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Our Pulpit.

Waiting for One Another,

The Occasion, Communion Sabbath.

SERMON PREACHED BY

REV. A. J. MOWATT.

In St. Paul's Church, Fredericton, Sunday morning, March 31st, 1889.

"Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another."—I. COR. XI. 33.

The Christians of Corinth had abused the Lord's Supper, thus teaching us that we had better be on our guard, lest, in some way, we may be led into abuses in connection with this blessed institution. The student of church history notes that the Lord's Supper has ever been specially liable to abuses, sometimes in one direction, and sometimes in another. Let us not be too sure, therefore, that as a church and people we are free of them. We may not be as free of them as we think we are. We may attach too much importance to the Lord's Supper or too little. We may fence it around with unnecessary restrictions or we may throw it too wide open. We may strip it of all its sacredness and solemnity and make it a very ordinary and commonplace service, or we may exalt it into a position of superstitious reverence and sanctity that do not belong to it. Thus, in so many ways we may depart from the purpose of the blessed supper, and like the Christians of Corinth make a sad abuse of it.

They abused it in this way. They made an ordinary feast of it. They seem to have had a series of tables, first, second, third, and so on. The well-to-do sort of people would come to the first table, and they would eat and drink to satiety, eat sometimes till they had eaten more than they should eat, and drink till they were overcome with wine. To the second table the middling class would come, and before they were through with their eating and drinking the table would be pretty bare. To the third table the poor would come, and there would be nothing at all for them to eat and drink. And then the rich who had been at the first table, as soon as they were through with their eating and drinking, would retire to their homes; and the middling class would do the same as soon as they were through with the second table, and the poor would be left to a hungry board, and empty benches, and the lean benediction. Such was the way they used to do in old Corinth in Apostolic days.

This led the Apostle to write strongly in condemnation of such abuses. He pointed out the purpose of the Lord's Supper. It was instituted by Himself on the night of the betrayed in memory of His death. It was not to be a feast or an ordinary meal. It was not as food the symbols of His broken body and shed blood were to be partaken of, still less for indulgence. Let men, he said, eat and drink at home, and not come hungry and thirsty to the Lord's Table. Let them look beyond the seen to the unseen, and discern the Lord's body, His death. And then let them not hurry away as soon as they are through with eating and drinking, but let them wait on one another. "Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another."

Now, according to the teaching of the apostle here, one great purpose of the Lord's Supper is communion, communion with Himself and with one another. The great purpose is commemoration. "This do in remembrance of me." But next to the great purpose is communion, and so we often speak of the Lord's Supper as the Communion. And the Apostle exhorts in the text: "Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another;" in other words, let there be communion at the Lord's Table, true fellowship there, real christian brotherhood.

The tendency of the world is always against communion, the tarrying of one for another. The world divides men up, tears them apart, fills them with ideas of self-interest and self-importance, and makes them impatient and unsympathetic with regard to others. You happen to have more money than I have, wherever you got it, and so you dress better, live in a better house and on a more fashionable street, ride when I have to walk, and because of these things you look down upon me, or at least I think so. Or again, you have a better education, you live and move in a higher social plane, you wield more influence and have more power, and so you and I cannot eat at the same table, cannot walk together along the same street, and can hardly go to the same church and worship the same God. This is the way it is as we find it in society, and the great brotherhood of humanity is rent up into shreds between which there is no harmony. Walls of separation and division are built up, and so we have race distinctions, color-lines, castes and classes, creeds and politics, and so much else, that keep us far apart from one another. And, while there has been a very great improvement within the christian era, a general levelling up and

coming together of the race under the benign influences of the gospel; still, the evil is wide-spread and bad enough yet, and in some respects perhaps it is growing.

Now, the idea of the gospel has ever been to do away with all these accidental and artificial and often absurd distinctions and divisions between men, to obliterate the color-lines, to break down the walls of separation between peoples and churches, and draw them together around the cross. Christ is the world's great peace-maker, humanity's true friend and Saviour. By His death He teaches men to love one another, to see in every one a brother-man, to be disinterested and unselfish, to seek the good of others rather than their own, to dwell together in peace, and work together for the common good. Not Englishmen alone are His, but red-skinned Indians and oblique-eyed Chinese also. Not Presbyterians alone are His, but all churches and creeds, even sects we would be slow to extend to the right hand of christian fellowship. We are slow of course to let go these things, and I do not know that it would be wise to let them go as yet, but we are coming as churches and christian brethren to understand one another better, and now we find ourselves at one in the great essential doctrines, and where we can not agree we agree to differ, and so there are peace and a happy hallowed co-operation.

Perhaps it is here at the Lord's Table, where, as a people, we realize our highest and fullest idea of communion and christian brotherhood. Today we leave the pews we ordinarily occupy, and we come together around the Lord's Table, and side by side we sit together on a common level. We eat the same bread, drink from the same cup, hear the same gospel, accept the same truth, worship the same Lord. We have but one table—no first table and second table, and third table. Here for the time being the rich forget they are rich, and the poor forget they are poor, and side by side honor Him, who, though rich, became poor, that He might make us all rich. Ah! this is a blessed sort of communion, not a levelling down, such as many today are contending for, but a levelling up, a higher christian brotherhood.

It is not what we have that gives us position here, nor what we give, nor what we know, nor what we do, but it is what we are. It is not the coat a man wears, nor the crown on his head, nor the number of letters before or after his name, that makes him a man or a christian; it is character. Love to the Lord brings us here, and the poor can love as well as the rich, and as much as the rich. Under the plainest clothes beats often the warmest heart, amid the hardest worldly circumstances sometimes grow the sturdiest principles and strong faith, and within the unlikeliest outward appearance is to be found the gem of character.

