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Our Pulpit.

Salvation To-Day.

SERMON PREACHED BY

REV. A. J. MOWATT

In St. Paul's Church Fredericton Sunday morning Nov. 18th 1888.

"This day is salvation come to this house."—LUKE XIX. 9.

Our Lord is passing along through Jericho on His way to Jerusalem and the cross. It is a time of earnest enquiry everywhere among the people as to whom and what the Jesus of Nazareth is. The whole land is moved at His coming, and the excited multitudes crowd the streets and highways to have a look at the great Miracle-Worker. The blind beggars along the wayside hear the hubbub and wonderingly ask what it is all about, and when they know, they cry to Him for mercy. "Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on us."

Do you see yonder little man running across the fields to intercept Him as He passes? See now, he is climbing a tree on the roadside! What is he going to do up in the tree? He wants to get a better view of Him. You smile perhaps at him as he sits astride a branch, and looks as if he was looking for life. You have run too perhaps, and climbed trees, and sat perched on the top of a fence, to see a Prince or a Princess pass along, and why wonder at the little man up the tree, when one greater than the princes of the world passes along?

But who is the little man up the tree? He is Zacchaeus, the chief of the publicans, the richest man in all Jericho, and the greatest sinner. Hump! what does the like of him want to see the good Jesus for? Let him go home and learn to be an honest man first.

But, see! Jesus stops and speaks to him. Now, you think you know just what He is saying. You think He is denouncing him for his being the wicked man he is. If you would put the words into His mouth they would be some such words as these: "Thou chief of the publicans, thou rich sinner, thou defrauder of the people, thou child of the devil, what art thou doing up there between me and Heaven! Come down, and go home, and learn to be a righteous man!"

Is that the way Jesus accosts him Or, does He begin preaching him a sermon, telling him about Hell and Judgment, the worm that never dies, and the fire that can never be quenched? Or, does He get down on His knees, and begin praying for him? No; He looks up with such a winning look, and He says to him in His own free and kind off hand way: "Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for to-day I must abide at thy house."

How delighted Zacchaeus is to hear that. No ten-thousand dollar draft ever pleased him half as much as that. I see him sprawling down the tree as fast as he can, and grasping Jesus so cordially by the hand and saying to Him: "This is indeed a most unexpected pleasure. I cannot tell you how glad I am to have you come to my house."

But the good people present do not like it. They begin growling and fault-finding, and some of them go off home disgusted and disappointed. I hear them saying to one another with no attempts to conceal the disgust they feel: "Did you ever? He has gone to be guest with a man who is a notorious sinner, the greatest sinner in all Jericho, the chief of the Publicans!"

But before the Publican gets Jesus to his house, a new light bursts in upon his soul, and he begins to see things as he never saw them before. I know not whether Jesus said anything very special to him about the way he had been living. This I am sure of at all events, He did not go to work to rake him fore and aft with the grape-shot of unpleasant truths the first thing as He sometimes did those miserable hypocrites the Pharisees. I think likely the chief of the Publicans would introduce the matter himself. He would feel that he could not walk thus with Jesus, and take Him home with him, and then go back and live the life he had been living and do the wrong he had been doing. He was committed now to a new life. His being with Jesus at all, His being in His company, would be regarded, and it ought to be regarded, and he wanted it to be regarded, that he was a changed man, a christian. So with the promptitude and decision of a business-man, he made up his mind there on the road to live the new life, and he told Jesus so.

And he began with a most practical business-like repentance. He began with making what reparation he could for the wrong he had done. "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him four-fold."

That is the way to repent. Jesus was pleased with the spirit of the Publican, and He said as He crossed his threshold: "This day is salvation come to this house."

Salvation to-day—that is my theme this morning, and if I can present it right, there ought to be souls saved before we break up. It is not too much to expect that. God is as gracious and merciful now as then, and salvation is to be had now just as it used to be had when Zacchaeus was saved, and the dying thief, and the jailer of Philippi, and so many others.

