in the study of the Word, nourish a quietness and stillness of spirit as in the very presence of Jesus. Believe it, that Christ is as near to you as to Mary as she sat at His feet. And in the consciousness of this, avoid all hurried, hasty reading. Watch against the mind being preoccupied with business or anything of earth. Realize Christ close beside you, and let this thought calm and refresh your spirit, and prepare you to receive whatever instruction you need.

And as you read be ever looking to Jesus for divine illumination. We can imagine Mary looking up again and again to the Savior when anything seemed beyond her. Then He would open her understanding, give her some fresh word of explanation, and make it all plain.

And will He not do this for you? When you look up to Him will He not give you the anointing of the Spirit, so that by this heavenly unction you shall know all things needful? Will He not suggest some other passage of the Word, some new view of an old truth, which will remove your difficulty and make your way plain and clear? Only catch the humble, teachable spirit of Mary, and doubtless you shall have Mary's blessing and reward. "Blessed is the man who listens to me, watching daily at my doors, waiting at my doorway." [Proverbs 8:34](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Prov%208.34)

2. Let us look at the footstool of Jesus as the place of PENITENCE. It is a blessed thing to be with Christ, as a lowly, teachable learner — drinking in the words of eternal life. It is no less blessed to be near to Him as a sinner — humbled for the past, confessing and acknowledging the evil of years gone by, and looking to Him for the free mercy that He loves to give. And have we not an instance of this kind presented to us in [Luke 7:37-50](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke%207.37-50)? I love to see the spirit of this woman. Far, far away, has she been on the mountains of sin and vanity — but the Good Shepherd has drawn her back by the mighty attraction of His grace. And here is the outcast, the perishing one, at the footstool of the Redeemer of mankind. She "stood at His feet behind Him weeping, and began to wash His feet with tears and wipe them with the hair of her head, and kissed His feet and anointed them with ointment" (verse 38).

The scornful Pharisee may look on in bitter contempt–he may despise the woman and misjudge the loving Savior. But the woman does not depart from Him who alone can whisper to her forgiveness, peace and hope. She has no words to utter. Her tears are both her confessions and her prayers. Sobs and sighs are heard, rivers of tears bathe the Savior's feet, as she waits upon Him for the pardon she seeks.

Forever blessed is such a spirit. "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." Here we see sincere sorrow, and godly repentance. Here are those sacrifices of a broken and a contrite heart, which God will not despise.

Nourish the same mind. Your sin may have been as great as hers — or you may have been kept free from all open vice. Still you need a deep view of your own vileness as before God. You need a humbled, self-abasing spirit, pleading nothing but your own misery, and God's mercy.

But let us mark here, penitence in the Savior's presence. It was not remorse hardening itself into unbelief and despair — but it was sorrow casting itself upon a merciful Savior. It was the silver thread of repentance, intertwined with the golden thread of faith in Christ. She knew she was a great sinner, and she owned and lamented it — but she knew also that Christ was a great Savior; and herein was her hope and consolation.

Let it be so with you. Open your eyes to see your sin in all its magnitude, in all its hatefulness — but also open your eyes to see your Savior near to You, ready to heal every wound, ready to forgive every sin. More of His grace is known to you, than to this sinful woman. She knew of His heart of love, and of His words of kindness. But you know the marvels of His great atonement, and all the shame He endured for sinners. Then go by faith into His presence, and believe that you are welcome. Go to His footstool, and tarry there in humility and faith. Look on Him bruised for your iniquities, and wounded for your transgressions. Go near and kiss those feet once nailed to the cross for your sin.

Go not to man; go not to human priest, expecting to gain peace and absolution from his lips — but go to Christ Himself. Go and stand by Him, and hearken to His forgiving voice. Go and wait before Him until you hear His word of life,

 "Your sins are forgiven you, go in peace!"

But let us take another step.

3. Let us see the footstool of Jesus as the place of COMMUNION and FELLOWSHIP. The Christian needs ever to abide near to Christ, to obtain strength and daily power to meet the various ills of life, and to go forward in the path of holiness. And we have an instance of one who thus was near to Christ, "When they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting at Jesus' feet." ([Luke 8:35](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke%208.35)).

Christ had been merciful to the man. He had delivered him from a legion of evil spirits. He had changed and transformed him from the wild, savage maniac, the terror of all around — to the happy, trustful, loving disciple. Once he wore no clothes. Now, clothed and in his right mind, he is "sitting at the feet of Jesus." While the Gadarenes besought Christ that He would leave them — this man beseeches Jesus that he may be with Him.

But now he has work to do. From the feet of Jesus, he is to go forth as a witness for Him. He is to tell others what great things Jesus had done for him. Nor is he unwilling — he goes forth on his errand and publishes everywhere throughout the whole city the tidings of Christ's pity and compassion toward him.

Here is the mark of one truly converted to God. When under the power of the Wicked one, he would have Christ leave him to his misery and sin. But when Christ has set him free, then to be near his Deliverer is the one desire of his heart. He would not go where he cannot have Christ with him. He wishes to be found wherever Christ will meet with him. To be with Christ in the poorest and meanest abode, is far better in his sight than to be without Christ in the palace of luxury and wealth. Without Christ he can never be satisfied. With Christ he can be happy anywhere.

"I need your presence every passing hour,
What but Your grace can foil the tempter's power?
Who like Yourself, my Guide and stay can be?
Through cloud and sunshine, O abide with me."

If you know the power and grace of Christ, ever maintain this fellowship. Walk with Him all through life's busiest scenes. Keep still close to Him in the chamber of weakness and suffering. When sorrow weighs heavily upon your heart, or the fear of death oppresses — still let His loving Presence be your solace and your stay.

Yet let not selfishness hinder your work for Him. Like this healed demoniac, you may have to sacrifice your own wish to go and bear witness for Him.

Duty may call you to forsake the privileges of a Christian land, to go as a messenger of the cross to a heathen country. A voice may bid you give up a service in God's house Sunday by Sunday, that you may go and search out those who care nothing for Christ. But you shall be no loser. Christ will make up for it by fresh gifts of His grace. Never, never will He be nearer to His servant than when that servant goes forth at His bidding to tell others of His grace.

There is yet one other view of Christ's footstool presented to us by Luke.

4. Let us regard it as a place for THANKSGIVING and PRAISE. Nothing more befits a Christian, than hearty gratitude for mercy and salvation. And we see this in the instance I would name ([Luke 17:16](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke%2017.16)). The ten lepers lifted up their voice afar off, "Jesus, Master, have mercy upon us!" He heard their cry, and as they obeyed His command, they were healed.

But where was their gratitude? They received a benefit beyond all price; they are healed of the terrible plague which robbed them of all life's enjoyment, and would before long have brought them to the grave. But they receive the gift — and forget the Giver. They go their way to eat and drink and enjoy their newly-found health — but they have no word of praise for Him who has done so much for them. Thus is it with the nine.

But the tenth is of a different spirit. Though a despised Samaritan, yet he alone shows forth gratitude to the Good Physician. He receives the benefit — and immediately returns to give thanks to his Benefactor. "One of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at His feet giving Him thanks, and he was a Samaritan" (verses 15, 16). And his thankfulness opens the door for the blessing, "Arise, go your way, your faith has made you whole!" (verse 19). He had now found from Christ a double healing. He was cleansed from his leprosy — and he was freed from the deeper pollution of sin. He could go to his home that day strong in body, and rejoicing in the everlasting peace and salvation which had been granted to him.

Come near to Jesus, and praise Him like this cleansed leper. Nothing is more blessed than a praising, joyful spirit. It brings glory to God, and shows forth His goodness and mercy. It baffles Satan and drives him away. It encourages young beginners, and shows them the happiness that Christ gives His people. It awakens thought in the children of the world, and often leads them to desire a better portion. It brings fresh blessings to him who exercises it. God loves to pour down His richest and sweetest comforts, into the lap of those who delight to magnify His name.

I commend to you the footstool of Jesus!

Go to it for teaching.

Go to it as a humble penitent.

Go to it for communion and fellowship with the Savior.

And forget not to thank Him for all His benefits towards you.

Make the feet of Jesus your constant resort and resting place. No place is more safe; no place is there where you will find more help, and grace, and strength for service or for suffering. If you have never come before, come now to His footstool.

For if that footstool is not to you the place of refuge, and hope, and salvation — it will be to you one day the place of utter defeat and irretrievable ruin. There is one passage in Holy Scripture that stands out in strong contrast to the thoughts of this chapter. "The LORD says to my Lord: Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet." [Psalm 110:1](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps%20110.1)

In this prophecy, I see a world of sinners at the feet of Messiah. Once they despised and rejected Him, and hardened themselves in pride and unbelief. But all this is over now. Where now all their boasted might and power? Where now the glory and the wealth and the human wisdom in which they trusted? All is gone. All has come to nothing. At His feet lie the proudest, the mightiest, those who have been renowned in this world, but enemies of the kingdom of God. Yes, the wicked shall be the footstool of Christ in the day of His coming. "You spurn and set at nought all those who stray from Your statutes, for their own lying deceives them and their tricks are in vain." "He must reign until He has put all enemies under His feet."