Oh it is good to be here! Here the rich are humbled, and here the poor are exalted. Here the first are last, and the last first, and yet none are left. Here the great are weak, and the weak strong. Here the wise feel how little they know of what they need to know, and the ignorant are cheered because they know so much, for they know Christ and His love. Here the good feel how poor and simple they are, and here the sinner has hope. It is both a coming down and a coming up to be here;—a coming down to our pride and vanity, a coming down to our self-importance and self-interest, a coming down to our wealth and worldliness; but then, on the other hand, it is also, and especially so, a coming up, to real worth and character, to the joys of salvation and the hope of eternal life, a coming up to oneness in Jesus.

Thus the Lord's Supper is happily called the communion, for it is the communion of saints;—communion with the unseen Lord, communion with one another, communion with brethren of other churches, communion perhaps more than we know with the dear ones who have gone above.

And now we come to consider, next, the Apostle's exhortation to us to tarry for one another. "Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another."

The word tarry is now obsolete; it has gone out of fashion. Today we say, wait, not tarry, and wait has been substituted for tarry in the revised version: "Wait one for another."

We know what it is to wait, but we do not always wait. We got ready to come to church this morning, and we were impatient to be off, and it flusters us to have to wait. And so perhaps we did not wait; we started off alone. We forgot or neglected the exhortation, "wait one for another."

Or, we are at church service, and it has come to the communion, or the collection, or the benediction part, and we are impatient to be off. We get up, and put on our over-coat, and prepare to bolt. We do not "wait one for another."

Or, it is the dinner-hour at home, and we are hungry. So without waiting on anybody we sit down, and begin to eat. And when we have eaten all we want in the shortest possible time, we hurry off

to business or pleasure. We pay no heed to apostolic teaching: "Wherefore, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait one for another."

But there is more here than that, a richer meaning, a wider application. And first the apostle's exhortation implies that some are more forward than others, more enthusiastic and energetic than others, more up in every respect.

Some people you have almost to hold back they are so pushing and progressive. They want to be on. The latest ideas in church-work and world-reforms they jump at. They are radicals in politics, iconoclasts in religion, revolutionists, reconstructionists. They take hold of new and bold measures with an energy that brooks no delay, and they stand at nothing in their way. If there is church work to do they want to do it right off, and they plunge ahead, and make a great ado because others will not join with them in their efforts in good-joining.

Others again are at the opposite extreme from these people. They are as slow as the others are fast. They bring up the rear of every enterprise. They are never in a hurry. They want to be sure they are right before they venture, and that they will succeed in what they undertake before they set out on it. They never initiate anything, never pioneer a movement. They are the brakes for the wheels of progress. They hate new things, are opposed to innovations, look before they leap, and sometimes look so long that they never leap. It is worrying to energy, flustering to impatience, trying to good nature, to have to do with them; and yet, they are not bad sort of people to have in a church or anywhere. They prevent immature and unwise projects. They save both church and state from hasty legislation, and foolish and reckless measures. They have their use as well as those who are in so great a hurry, and in the long run they may do as much good. The race is not always to the swift. Slow and sure may come in first when the rewards come to be distributed, the crowns come to be given.

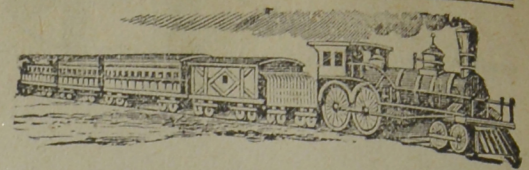
Now, the apostle counsels here the enthusiastic and energetic and progressive to wait on the slow and sure. It is best for both to keep together. It would be bad for the too fast sort of people to be without the slow ones, and it would be bad for the slow ones to be without the fast ones. The one need the other. A train needs brakes as well as driving-wheels. And so does the church. As the train waits at the station, or the steamboat clings to the wharf, there is sometimes such a hissing and sputtering of steam, and a sort of impatience to be off. So in the church we have sometimes glowing spiritual enthusiasm, an energetic restlessness that is hard to control, and occasionally it becomes untroutable, and breaks away into all sorts of religious extravagances, and the result is often calamitous to the peace and progress of the church, and the best interests of religion.

Hence, the apostle exhorts the enthusiastic and progressive to wait on their slower brethren. It is theirs to wait. It is in their interests to wait. It is their duty to wait. "Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, wait one on another."

Learn here, further, to wait on those who differ with you in opinion. Do not be too fast in crying heresy, and begin hurling anathemas. Orthodoxy can afford to wait. Truth is not so easily hurt as some of its friends think. There is weakness in a cause that you have to rush to with all haste to buttress up with your arguments. And you may not be so right as you think you are. There is more of truth than you have in your creed. You have not been all around any one subject, else it is a very small one, and hardly worth the going around. There is more to be known than you know, more to be learned than you have learned or ever will learn, discoveries in truth to be made long after you and your ideas of things are dead and buried, and you had better listen to what others have to say.

It is by difference of opinion that the truth has been found out. It is by much sifting the wheat of truth is made clean. You and the one who differs with you in opinion may be both a little wrong. You may push yours views a little far in one direction, and he may push his views a little too far in the other direction, and so you may be both wrong, and you may think you are both right. If however you would wait on one another, and be patient with one another, your view would help his, and his would help yours, and so it would be to the advantage of both, and the cause of truth would be promoted. Your Calvinism needs some of his Arminianism, and his Arminianism needs some of your Calvinism. You preach justice, retribution, damnation; he preaches love, love, love. Ah! you need his love, and his love needs some of your hell-fire. In your view Christ is God, with another He is man. But when you come to know the truth better, you will find that you need his view to supplement yours, and he needs yours to supplement his.

Continued on third page.



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