And first, I remark that salvation is such in its very nature, that its condition may be fulfilled, and itself possessed and enjoyed here and now. The only conditions to salvation are faith and repentance, and salvation itself is deliverance from sin. We might express it still more simply than even that, and call it accepting Christ, taking Him home to one, like Zacchaeus. In that one simple act, all the conditions are fulfilled, and salvation possessed and enjoyed.

That is what Zacchaeus did when he was saved. He lumped it, so to speak. He did not stop to analyze his feelings, or to get at it little by little—to repent, and then believe, and then be forgiven, and then be saved. He made one thing of it, and took Jesus to his home and heart. Of course he repented, and believed, and was justified, and was enlightened, and was persuaded, and so was made willing to be saved, and was regenerated and adopted and saved. All that and more were implied in his yielding to Jesus. I think if he had taken time to analyze what being a christian is, and what being saved is, he would not have been a christian and saved that day. Indeed it is a great chance if he ever would have been saved. But he did not do that. He took Jesus as He offered Himself to him. And He knew what he was doing, not very fully perhaps, but he knew it sufficiently. He knew what it meant to take Jesus home with him. He knew it meant reparation for past wrong so far as he was able, and a new life of love and faith. He had it all ciphered out in his head how much it was going to cost him to be a christian, and it was going to cost him quite a sum, but cost what it would, he was resolved to make the sacrifice.

There are men in our churches to-day, men not devoid of intelligence, nor wanting in common sense, and they have been sitting there all their lives trying to make up their minds whether to be christians or not. They have been trying to find out what this being a christian is, what it is to repent and believe, to be regenerated and justified, to be saved and glorified. Perhaps they have been trying to find out how cheaply they can repent, how much they can save or make by the transaction. They are afraid it is going to cost too much to be a christian. This and that and the other difficulty comes up, and there they are yet, as far from salvation as they were years and years ago.

Now, my hearer, if you want to know all about what it is to be a christian before you are one, and what it is to be saved before you are saved, I do not hesitate to say that it is going to be a long story, and there is no hope of your being saved to-day, nor for the next ten years, if ever. But if, like Zacchaeus, you will take Jesus as He offers Himself to you to-day, take Him home to you, take Him into your business, make your business such that Jesus can be with you in it, take Him all through life with you and do the best you can; then, you can be a christian to-day, you can be saved before I get through with this sermon.

And that is what men have to do. You cannot know what it is to be a christian till you are one, and what it is to be saved till you are saved. Indeed, we will not find out what it is to be saved, till we are in Heaven. You have to take a thousand things for granted. You have to do that in other things. You cannot take time to analyze the food you eat, find out what it is made of, and how it is made, and how it is going to feed you, before you eat it. Why, you would die of hunger in the meantime. But men are not such arrant fools. The rich juicy sirloin and the smoking plum-pudding make their mouths water as soon as they see them, and they know intuitively, instinctively, that they are good. I think they would know that even though they had never seen them before. And when Jesus comes to us in the gospel, and offers Himself to us to be ours, we know, we ought to know, He is good, and we ought there and then to accept Him; and, accepting Him is salvation.

I do not suppose Zacchaeus had any idea of being a christian when he ran across the fields and climbed the sycamore tree to have a look at Jesus as He passed. Perhaps he was unspcakably sad sometimes, and may have wished a thousand times that he was out of the publican business, and that he was a christian. But we have no reason to believe, that, when he started out of his house that morning, to go to his office, he thought anything about Jesus, and the gospel He preached, and the salvation He offered to the sinful and wretched. Not until Jesus said to him, "Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down, for today I must abide at thy house;"—not until he heard that, did he think seriously

about it, and then it was all done as in a moment.

So with you today, my hearer. You may have come here without thinking much about the salvation of your soul. Many a time, I have no doubt, you have thought about it. Many a time your heart has ached within you, when you thought how life was going with you, and your peace not made with God, and your soul not saved. Many a time you have resolved to turn over in your way of it a new leaf, and live better. But you are here today still unsaved, and not much concerned about it. Nevertheless Jesus says to you: "Make haste and come down from that careless state of yours, that unbelief, that foolish pride and prejudice, for today I must abide at thy house, today I want a home in thy heart, today I want to go home with thee, and save thee and thine."