Ah, choose you, my fellow-sinner, which shall it be? The footstool of Jesus now — or hereafter? Which will you have? Choose it now — and you will find it a place of unspeakable blessedness. Reject it now — and you will find it a place of utter destruction.

Think how Joshua put his feet on the necks of the kings before he slew them. And a day is coming when mercy is past and judgment alone remains — and our Joshua will put forth His power to cast down those who oppose His authority. Oh, choose the safe part! Trust Christ now with your entire salvation. Let His love be your constant refuge and His mighty arm your defense. Leave everything in His hands, and commit to Him your present and eternal welfare. Then your enemies will be Christ's enemies, and you shall be forever exalted, while everything that is against you shall be forever cast down.

"O choose for me my portion,
My bitter and my sweet;
The cup Your hand does mix me,
I will drink it at Your feet.

While I'm waiting for the moment,
The brightest and the best,
When You shall stoop to lift me
From Your footstool to Your breast."

7. The Tears of Jesus!

Thrice Jesus wept.

He wept at Bethany.

He wept on Olivet.

He wept in Gethsemane.

What lessons may we learn from these tears of Jesus?

We shall see. But first let us turn to another thought. Let us think of the tears of others.

When was the first tear shed, and by whom? Was it beneath the trees of Paradise, when our first parents began to learn the misery to which disobedience had brought them?

Was it when God pronounced the curse, "Dust you are, and unto dust shall you return?"

Was it when they were driven out from the pleasant garden in which they had been placed?

Was it when Eve beheld Abel lying in his blood, and she had learned that her first-born was the murderer?

I know not when it was. But one thing I know, that ever since the day that sin entered, the tears of the children of men have been as plentiful as rain in the showery days of April. Yes, and, thank God, not seldom, like those showers, they have been fertilizing also — softening hard hearts, and preparing the way for the good seed of the kingdom.

"Behold, the babe wept," is written of the infant Moses. "The babe wept" — and still, right on through each age, infants and young men and strong men, and maidens and wives and widows, have wept too. The whole world is watered with tears! There is, perhaps, not a single dwelling or a single chamber where a tear has not fallen.

These human tears — what do they mean? They mean sorrow and suffering, pain and disease, care and trouble of every kind. For a time we go on our way, and do our work with pleasure, and enjoy God's good gifts, and escape the enemy.

But the evil day comes at last. The agony scarcely to be endured, the heart-breaking loss or disappointment, the burden of anxiety, the desolation of a bereaved home — something of this sort comes, and then the fountain of tears is opened, and we cannot but weep.

Human tears — what do they mean? They mean repentance and humiliation. They mean sorrow for sins that are past. They mean earnestness in prayer, reality and fervency in seeking help from above. The woman who was a sinner bathed the feet of Jesus with her tears as she remembered her old ways. Jacob wept and made supplication to the angel as he sought a blessing.

 Hannah, too, and Hezekiah both wept in prayer, and God marked their tears, and their petitions were granted.

Human tears — what do they mean? They mean zeal for God, a holy hatred of evil, a tender compassion for the perishing. Of all tears, none so blessed as these. David could say, "Rivers of waters run down my eyes, because men keep not Your law." Jeremiah could speak of his "eye trickling down" without intermission, because of the miseries of the beloved city. Ezekiel tells of God's favor towards the remnant that "wept and sighed "for the evil around (Ezekiel 9.) The Apostle Paul drops a tear on his letter to the Philippians, as he refers to those who were the enemies of the cross of Christ and whose end was destruction (Philippians 3.)

And all these tears are noted by our merciful Father above!

On opening ancient tombs in Palestine, many a tear-bottle has been found, which was supposed to be a repository for the tears of the mourners, and was then placed in the tomb beside the one who was laid there. In many cases this may have been but a mere mockery of woe — but our heavenly Father does gather all the tears of His redeemed children. "You keep track of all my sorrows. You have collected all my tears in Your bottle. You have recorded each one in Your book!" [Psalm 56:8](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps%2056.8)

Not one tear is lost. Not one sorrow is unheeded. Not one grief is left unbefriended.

And in the tears of Jesus, has not our Father provided the antidote we need? Without Christ, without a sorrowing, suffering Redeemer — our woes would indeed be hopeless.

We cannot, and we will not believe the cruel, gloomy creed of the secularist and infidel, who would rob us of all the consolation we possess, that would make the Heaven above us as iron and brass, and only leave to us cold, frozen, despairing hearts.

Nay, we have a Savior who has known our sorrows, and by His tears can heal every wound that sin has made. "In all their affliction He was afflicted." He has wept with those that wept, as He rejoiced with those that did rejoice. And He is still the same. We can think of the tears He shed more than eighteen centuries ago, and know that at this hour He is the same loving and sympathizing Friend.

I have said that thrice Jesus wept. Let us consider each occasion, and learn from each to find a remedy and a consolation for the tears we shed.

1. We go to BETHANY. We find weepers there, the sisters and the friends alike in grief, for the loss of Lazarus. But another mourner comes, even Jesus. The shortest verse in Holy Scripture tells of His marvelous love, "Jesus wept."

What a wonderful revelation of Christ's heart! It is a ladder that reaches down to every child of sorrow on earth:

"Jesus wept! That tear of sorrow
Is a legacy of love:
Yesterday, today, tomorrow,
He the same does ever prove.
Lord, when sorrows deepest lie,
Let me think of Bethany."

There is no sympathy like that of Jesus! It flows in full flood toward His believing children. Just as the rising tide rushes in and pours through every cranny and nook on the shore where admittance can be gained — so does Christ's tender loving-kindness enter the hearts of His people.

If only you desire it and humbly seek it–then it is for you. Your sorrow may go deeper than that of most, there may be a specialty about it that others cannot comprehend. But Jesus knows and Jesus feels for you, and the assurance of His care and His presence will be more to you than any other source of comfort.

Remember, too, that with the tears of Jesus at Bethany there was spoken a promise of immortality. It is one of the most glorious of the "I Am's" of John's Gospel. It meets us at the solemn hour when we carry our beloved ones to the silent grave. "I am the Resurrection and the Life! He who believes in Me, though he dies — yet shall he live. And whoever lives and believes in Me, shall never die!" ([John 11:25](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%2011.25), [26](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%2011.26)).

But there was more than this. At the grave of Bethany, there was the manifestation of resurrection power. By His word, He called him that had been four days dead. Put these together. Think of the heart that "is touched with all our woes." Think of the voice that promises a glorious and unending life. Think of the power that can summon back the dead from the grave. And all are yours — if you receive Christ by faith and rely upon Him. A sympathy beyond all thought, a blessed life of immortality, a mighty power that can reach beyond the utmost limit of your necessities and griefs — on these may you rely all through your earthly pilgrimage.

2. But we read that Jesus wept on MOUNT OLIVET. He reaches the spot where He can see the beautiful city. The multitude around are singing their Hallelujahs, and rejoicing in the coming of their King. But Jesus weeps. Not for His own sufferings, now close at hand; not for the shame and contempt and cruel death which He was to endure — but for the beloved city. He foresaw the doom which was so fast approaching. The wolf would come down on the fold, and the children of Zion would be a prey and spoil to the destroyer. The Roman eagles would be planted in the city, and her temple and her palaces and her people would perish.

And beneath and beyond all this, the eye of Jesus could discern a still more terrible woe. Those whom had refused His mercy, now they must bear the guilt and punishment of their iniquity. No more invitations, no more offers of life and salvation, but the dreaded prison-house of the lost–and, whatever the awful words may mean, "The worm that never dies, and the fire that is never quenched!" For all this Jesus wept; for He is patient and long-suffering, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

And may not these tears be for the encouragement of those who grieve over surrounding evil, and who often sow the good seed of eternal life in tears?

How confident may you be, that you are not alone in your work or in your sorrow! He who wept on Olivet, knows well this burden that lies on your heart, and stands by you in every effort you make, to save the souls of the perishing.

And let those tears teach you another lesson. Be very compassionate for those who go astray. Nourish the gentleness of Christ. In meekness instruct those who oppose themselves. When M'Cheyne preached on the terrors of Hell, it was with tears in his eyes as he thought on the misery coming on those who continued in unbelief. In all faithfulness, tell such as continue in their unbelief of the bitter fruits of sin and impenitence — but let love be manifested in all you say. Let no harsh or angry word mar the good you may do. Speak gently to young and old, to the anxious seeking one and to the hardened and impenitent sinner. There is no better way to win them than thus to show the tender love of Christ.

3. Once more we read that Jesus wept. It was in the lonely garden of GETHSEMANE, in that terrible agony which preceded His death. Paul tells us that "He offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him who was able to save Him from death — and was heard in that He feared."

And were not those tears a part of that great atonement, the foretaste of that bitter cup He tasted on Calvary? And if so, may not the penitent see in them a ground for hope, an assurance that his tears shed in the remembrance of his sin, shall not be in vain? Yes, those tears of Jesus pointed to that healing flood of mercy and grace which flowed from the wounds of Jesus, and which brings pardon, life, and salvation, to all who flee to it.

Thrice Jesus wept. Thrice he fulfilled His own title, "The Man of Sorrows." Thrice he thus bids us bring every tear and grief to Him, and rely on His sympathy, and faithfulness, and love.

Thrice Jesus wept, and thrice it is promised in Holy Scripture that "God shall wipe away all tears from the eyes "of His people ([Isaiah 25:8](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa%2025.8); [Rev. 7:17](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rev.%207.17), [21:4](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rev%2021.4)). He wept — that we might never weep. Though for a season tears and troubles may be our lot, yet believing in Christ, and following His footsteps — a Father's hand shall remove every sorrow and give everlasting gladness.

THE TEARS OF JESUS

Tears of love! behold them flowing,
From the Elder Brother's eye;
See Him as a mourner going
To the grave at Bethany.
He, who through the shadowy portal
Summoned back the freed immortal,
He, whose all-commanding word
Sheathed the gloomy victor's sword,
There, where buried friendship sleeps,
He, our own Immanuel, weeps.

Tears of pity! see them gushing
From their pure and sacred fount;
Angels, your hosannas hushing,
Bend you from the holy mount;
Stoop to read the wondrous story,
How the Father's "brightest glory"
At a sinner's grave can stand,
Mourner 'mid a mourning band,
With the heart, the voice, the eye,
Of a perfect sympathy.

Tears of Jesus! while I ponder,
Blessed comfort let me reap:
"That same Jesus" lives yonder,
Who on earth was used to weep.
Though His brow the rainbow wears,
Yet my thorny crown He shares,
Yet that loving heart divine
Throbs responsively to mine;
Not a struggling sigh can rise,
But 'tis echoed in the skies.

Blessed Jesus, in Thy sorrow
Friends and kindred passed You by;
You alone could never borrow
The support of sympathy.
When Your human heart was bursting,
When Your parched lip was thirsting,
When encompassed by the foe,
Mocking at Your bitter woe,
You, who had a heart for all,
Drank alone Your cup of gall.

Now in glory, where You dwell,
All unknown is sorrow's look;
Yet Your people's tears You count,
"Are they not within Your book?"
While my "night of weeping" lasts,
Before the morn its brightness casts,
My blessed portion may it be,
That You weep, Lord, with me;
And one day, with heart and voice,
In Your joy, may I rejoice!
  Ellen H. Willis

8. Jesus on the Holy Mount

"After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus. Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters — one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!"

 [Matthew 17:1-5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt%2017.1-5)

It was no small privilege which Jesus conferred on His three favored disciples. Far away from the haunts of men — He takes Peter, James, and John to some lofty mountain height. There, apart from the noise of the multitude and from the opposition and enmity of Scribe and Pharisee — the Son of Man pours out His soul in private prayer. While in prayer a marvelous glory falls upon Him! His countenance shines as the sun! His clothing becomes white and glistening, yes, white as the snow!

And other glories are manifested also. Two messengers from the world of spirits are there to do honor to the Savior of mankind. Here is Moses, the minister of the law, who fifteen centuries before had been laid in the grave by no mortal hands. Here is Elijah, the greatest of the prophets, who had been carried to his rest in a chariot of fire. Both meet here and speak with Christ of His death, which soon would be accomplished for the salvation of the world.

For a season a strange drowsiness steals upon the three disciples, but now they awake and see something of the Redeemer's glory. Now they desire to tarry here — and no longer battle with the duties which occupy them, and cares and sorrows which beset them. Heaven is begun — why should they go back to earth? "If you wish, I will put up three shelters — one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." But while they speak, yet another beam of Divine glory is manifested.

A bright cloud overshadows them, and a voice is heard out of the cloud, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!"

Too soon the scene passes away. Christ is left alone. The bright cloud is lifted up, and the Master and His disciples go back into the arena of strife and woe.

Some rays of glory still linger on the countenance of Him whom they love, but with Him, they are soon face to face with Satanic power and human misery.

They have still to bear the cross, and fulfill their appointed work. By and by they have to preach the Gospel, and suffer reproach and persecution for the Gospel's sake. But that day of glory is not forgotten.

Years roll on, and the Master has died, risen, and ascended, but the memory of that scene never fades until their latest hour. John speaks of it in his Gospel, written at least forty years afterwards ([John 1:12](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%201.12)), and Peter refers to it in the Epistle he writes shortly before his death ([2 Peter 1:16](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Pet%201.16)).

And it abides with us likewise. In the faithful mirror of the written Word, it is given for our instruction and everlasting comfort. Through the guiding of the Spirit of truth, we may find precious thoughts and LESSONS to help us on our way to the kingdom.

1. Let us learn first the transforming efficacy of true prayer. "As He was praying, the appearance of His face changed, and His clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning!" [Luke 9:29](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke%209.29). While Christ was praying, the Divine light and glory came upon Him from above. And so in another way, it is with the believer. Imagine a child of God who has had a day of toil and anxiety. He has been all day long in contact with the world, its turmoil, its business, and perchance he has been ruffled with the evil tempers or angry words of those he has met.

But the evening comes. He has a quiet half hour for communion with his Best Friend. Then, as he dwells upon some sweet promise of the Word, as he rolls the burden of the day upon a Father in Heaven — there comes back a quiet joy, a calm light of peace into his soul. A new strength is imparted, a new view is taken of life's duties and temptations. The discipline of heavenly wisdom is recognized, and instead of the jaded look and wearied spirit — there is power and life and gladness and hope found upspringing within the heart.

Never, never let the Christian be robbed of the comfort of prayer by the thought of being unfitted for its exercise. You are tempted, it may be, to think that because the mind has been overstrained, and you are tired and weary — that therefore it is impossible to make the effort for prayer. Let it be just the other way. "I need the quiet of my Father's presence to soothe this throbbing brow, to rest this fainting heart — and I must have it." Then go to the mercy-seat as a little child to a mother's knee. Your words need not be many, but let them be from your heart — to the heart of your Father in Heaven. Utter in faith the Savior's name. Let the spirit within prompt the expression of your confidence in your Heavenly Guardian.

"Let but this fainting heart be blessed
With Your sweet Spirit for its guest;
My God, to You I leave the rest,
May Your will be done."

A second lesson is made clear.

2. Dead men live. Here is the account of Moses being present on the mount, who had died some fifteen centuries before. Here is the account of Elijah, who had left this world not less than seven hundred years previously. Both meet to do honor to Christ!

Never forget it. Men live on and live on forever when this present existence is past!

Years ago there were familiar people on our streets — men and women well known to the neighborhood, but you have lost sight of them. An accident, or a few days' illness, or the infirmities of old age — carried them off, and you never see them, and their memory is well-near gone. But just as truly do they live at this moment, as you yourself who are reading these lines. Could we but see it, we would behold even now the far-off land, peopled with those who once walked up and down in the midst of us. And a day is coming when in a real, though spiritual body, we shall be able to recognize them as in days gone by.

And if those departed hence have done so in the fear and love of God — then the reality and blessedness of their life in Christ does not suffer a moment's interruption.

You see a broad river passing through a plain. By and by it is hidden by overhanging rocks and the dark shadow of trees — but it emerges again into the open country and flows on as free and glorious as ever.

Thus does the life of the Christian ever flow on. Hidden, indeed, from mortal sight in the dark valley of the shadow of death — but soon is it manifested again in the Paradise beyond. Death is not death to such. It is life for evermore. "If any man keeps My Words, he shall never see death." "The world passes away, and the lust thereof, but he who does the will of God abides forever."

Another lesson we may gain from this narrative.

3. It confirms our faith in the truth of Christianity. It was a seal upon Christ's mission. The disciples had already seen Christ mocked and His claims discredited. Within a short time they are to see Him rejected by the whole nation, and as a malefactor put to a shameful and cruel death. Well might doubts arise whether He were indeed the Messiah sent by God. But God would strengthen their faith by this wondrous scene. As if He would say to them, "Though you see Messiah scorned and despised, crucified and slain — yet, believe it, there is a hidden glory in Him yet to be revealed. For a moment I will raise the veil, and you shall see something of the glory that appertains to Him." Thus their faith was strengthened, and in the years to come, the remembrance of this hour gave to them a firm assurance that they were not following "cunningly devised fables."