Something like that is Christ's word to you today as you sit there in your careless ease and unconcern. It is not perplexing questions He puts to you, problems difficult to solve, doctrines hard to believe, mysteries profound, truths vast and awful. But he wants to know what you think of Him, and whether you will take Him for what He is. What, then, is your answer going to be? Is it going to be that of Zacchaeus, a glad acceptance, a ready whole-hearted compliance, a coming down at once and closing with His offer? Or, is it going to be again what it has been so often before, a wretched put-off, a trifling with duty, a fooling with destiny, a mad reckless risking of all that is grand and good and glorious forever?

Do I hear you saying? "I am not just ready to be saved this morning. I did not think of it before. I must have time to make up my mind. It is not well to rush in a matter of this kind. It is so serious to make a mistake, and I do not want to make the mistakes that others make. No, not today, Lord; it is not convenient. Some other day, next week, after the Christmas and New Year holidays, but not now."

Just think of Zacchaeus talking that way. But he did not. He came down without a moment's hesitation, and that day he was saved. He found nothing in the nature of salvation or its conditions to require the least delay, and no man who is really in earnest about it finds anything to delay his being saved an hour.

Again, I remark, that not only is there nothing in the nature or conditions of salvation requiring delay, but the best time to be saved, and the only time we have promised us to be saved in, is to-day.

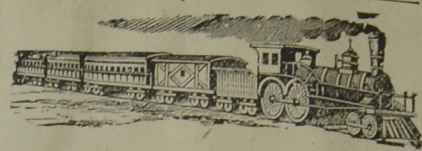
Salvation today—You think that so sudden, so abrupt, so sharp on time. And it is an eternity matter. But really today is just the time to be saved. It is God's time to save. "Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your heart." "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

Every command bearing on the subject, and every promise made, are conditioned by the present moment. Grammatically they are made in the present tense. Being saved is an act of faith, and an act is necessarily sudden, abrupt, momentary. A work requires time, and salvation is a work as well as an act. "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling." It is a life-long work. But the essential part of salvation, the acceptance of Jesus, is an act, an act of faith, and that act has to be done, must be done, if ever done, in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye. You cannot take a week to do it; you must do it when you do it in a moment. It is saying, "Yes!" with your soul. There must be a sudden break with the world, an abrupt turn-off to the right, a leap for life. Think about it as long as you like, and delay in hopes that it may come to be easier, when you come to the point and act, there has to be a break, a sudden reckless plunge for life into the outstretched arms of the merciful Christ.

Some of you perhaps have been waiting in your way of it years and years to be christians. You hoped it would come to be easier. But is it easier? Are you nearer the Kingdom than you were, nearer Christ, nearer being Christians? No. And moreover your delaying will never make it easier, and will never bring you any nearer. That is not the way of being saved at all, and you never will be saved till you take God's way. God's way is a leap for life, a sudden break with the world once and forever, an earnest close with the offers of mercy, a taking of Christ at once. You must come to that at last, if you would be saved, and the sooner you come to it the better.

How sudden it was with Zacchaeus? Not much time to think. No time for trifling. No time to delay. It was now or never with him. It had to be salvation that day or not at all. Jesus was on His way to the cross. He was passing that way for the last time. He had passed it before often and often perhaps, and Zacchaeus may have had opportunities before of seeing Him, and hearing Him, and believing in Him. I do not know whether or not. But now it is the last chance, and he is on hand to receive the invitation, and Jesus is there

Continued on third page.



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12.00 M.—For Fredericton Junction St. John and points east.

3.15 P. M.—For Fredericton Junction, St. John and points East.

ARRIVE AT FREDERICTON

9.25 A. M.—From Fredericton Junction St. John and all points East.

2.30 P. M.—From Fredericton Junction, Vanceboro, Bangor, Portland Boston, and points West. St. John St. Andrew's, St. Stephen, Houlton, Woodstock.

7.15 P. M.—Express from St. John, and intermediate points, St. Stephen, Houlton Woodstock and points north.

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8.00 A. M. Mixed for Woodstock, and points north.

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