Look back to that scone of glory and rejoice that it gives you another link in the great chain of Christian evidence. Peter and John could not be deceived, and they could not deceive others. Their testimony demands our fullest confidence.

At the present day, doubt and unbelief are spread abroad like a pestilential vapor. Many are turned aside, and know not what is true. Others regard the Scriptures as a mixture of truth and error, and are ready to give up the most precious doctrines of the Gospel upon the very least objection that is urged against them.

Be it your part to take fast hold of the Word and all that it contains. Difficulties, no doubt, there are, that you may not be able to meet, but there are far greater difficulties in unbelief.

Remember the word of Christ, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My word shall never pass away!"

4. The last and the great lesson we should learn from the Transfiguration is, that we may gain from it an increasing knowledge of the glory of the Son of Man. It is one of the many glimpses of His glory that from time to time burst through the veil of His humiliation. We listen to the song of the celestial choir who celebrate His birth. We behold the Spirit descending as a dove at His Baptism, and hear the Father's witness to His well-beloved. We read of the angels ministering to Him in the desert, and of the angel strengthening Him in the garden. At His apprehension, the crowd of His enemies were constrained to fall before Him, and His glorious resurrection was attested by many witnesses.

So also on the Holy Mount, we have the witness of the heavenly light and of saints in glory, and of the Shekinah cloud and of the Father's voice.

Behold here His glory as the only-begotten of the Father. Never was such a witness borne of Abraham, or Moses, or David. Only of Jesus was it declared, "This is my beloved Son — listen to Him."

Behold Him as the very image and brightness of the Eternal God. Behold Him as the Son of His love, who came to fulfill all the good pleasure of His will. And hearken to His voice. God Himself has bidden you hear Him. When He speaks, let all else be silent.

One single word of the Son of God is more to be valued than the wisest sayings of earth's greatest men! Yes, hearken, believe, obey. Drink into your very soul the truths He proclaimed.

Hear Him when He tells . . .
of the love of God,
of the peril of sin,
of the need of a new and heavenly birth.

Hear Him when He calls . . .
to prayer,
to watchfulness,
to faith in His name.

Hear Him, and He will never lead you astray — but, hearing His voice and following His footsteps, you shall be His sheep and find eternal life in His grace.

Again, behold here the glory of Christ in His atoning death. What was the theme on which Moses and Elijah spoke with our Lord? Was it the deep mysteries of God's providence? Was it the future glory of God's saints?

These and many others might have been fitting subjects of discourse for Christ and these servants of God. But all were passed over that they might speak of "His death that He would accomplish at Jerusalem."

Here was the pivot on which turned the salvation of the whole Church.

Here was the meeting-place of justice and mercy.

Here was the instrument by which sin was to be blotted out and principalities and powers robbed of their spoil.

Let every true disciple dwell much on the death of Jesus. As much as we should value the Incarnation and the holy life of the Savior — above all should we value His sin-atoning death. He was born to die! It was the chief end of His earthly mission. He came to be "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." "The Father sent the Son to be the Atoning sacrifice for our sins." Before the world was made, it was purposed that Christ should die.

All through the world's dark history of sin and woe, at the cross of Jesus alone has man ever found pardon for sin and peace with God. And when the world shall have passed away and the new Heaven and the new earth appear — still the everlasting song of the redeemed shall be the death of their Surety. All through the ages of a coming eternity the sweetest note of joy shall be this: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain — to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing!"

And if we learn on the Holy Mount the glory of Christ's death — do we not behold also the glory of His coming kingdom? The three Apostles had but a momentary glimpse of the glory which Christ shall manifest at His return.

Who can imagine the brightness of His countenance and the glittering luster of His apparel on that day? Will there not be again the cloud and the witnessing voices, and the saints of all generations gathered around Him? Truly it will be "good to be there" — and from that height, we shall never have to descend! No more shall the disciples of Christ have to mingle with the ungodly, and witness for the Master among those who deny Him. It will be no passing vision — but an eternal, abiding reality. "Everlasting joy shall be on their heads, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away!"

For that day let us work, and live, and wait. It is the Master's voice: "Lo, I come quickly. Amen. Even so come, Lord Jesus."

"Closer, dear Lord, to Thee,
Closer to Thee,
In sweet communion drawn,
Oh, let me be!
Earth's joys forgotten quite,
While dwelling in the light,
Closer, dear Lord, to Thee,
Closer to Thee.

"Oh, let no cloud of sin,
'Twixt me and Thee,
Nothing of Your brightness hide,
But let me be,
Now on the mount's blessed height
Gazing on glory bright,
Until faith be lost in sight,
Closer to Thee.

"So shall my walk below
Glorify Thee,
Until that glad moment come
When I shall see,
Not through a darkening glass
Glimpses of glory pass,
But view Thee face to face,
Closer to Thee."

G. M. Taylor

9. At the Samaritan Village

"As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem. And he sent messengers on ahead, who went into a Samaritan village to get things ready for him; but the people there did not welcome him, because he was heading for Jerusalem. When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked, "Lord, do you want us to call fire down from Heaven to destroy them?" But Jesus turned and rebuked them, and they went to another village." [Luke 9:51-56](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke%209.51-56)

Weary, tired, and footsore, Christ and His disciples journey on. They go "to another village." But why? It is the hour for rest, and Christ desires it both for Himself and those who are with Him — and yet the Master and His little band go on their way until they reach some other place.

Let us consider why it was. We must recall the whole scene. The hour draws near when Christ must suffer and die for our sakes — and for this end, to Jerusalem He sets forth. Dark clouds are before Him. With prophetic eye He can discern Gethsemane and the house of Caiaphas, and "the way of sorrow" and Calvary. But He "steadfastly sets His face to go to Jerusalem." On the road He passes through Samaria. Nearing one of its villages, lie sends forward messengers to prepare a lodging for the night. He would have tarried there and blessed them by His presence. He would have healed their sick, comforted the mourners, and left behind some precious words of life and salvation. But no — they will not receive Him. Prejudice is excited. He is going to the Jewish Passover, and the Samaritans had their own Passover and did not go up to Jerusalem.

So, because Christ was a Jew, with one consent they all unite in refusing Him a resting-place in their village. From house to house the messengers are met with the same determined rejection. Not one solitary door is opened. Not one of the inhabitants will admit the Savior of the world. Knocking, knocking, knocking — but all in vain. O how strange — the Friend of sinners, the Good Physician, has nowhere to lay His head. Then the anger of the disciples is stirred. James and John, the sons of thunder, would verify their name. They would pour down wrath upon the villagers, yes, and call for the lightning's flash to destroy them. They remember the prophet of old commanding the fire to come down from Heaven and destroy the captain and his fifty men who came to take him. "Is not our Master as great as Elijah? Why not avenge the insult of His rejection, and burn up the homes of these scornful and unbelieving men!" So they think in their hearts, and then ask permission from the Master to fulfill their design.

Ah! Pride was there. Self was uppermost. In the heat of their spirit they would execute swift judgment upon the villagers. But what does Jesus say? Will He yield to their request? Will He punish those who refuse to have Him as their guest? Nay, far otherwise. He gently rebukes the disciples for their mistaken zeal. They have forgotten the errand upon which He has come, and the spirit which they must ever cherish. "To save — not to destroy, to pity and forgive — and not to punish, is now My work and yours. For this I have come from above. For this I live, for this I am about to die. Nay, leave them alone. Great is their loss that they will not receive Me, but now is no time for judgment."

In this spirit He speaks to them. So He and they turn away, and go to some village where a welcome may be given. We can imagine the little flock leaving that abode of unbelief. It was both in mercy and in judgment. It was in mercy, for He would not injure one hair of their head. It was in judgment, for those villagers never had another opportunity of receiving the Lord of glory. He left forever those whom He would gladly have blessed by His presence.

Three things we ought to notice in this story:

1. Here is a picture of those who, through pride or prejudice, reject the Savior. It was a sorrowful sight. The Savior, wearied with His journey, is compelled to journey on. In all the village, not one is found to welcome Him. Ah! if but one had been found, one in the very meanest abode — what a consolation would it have been to Christ!

A great contrast do we find in another place in Samaria. When the woman of Sychar had seen Christ and told the others what He had done for her — they besought Him to tarry with them, and He tarried there two days, and many believed on His name. But here not for one night's rest, will they permit the Savior to abide.

If your lot had been cast in that village, what would you have done? Perhaps you say, "I would have acted far otherwise. I would have opened my door to Him and received Him joyfully. The very best fare should have been His. If need be, I would have given up my own chamber and rest, to afford it to the wearied Redeemer."

You think so, but actually what are you now doing? The messenger of Christ has come to your door — yes, the merciful Savior has come seeking a resting-place with you. Hearken to His word: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man hears My voice and opens the door — I will come in and sup with him, and he with Me."

Have you welcomed Him? Have you given Him a chamber in your heart? Have you learned to regard Him as the dearest Guest — the Friend of all friends? Have you been willing to cast out the old tenants . . .
of sin,
of self-will,
of worldly care,
of covetousness,
of pride,
of prejudice,
of man's praise
— to give Christ the best room and the control of the inner man? Is Christ within — and all opposed to Him shut out? Or is it just the other way? Is He still kept without — while His enemies bear sway? Does He still knock in vain for admittance? You remember how Herod put John in prison, while Herodias was in the palace. Are you dealing thus with Christ? Do you welcome sin in some shape into the palace of the heart — while Jesus and His religion are imprisoned in the dungeon of unbelief and contempt?

The whole world of professors is divided between those who receive Christ like Martha at Bethany, like Zacchaeus at Jericho — and those who reject Him. Among which are you found? What is your desire? Is it like that of the Gadarenes, that Christ would depart from you, that you may not be troubled with thoughts of His presence or of His claims? Or is your one longing petition that of our sweet evening hymn —

"I need Your presence every passing hour;
What but Your grace can foil the tempter's power?
Who like Yourself my guide and stay can be?
Through cloud and sunshine, O abide with me!"

2. In this narrative we see Christ manifesting His marvelous pity and forbearance towards the sinner. Nothing wins the heart more than this tender compassion of Jesus. When Pharaoh and the Egyptians refuse the petition of Israel to let them go, there came down terrible plagues and judgments. The whole land perished through the hail, and the locusts, and the flies. At last the first-born are cut off and the whole army is buried in the Red Sea.

But now that the Samaritans refuse the petition of Christ for a night's lodging, He will not allow the disciples to injure one of them. No fire is permitted to fall and consume their dwellings. He is unwilling to punish, but most willing to save and bless. Believe it, the work in which Christ delights is to rescue the perishing. Nothing gives Him such joy as to forgive one who has gone astray. He takes the lost one on His shoulders and bears him rejoicingly to His fold.

Perhaps you wish to be saved, but you have an idea that Christ is hard to reach, and that perchance the character or the greatness of your sin may have shut His heart against you.

But is this possible? Is it not a faithful saying that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners? And would it prove to be faithful, if Christ ever failed to receive and save one sinner that took refuge in His grace?

Years ago I knew a good man who set his heart on rescuing and reclaiming young thieves. In the course of a few years hundreds of such had been welcomed to his house, and had received proofs of his kindness and good-will. One of those whom he sought out was so addicted to dishonest practices that he said that he could keep his hands off nothing, unless it were "too hot or too heavy." And yet this one also was led, by his persevering efforts, to renounce his evil habits, and to become an honest Christian man. Suppose to this devoted worker a young thief, touched by remorse, had come for guidance and help to live a better life — can you imagine him to have rejected the young applicant or to have refused him any help in his power to afford?

And since Christ's delight and joy is to save and restore not only thieves, but sinners of every kind, stray ones, young and old, those who have fallen deeply, and those who are just turning into wrong paths — can we question whether or not He will welcome one who turns to Him? Surely not!

His office forbids it;
His promise forbids it;
His tender, compassionate heart forbids it.

Think especially of this. He would not call down fire on the Samaritans, but He would for our sake endure the fire of God's judgment due to our sin. He would pass through Gethsemane and Calvary that He might cleanse us in His blood and save us eternally.

An old story tells of a navigator on the Mississippi river who, when the steamer was in flames, stood at the wheel until one arm was so burnt that he could not use it — and still stood firm, using the other until the ship had reached the shore, and then fell dead from his post into the river.

And did not Christ too bear all that came upon Him for our sake, passing through the terrible ordeal of shame and suffering and death, and laying down His own life, that He might bring us safe to the shore of life and glory?

Never doubt or question the willingness of Christ to save. Though your conscience may condemn you for evil that you dare scarcely dwell upon, though you are lacking in the deep sorrow for it that you would desire to have, though Satan whispers thoughts of utter despair — yet Christ is mighty to save, and will never refuse a soul that comes to Him.

A third lesson we may learn:

3. Christ at length departs, and forever — from those who refuse His mercy.

Christ goes "to another village." He and His little troop of disciples leave it behind them, perhaps casting back a look to see if any relent, but soon lose sight of a spot so inhospitable. It points to that which is equally true today. Christ comes to the sinner's door — His Spirit strives, His Word is proclaimed, His ministers plead. But it is all in vain. Sin is loved better than the Savior. The soul is neglected, while the world is cherished. The fear of man, is stronger than the fear of God. So it ends in the strong man keeping the palace — and the merciful Redeemer being refused an entrance. Then by and by the Spirit is quenched, impressions utterly fade away, and Christ Himself gives up the man to the power of evil.

I have read an allegory in which Christ is knocking at a door once and again.

"Who is there?" is the inquiry from within.

"It is your Lord with the pierced hands — open the door please."

"Nay, Lord, I am too busy. But wait a while, and then I will open to You."

Again there is a knock. "Make haste. Open now, if you will, or it will be too late."

Meanwhile a knock comes at the back door. A man comes with a bag of gold, and he is welcomed. Christ turns sorrowfully away saying, "He is joined to idols; let him alone."

Yes, Christ departs at last. He departed from the Samaritan village, and He departed from the Gadarenes when they besought Him to do so. And He departs at length from every soul that turns from Him. And this departing is the death-knell of the soul. "Woe unto them when I depart from them!" All other woes are light compared to this. You may be poor, hungry, suffering, desolate — you may have to bear sorrow upon sorrow, and wave upon wave of sorest trouble may beat upon you — but it may end in peace, and hope, and everlasting life. But if Christ departs from you, what then? You may be light and careless, and go on your way as full of mirth and glee as if death and judgment were far away. But they will soon come close to view. They will lay an iron hand upon you which you cannot resist. And with a hard, impenitent heart, without Christ, without His Spirit, without one ray of hope — you must pass into eternity as a damned soul.

But Christ has not departed yet.

By these lines, He still calls and pleads with you.

He is ready to forgive your past sins.

He is ready to heal your backslidings.

He is ready to renew our sinful heart.

"Lord, in this Your mercy's day,
Before it pass forever away,
On our knees we fall and pray.

"Holy Jesus, grant us tears,
Fill us with heart-searching fears,
Before the hour of doom appears.

"Lord, on us Your Spirit pour,
Kneeling lowly at Your door,
Before it close for evermore.

"Grant us 'neath Your wings a place,
Lest we lose this day of grace,
Before we shall behold Your face.
 Amen."

10. Poor, Yet Rich

Two things about the Temple attract the notice of our Lord. His disciples point out to Him the huge, massive stones, adorned with goodly ornaments. But as to these, He speaks only a word of solemn warning: "Do not let your eye be fixed on these. Great and beautiful though they are, they shall soon fall and perish. Not one shall be left upon another — every one shall be thrown down! Before long, ruin shall overtake both the city and the Temple."

But another object attracts the eye of Jesus. Here is something far more glorious than those goodly stones. Behold a living stone! Behold here a precious stone of that temple which shall never be overthrown! Yes, in that poor widow, see one whose soul is adorned with rare and costly jewels, one who shall be for all ages a pattern of Divine grace and virtue.

Never forget it! Here is the true beauty of God's house. No doubt it is right and good that all due care should be manifested in the erection of buildings set apart for God's special service. Let there be about them a chaste beauty suitable for such a purpose. But do not mistake. In God's sight, the true beauty of His house does not consist in the exquisite symmetry of the material fabric, nor in the marble pillars, nor in the windows with their rich and varied designs, nor in the vaulted aisles — but in something far different. Where are the living stones? Where are the poor and contrite hearts to whom Jehovah will look? Where are the humble ones with whom the High and Holy One can dwell? Where are the souls firmly resting on the Great Foundation, who delight to worship the Father in spirit and in truth? Here is the beauty that God would have. Here is the true temple, whose glory shall never pass away.

It is interesting to notice that it is "a widow" that is here commended of Christ. God cares for the widow. He is "the Father of the fatherless, and the Judge of the widow."

No more touching instance of God's care is given in Old Testament story than that of the widow of Zarephath, to whom Elijah was sent. The cruse of oil never failed, nor did the barrel of meal run out, for the Lord Himself provided for the widow and her son. And in the New Testament where can we find a greater proof of the compassion of the Son of man, than in His tender dealings with the widow of Nain, wiping away her tears and restoring to her the one prop of her declining years?

Would that the widows of India, whose lot is so peculiarly distressing, would find here the solace which they need! If at the hand of man they receive nothing but contempt and every species of ill-treatment — yet from the hand of Christ they will find the pity and love which will bind up every wound.

But let us turn to the short story given in the Gospel. Christ is sitting over by the treasury. In the court of the women, Josephus tells us, were placed thirteen chests for receiving the offerings of the people towards the expenses of the Temple worship. Hence this part of the building was called the Treasury. To the chests the Jews came, bringing the shekel or half-shekel or lesser coin.

Jesus marks the givers. He marks the rich, who come and cast in large offerings of gold and silver. But He marks the poor also. Most of all does He delight in the bounty and liberality of this widow. Full well He knew her poverty, and her struggle to obtain the bare necessities of life. But she comes and brings her gift. It is but the offering of two of the smallest Jewish coins, not valuing a penny in our money. But it was very precious in the eye of Jesus. In His sight it was far, far greater than that of the richest among the offerers. She gave much, for she gave her all. "It was all her living," even "all she had."

I want you to notice the exceeding wealth of this Jewish widow. She was poor — but she was rich. She was poor in the uncertain riches of earth — but she was rich in treasure that abides.

But how may we know this? We never read of her before nor afterwards; but this one incident and the word of Jesus is enough. From a single cluster of grapes or a single handful of fruit — you may learn the character of the vine or the tree on which it grows. So there are times when a single word or action may reveal a character steeped in vice or selfishness — or, on the other hand, endowed richly with the grace of God. And was it not so here? May we not easily see what she was, from what she did? May we not plainly discern that she was "rich toward God," though so poor in her outward circumstances?

Fivefold riches she possessed.

(1.) She was a woman "rich in FAITH." The saying of James was manifest in her: "Has not God chosen the poor of this world, to be rich in faith?"

Her main wealth was her full trust and confidence in God's care and love. She had no store of gold and silver — but she had access to a rich bank, to a treasury which could never be empty. She gives what she possesses, for she knows and trusts in the God of providence, whose are all things both in Heaven and earth. His promise was sure, and she could rely upon it: "The young lions lack and suffer hunger — but those who seek the Lord shall not lack any good thing." Thus her soul is at peace. A God of love, a faithful God — would never disappoint or deceive her. On Him alone she casts her burden — and His mercy, truth, and goodness are the firm resting-place on which she builds her hope.

(2.) This woman was rich in love to God. Never would she have given her last farthing in God's service — unless His love had reigned in her heart. Out of love to God, Abraham gave his son. Just so, out of love to God, this woman gave her two mites. Amidst all her distress, it was a joy to her that her best treasure could never be lost, for her heart was set on God. He was her portion, her sustenance, her exceeding great reward. Here is the key that unlocks the heart, and opens the hand. Where human love is supreme, we know that nothing is too good or too great to bestow on its object. Even so where the love of God is uppermost, it will lead to willing sacrifices and to a desire to keep back nothing from Him who deserves it all.

(3.) This woman was rich in a rare spirit of CONTENTMENT. It has been well said, "If we cannot bring our circumstances to our mind — let us bring our mind to our circumstances."

Very beautifully does this woman show she had learned this lesson. What thought would she have had of the Temple — if she had been bemoaning her own poverty and need? What power would she have had to dedicate her all to God's service — if she had been unhappy and troubled about the day's subsistence? And we, too, need the same lesson. "Godliness with contentment is great gain." "Be content with such things as you have; for He has said, I will never leave you nor forsake you."

Even a heathen may teach us the blessedness of a contented spirit. There was once a slave in Rome who had a cruel, unfeeling master. Perpetually had he to receive without reason — heavy blows, lack of food, and many other ills. At length he was set free, but he lived in the very poorest condition to the close of his life. A rich man once came to see him and to hear something of his reputed wisdom.

"You will get nothing from me," said the poor man, "because you do not wish to learn the true principles of life."

"Well, if I attend to such things," was the reply, "I shall be a mere pauper like you, with no food, no house, no land."

"I don't want such things; and besides, after all — you are poorer than I am."

"Why, how so?"

"You have no contentment, no harmony with nature, no freedom from anxieties. Patron or no patron, what do I care? You do care. I am richer than you. I don't care what Caesar thinks of me. I flatter no one. This is what I have — instead of your silver and gold. You have silver vessels — but earthenware reasons, principles, appetites. My mind is to me a kingdom, and it furnishes me with abundant and happy occupations, in place of your restless idleness. All your possessions seem small to you — mine seem great to me."

(4.) This woman was also rich in her BOUNTIFUL SPIRIT and in her ZEAL for God's house. Her own home would be very scantily furnished — but she had another home, even God's house. She loved its courts. She loved to join in its services; and in her zeal for God's house, she forgot the necessities of her own. She was among those blessed ones that "dwelt in God's house." And to her a day in its courts was better than a thousand. So she felt the privilege of giving for its support. And she gave her two mites. One would have been accepted, and a large offering, too, for her to give — but she gives both. Yes, and if at her disposal had been thousands of gold and silver, she would gladly have consecrated it all to the service of Him she loved.

(5.) Lastly, this woman was rich in the approval and commendation of her Savior. Unnoticed, would she gladly have come and gone away. But it was not to be. The eye of Christ was upon her. Her offering was not in vain. He saw it then — and He will reward it at the day of His appearing. Nor only so. He sets this widow before His Church in all ages, as the pattern of all true givers.

Let each of us be eager to gain the true riches which this widow possessed. First of all, be large recipients at the treasury of Divine grace. There is a Divine order to be observed, "Freely you have received — freely give." Ask great things — expect great things. Then you still receive great things — abundance of grace, abundance of joy, and peace in Christ. Then go forth and give bountifully to the cause of Christ on earth. Though you may be poor, still give. If you are rich, let your large offerings be in proportion to your wealth. "He who sows sparingly, shall reap also sparingly; he who sows bountifully, shall reap also bountifully."

"A little tear can carry light,
A little word, great love,
As little stars light up the night,
And keep it bright above.

"You have no gold! Do not repine.
No silver! Take a tear.
Take it, and through it let love shine,
Some sad heart it will cheer.

"We think the Lord, our faith oft dim,
Weighs actions by their size;
The smallest work, if done for Him,
His love will ever prize.

"Great things, by little deeds are done,
Great things, by small things saved;
This oft gives hope, all hope else gone,
Our faith by fear depraved.

"A loving look, a gentle word,
A tearful, broken sigh,
All, all are treasured by the Lord,
And bring His presence nigh.

"When praise of great deeds loudly rings,
Our eyes with sorrow dim,
Do not despise the little things
Your faith can do for Him."
  W. Poole Balfern.

11. The Story of Malchus

The Savior and His little flock of disciples have been alone in Gethsemane. The thrice-repeated petition has been heard, and Messiah is strengthened for the conflict that lies before Him. Then from the city pours forth a crowd of soldiers, servants, and officers to capture Christ. Torches and lamps are seen through the darkness, the clashing of weapons is heard; headed by Judas, His enemies come to the quiet garden which Jesus in days past had oft frequented with Peter and the rest. Never, never did the glory of Jesus shine forth more brightly, than at that hour.

What calm dignity,
what royal majesty,
what meekness,
what tenderness and love
— does He display!

See the noisy rabble eager to lay hold of their prey! But is He afraid? Does He endeavor to escape? Nay, who is it that comes forth so fearlessly? Who is it that asks the question, "Whom do you seek?" It is none other than Jesus Himself, the One whom they seek, the One whom they came to capture and destroy.

What need of all that crowd? What need that Judas should sell his soul for a few pieces of silver, that he might deliver Him unto them? Had He been unwilling to suffer and die — then not all the soldiers of Imperial Rome could have arrested Him. Since He was willing, a single messenger, even a little child — would have been enough to bring Him before the Jewish Council.

The disciples are dismayed at the sight of the multitude. "Master, shall we smite with the sword?" asks one. But Peter waits not for the answer. He rushes into the forefront. He will prove no coward. At least he will be found ready. None shall touch his beloved Master. So with sword in hand he rashly swings about him, and cuts off the ear of the high priest's servant. It was just like him. We see at a glance his zealous, impulsive nature. Before this, Christ had told him that before the rooster would not crow until he would deny Him thrice — and Peter had declared that though he should die with Him, he would not deny Him. So he will fulfill his promise. It shall be seen to be no mere boast. None shall hereafter question his fidelity to his Lord. Though by it he endangers his own life and that of his fellow-disciples, he will stand up manfully for the Master whom he loves.

But not such was the spirit which Christ desired. "The wrath of man works not the righteousness of God." Carnal weapons are not needed in this service. Not the flashing steel, not the uplifted arm, not bitter words, not reproaches, revilings, nay, not these — but rather the rod of meekness, gentleness, forbearance, the power of an overcoming love — these most effectually will do the work of the Lord.

Mighty is the spirit of persistent obedience, coupled with a meekness that can endure all things. "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds." Peter needed not the sword which can be wielded by an arm of flesh — but another sword, the sword of the Spirit, the living Word, which he learned so effectually to use in days to come.

It is wise for Christians at all seasons to remember this lesson. Avoid a rashness which goes forth on its own errand, and is not guided by the will of God. Avoid that eager haste which will rush unsent into the midst of the battle, and which will rather hinder than advance the cause of Christ's kingdom. But cultivate a quiet steadfastness of spirit, a determination to go through fire and water at the Master's word. Cherish that true courage that can speak a faithful word, that can rebuke a dishonor done to God, that can stand alone, if need be, against thousands, that can plead earnestly with a soul that is perishing, and which will abide even to the end.

Jesus calmly reproves the fiery zeal of His disciple. "Put your sword back into the sheath! All those who take the sword shall perish by the sword. The cup which My Father has given Me, shall I not drink it? Do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He shall presently give Me more than twelve legions of angels?" (

[Matthew 26:52](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt%2026.52), [53](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matthew%2026.53); [John 18:11](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%2018.11)).

Here is the true secret of safety and peace in a day of peril and fear. Yield yourself up to your heavenly Father's will, and shrink not from shame and suffering if He appoints it. Go and pray to your Father — and remember that all things are at His disposal. He could send myriads of angels to rescue and save you, or could in a moment disperse all your enemies and difficulties. Be persuaded of this and trust in God alone. Believe it without a doubt, that if you thus honor Him, He will honor you, and in due time exalt you above all that troubles you.

But now comes a deed of mercy which perhaps is excelled by none given in the Gospel narrative. It shines forth with a luster peculiarly its own. In many respects it strikes the imagination far less than the raising of Lazarus, the stilling of the storm, the feeding of the multitude, the healing of the leper. But in one respect it rises above them all. These miracles were wrought on behalf of those who sought His aid, or who followed Him for a season and hearkened to His Word. But here is mercy shown to an enemy.

Malchus had come as one of the ringleaders of the band. He was quite prepared to capture and fetter Christ, and with no gentle hand to force Him to go to the house of Caiaphas. Try to realize for a moment the spirit in which Malchus and the rest had come. No doubt it was with hearts hardened in unbelief, steeled in prejudice and hatred, and prepared for any cruelty. And now that Malchus is wounded and injured, what does Christ do? Does He repay bitter for bitter, evil for evil? Does He cherish one feeling of revenge for the conduct of these men? Nay, look and see. See, the Savior stretches out that hand so soon to be fast bound, and with it heals the ear of His enemy! Oh, abounding mercy and grace! The last act done by those loving hands of Jesus before they are bound, is to stanch the trickling blood, to restore the wounded member, to send Malchus back to his home without hurt or harm.

There was mercy to Malchus! To stay the pain, to give back the ear — here was something. But was there not more? When He touched his ear — may we not hope that He touched his heart too? Do you think Malchus could have been among those who cried, "Crucify Him, Crucify Him!" Do you think he could have been among the mockers around the Cross? Perhaps one day we shall find that deed of love turned him from a foe into a friend; nay, perhaps, one of the heartiest workers for the Redeemer's kingdom.

There was mercy to Peter. But for this healing touch, it is likely that the life of Peter might have been sacrificed. If they were willing to slay the Master — then they would have had no hesitation in destroying the servant when he stood in the way of their purpose. Had the wound still continued to remind him of the injury he had received, is it not probable that Malchus would have sought out the author of his suffering, and have endeavored to repay it to the utmost?

And was there not mercy to ourselves? Have we not here another revelation of the Savior's heart? May we not see what was His kindness and compassion then? And is He not the same today? May we thus learn to depend more firmly upon His free grace and mercy!

Very wonderfully does our Lord in these last hours of life illustrate His own command, given to His disciples on the mount, "I say unto you: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who despitefully use you and persecute you" ([Matthew 5:44](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt%205.44)).

Here you have our Lord loving an enemy, and doing him good, removing pain, and restoring the ear.

A few hours later you see our Lord taken away to Calvary, and then the soldiers driving in the nails and causing Him intense suffering.

How does He return it? Go near and listen to His words. What are they? A prayer for His murderers and a plea for their forgiveness: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Thus does He Himself in the very highest degree fulfill both sides of His own precept — manifesting His love to His enemies both by a deed of kindness and by a prayer for their salvation.

And does He not still show pity to those who have been most opposed to Him? There are many who are set against Christ, and to the very utmost strive to resist His sway.

And within the heart of many a one, there is something of this spirit. There may have been an awakening, a thought of a better life aroused — but there is a tremendous barrier yet to be overcome. Prejudices firm and strong against the gentle sway of Jesus; a will set against God and righteousness; a heart full of enmity and unbelief; yes, many a sword-point of deadly opposition stands in the way against the reception of Christ and submission to His kingly rule.

But in spite of all, Christ deals in pity and forbearance with those who reject Him. He conquers by love. He points men to His death, and to all the benefits He offers them through His atonement. He reminds them of His invitations and promises. He shows them the example of loving-kindness to His enemies when here below, and thus through the power of His Spirit takes the citadel of the heart.

Someone who reads these lines may have hitherto been living in direct and open enmity to Him. You have broken His plainest commands, and have paid no regard to the rebukes of His Word, and of your own conscience. Or you may have been a hinderer or persecutor of His people. You have put difficulties in the way of others by taunting them for any change you saw in them. You may have laughed a brother, a sister, a wife, out of their convictions, and drawn them back again into the downward paths of destruction.

You may have cast contempt upon His truth, and have endeavored by subtle arguments to undermine the faith of Christians.

But remember this, there is an eye that follows you in mercy and compassion every step of your downward path. Often He has turned aside the fatal shaft that would have laid you low. He has withheld the axe that would have brought down the fruitless tree. He has spared you from danger, disease, and death — and to this hour tarries for you, ready to pardon and ready to save.

He who healed Malchus. is ready to heal you! He who showed this proof of kindness to a foe in the garden — is ready to pour down tender mercies upon you and make all your life happy in His love.

There is one closing lesson from the story of Malchus, which we ought not to pass over. Jesus is the Great Healer, and we find Him in this case healing the ear. And in a spiritual sense does, not the Good Physician still do the same thing? In many a one, the inner ear of the soul fails to fulfill its office. There is no ear to hearken to the sweet voice of Jesus' love. There may be an ear to drink in the news of the day, the world's praise, the evil report of the hour — but where is the desire to hear the joyful sound of the Gospel and the precepts and promises of the Good Shepherd?

But Jesus can heal the ear! He can dispose the heart to receive the message of His grace. He can close the ear to the voice of flattery and sin and vanity, and the evil-speaking which abounds — and open it to hear of Him who came to save.

It is written, "He who has ears to hear — let him hear." But it is written again, "The hearing ear and the seeing eye — the Lord has made even both of them."

When Lydia by the river-side listened in faith and humility to the teaching of Paul, it was the Lord who opened her heart to receive the things he spoke. And wherever now there is the willingness to hearken and obey the message of the Gospel, it is still the same Lord giving needful grace to receive the truth as it is in Him.

But every evil, every infirmity — Jesus can and will remedy, if only it is brought to Him.

I close with a few words of Christian experience: "I am far more deeply wounded than Malchus was. My whole head is sick, and my whole heart faint. In heart, in understanding, in will, in conscience, in memory — I am sick both in body and soul. My wounds stink and are corrupt through my foolishness. Without You they are incurable. There is no balm in Gilead except Your blood — there is no Physician except You. But You can and will heal me. O make me willing to submit entirely to Your management as the Physician and Savior of my soul."

12. The Silence of Christ

"Speech is silver — but silence is golden."

Never was this word better illustrated than in the last hours of the Son of Man. You have often read and pondered the sayings of Christ. Many a one has sunk deep into your heart. "Never man spoke like this man!" Wisdom and love, truth and grace, reality and power, shone forth in every word that fell from His lips. And His words have gone forth over the wide world as a seed of eternal life in tens of thousands of human hearts.

But did you ever ponder or think much of the silence of Christ? It was foretold by Isaiah: "He is led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth" ([Isaiah 53:7](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa%2053.7)).

And see how this was fulfilled. For many a long, dark hour He stood before His accusers. False charges were brought against Him, and He was exposed to cruel mockings and buffetings both from the Jews and the Roman soldiery. But through all, He maintained a silence which amazed His enemies.

See Him in the presence of CAIAPHAS. False witnesses came and laid many wrong things to His charge. They perverted His words, and accused him with threatening to destroy the Temple. But no voice is heard in reply. No answer falls from His lips. Silent, immovable He stands, and utters not one single word. The high priest cannot comprehend it. "He arose and said: Are you not going to answer? What is it which these witness against You? But Jesus remained silent."

And it was only when the cause of truth demanded a bold and faithful confession, that He opened His lips and acknowledged Himself the Christ, the Son of the Living God — and that hereafter "He would sit on the right hand of heavenly glory and come in the clouds of Heaven."

Upon this confession, Jesus is condemned by the Council. But He has a second trial.

He is taken before PILATE, the Roman governor, without whose consent He cannot be put to death. Again we find the same determined silence. "When He was accused of the chief priests and elders, He answered nothing." Then Pilate, too, was amazed. "Don't you hear," said he, "how many things they charge against You? And He answered him not a word, so that the governor marveled greatly" ([Matthew 27:12-14](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt%2027.12-14)).

Jesus is then sent to HEROD, the governor of Galilee. Pilate hopes in this way to be done with his prisoner, whom he is afraid to release — and yet unwilling to condemn. A third time do we mark this strange silence in our Lord. Herod questioned with Him in many words, but He answered nothing. And the chief priests stood and vehemently accused Him ([Luke 23:9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke%2023.9), [10](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke%2023.10)). It matters not whether Herod questions, or the soldiers mock, or loud and angry accusations come from the chief priests — He is not moved. His lips are sealed, and, for all they can say or do, He stands before them as silent as death.

It is a sight worth beholding. "Behold the Man!" Fix your gaze on this holy, silent Lamb of God. Admire the grace, meekness, and patience that shone forth so brightly in Him. Was it not, perhaps, the greatest victory He ever achieved? True, in the wilderness He had a sore conflict with the tempter, and thrice overcame him. True, in Gethsemane the struggle was great, and He conquered. But in that night of shame and suffering, it may be — the victory was still more glorious as He stood unmoved by all that He endured.

What must it have been for Him, the Holy One of God — to be assailed by the vilest blasphemies, railing accusations, lying charges, taunts, and mockeries of every kind? Yet through it all — no threatening, no angry word, no murmur of impatience or resentment, was heard. Calm, quiet He stood, hidden from the strife of tongues in the secret place of the Most High. "When He was reviled, He reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously."

Surely no taint or infection of human sinfulness was in Him. If a spark falls on tinder — will it not at once ignite? And had any evil thing been lurking within the breast of our Lord — then surely it must have struck fire, through the untold insults and provocations of those hours of darkness. But there was none. "He did no sin, neither was deceit found in His mouth." "The Prince of this world came, and found nothing in Him."

And shall we not follow in the Master's footsteps? Shall we not cherish the same mind that was in Him? If an unkind word greets the ear, if a breath of slander assails our good name — how shall we take it? If in the home, or in the workshop, or in the office — there is one who tries us almost beyond bearing, who disturbs our peace of mind by wrong judgments, by misrepresenting what we do, by carping words and the like — how shall we deal with it? Shall we return bitter for bitter, evil for evil, taunt for taunt? Or shall we bear it patiently and meekly for Christ's sake?

If insult or injury is heaped upon us, if wrong is done us in person or in property — shall we boil over with anger, and passion, and purposes of revenge? Or shall we see the hand of the Lord behind it? Shall we count it a part of our needful discipline? Shall we take it to the Lord and leave it with Him, only acting in the matter as prudence and love suggest?

In the sight of the silent, holy, suffering Redeemer — let us learn, through the Spirit, to control our temper and our tongue. Let us not be careful to justify ourselves, remembering there is One who can make our righteousness as the light and our judgment as the noonday. Even when falsely accused, let us learn sometimes that it is best to hold our peace, and let the Lord Himself plead our cause. Let us meekly take this cross when laid upon us, remembering that it is written, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."

To assist you in this, ever bear in mind a point I have already named. Whatever is the instrument that God employs — whether a sickness, a great sorrow, a loss, a disappointment, or any person whose conduct vexes and annoys you — the trial is a part of that loving correction which your Father appoints for your good.

David recognized this when Shimei cursed him and threw stones at him. "Let him alone," says David, "the Lord has bidden him" (2 Samuel 16:11).

And if you believe this truth, then remember it is foolish to be angry with the rod — it is sinful to rebel against the hand that holds it. Therefore under this distressing trial, flee to God as your Refuge and commit the matter into His hand.

"Whatever your sacred will ordains,
O give me strength to bear;
Still let me know my Father reigns,
And trust my Father's care!"

A second lesson we may learn as we stand in the presence of the silent, suffering Savior. Christ was silent when accused — because He freely gave His life for us. He had no desire to escape. When the time was come, He set forth on His way to Jerusalem, and went before them with such eager haste, that as they followed they were amazed. When the struggle in the garden had passed, He gave Himself up to the men who sought Him, though, as at Nazareth, he might easily, had He willed it, have passed through and gone His way. And now before Caiaphas and Pilate and Herod He is silent — for He gladly lays down His life for His sheep. Willingly does He drink to the last drop the cup of shame and suffering and death.

Yes, and in one sense Christ was guilty (by imputation) and deserved to die. He made Himself chargeable with our debt. He took upon Him the burden of our sin. As our Surety and Representative, the sinless One was reckoned a sinner.

And now that the guilt must be borne and the debt must be paid, He does not shrink from the work. He bears the sin and pays the debt, even to the last farthing. Hence is He silent. As the sinner's Kinsman Redeemer, He is guilty of death and He denies it not. He is the scapegoat on whom rest the sins of His people. He is the very Lamb of God, the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and for our sake He freely lays down His life.

Hence let us learn two things.

If Christ was silent and excused not Himself as He bore our sin — then what shame and self-reproach befit us as we think of those sins we have ourselves committed! Surely we ought to humble ourselves, to cast aside every excuse, every self-justifying plea, to lie low before a Holy God, and plead guilty before His footstool! We all can recall sin upon sin — sins against the law, sins against conscience, sins against the Gospel, sins of omission and of commission, sins of the tongue, sins of the hand, the foot, the heart. Then let us own it all. Let us put in no excuses because of our temptations, our circumstances, our associates, or the like. Let us not endeavor to lessen our faults by magnifying those of others. Rather let "every mouth be stopped and all the world become guilty before God" ([Romans 3:19](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom%203.19)).

But while we sorrow for our sin, and hate it with bitter hatred — as the knife or the spear with which we have slain our best Friend — let us also look upon the dying Savior with hope and confidence.

He died — that we might live.

He was bound — that we might go free.

He took our heavy burden — that He might give us rest and peace.

He was silent as our Surety — that we might evermore praise and bless our God for His forgiving mercy.

Christ's spiritual offspring, all who belong to Him, are "not condemned, though transgressing." In spite of their sins, they have life through their Head. None shall perish, none shall die, for the One offering offered once for all is enough.

None shall be bound in the iron bondage of sin and guilt, for Christ was bound to set us free.

None shall be reckoned wrong-doers, for all the wrong has been borne by their Surety, so that in Him is no condemnation. "Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died."

Let us rejoice in the great privileges thus granted to those who believe in Jesus. Through our tears of repentance, let us look up and see the reconciled countenance of a God of love. Let us trust in Jesus and not be afraid. And in the strength of His favor and love, let us show forth His praise by a life of special holiness and zeal for His glory.

One further lesson let us learn from the silence of Jesus. There is "a time to be silent — and a time to speak." And in Jesus we see both these illustrated. He was silent, as far as His own defense was concerned — but He was not silent when He might show His mercy and good-will to others.

He spoke a word in the garden on behalf of the little flock, "If you seek Me, let these go their way."

He spoke in compassion to the women who followed Him, "Weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves and your children."

He spoke in prayer on behalf of those who pierced Him, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

He spoke for the salvation of the dying thief, "Today shall you be with me in Paradise."

He spoke for the consolation of His mother, "Woman, behold your son."

And now that the suffering and shame is over, He speaks good for us before His Father in Heaven, ever pleading our cause and interceding on our behalf.

Only draw near in His name; only through faith in Him come boldly to the throne of grace, and you may be assured Jesus will undertake for you. He will hearken to your petition. He will support you in every temptation. He will comfort you in every grief.

Nor forget that for you also there is "a time to speak" — as well as "a time to be silent." If Christ pleads your cause in Heaven — will not you plead His cause on earth? If He speaks good for you in His Father's presence — will you not speak good of His name among your fellow-sinners? Will you not for His sake boldly witness against sin, error, and all ungodliness, and plainly testify on behalf of truth and righteousness? There are far too many Christians who are silent when they ought to speak — and who thus, through fear of man, permit great injury to arise in Christ's Church, and leave many souls without the guiding light they are bound to give them.