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Our Pulpit.

Christian Hope.

SERMON PREACHED BY

REV. A. J. MOWATT.

In St. Paul's Church, Fredericton,

"And every man this hope that hath in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure."—1 JOHN III. 3.

I am to speak to you this morning of christian Hope. And a sweet theme it is. May the Spirit of the Lord inspire me in what I have to say to you on this sweet theme, so that you may hope better, hope with the christian's hope!

You all know what hope is, for you all hope. Hope has to do with the future. Just as by memory you look back over the years of the past, and keep fast hold upon whatever is precious there, and what would otherwise soon be lost to you; so by hope you look forward to the years to come, the distant future, and enjoy the good that is to be long before it is. Hope is thus one of the most wonderful endowments of the human mind, and one that almost more than any other contributes to men's joy and help.

You see the working of hope everywhere, and you cannot but note what a precious boon it is to men. Like all good things it may be abused, and it is abused. Men hope for things unworthy of them, or they are wildly extravagant in their hopes, ambitious, silly, and so of course their hope is disappointing, not helpful but hurtful. Still, perhaps hope is less abused than almost any other of our desires. Appetite gorges itself. Passion and lust and greed riot in their debasement. Desire grasps and grasps, and is never satisfied. But hope lifts up even the sordid soul, and points to higher and purer pleasures.

The farmer hopes, and because he hopes he sows. He sees afar off waving wheat-fields, bursting bins, overflowing cellars, and so he sows with a liberal hand.

The man of business hopes, and because he hopes he launches out on some new business speculation, and invests largely. He flings himself into it, and does with all the might he has. He sees, or thinks he sees, far on before him, a golden pile, and he is not always mistaken.

The honest poor man has his hopes too, and he has a right to them. No man is so poor that he cannot hope, and hope to some purpose too. He grips hard with want, and though hurled to the ground again and again, he gets up, and renews the struggle, and by and by, because he hopes, he comes off more than a conqueror.

Around you clamors for bread a growing family, and the toil of doing for them, bearing with them, training them for the future of their career, providing for their numerous wants, is almost too much for you. Your burden crushes, frets, makes you care-worn, old before your time. Still you hope; you hope for the lingering day to come when they will be a help and comfort to you instead of a burden, and so, because you thus hope, you toil on, and bear on, through the weary years, and you get through, and not so ill perhaps.

Some of you are in affliction to-day, bowed down and broken with grief. You walk perhaps where graves open at your feet. You grope your way where the shadows of death lie around your soul. Dear ones, once so great a joy to you, and whose presence meant so much to you, are not now with you, and you feel as if there is no sorrow like your sorrow. And yet, there is a ray of hope still left to pierce your awful darkness, and so you hope, and because you hope, life is endurable, and it may come to be enjoyable.

Thus, my hearer, what a boon to men is hope, the ordinary hope we have as men, the commonplace hope that glints in dull earthly hearts.

But there is a better hope, christian hope, the hope that looks high up into the face of God's Blessed Son, and hopes because He is true. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in Him, purifieth himself, even as He is pure."

Now, we have here, first, the nature of christian hope. It is hope in Him, hope in Jesus. It thus differs from ordinary hope in its object mainly, but because it differs in that, it differs essentially, it differs in everything, as we shall see.

The men of the world hope. They look forward across the years, and they say sometimes: "I shall yet be rich. I shall yet occupy yonder commanding position. I shall yet have power and reign among men. I am not going to stay down here in this narrow hedged-up sphere, cramped and crushed, hindered and held. I am going to push my way in the world, and be something more than I am."

And as they thus speak, a glow comes into their face, their eye flashes fire, their bosom swells with pent-up emo-

tion. But why do they thus hope? what is the ground of their hope? Ah? it is the strength of their own right hand perhaps, their power to do, their own ability to rise and reign. But such a ground of hope is not a sure ground of hope. Their right hand that they hope so much from, may be weakened by disease, or paralyzed by death, long before the thing they hope for is theirs to enjoy.

Men hope in men, and so much sometimes, too much. They hope in their friends, their rulers, their counsellors. They hope in a great general, a wise King, a powerful political leader—so hope in him, that it depends upon him, whether it is to be for them glory or despair. The hope of a nation, the future of a great people, the interests of unborn millions, are sometimes centered in one man. According as he shall say and act, so it will be, whether the nation is to stride onward to national greatness, or be thrust back to centuries of dishonor.

What hopes there were in Gladstone the other day. It was felt that he was the one man in the wide Empire to say the wise thing, and do the thing that was needing to be done, the best thing, the right thing. But the grand old man was not able to do all that men hoped. And now the political hopes of the people are in another. But that other will not be able to do all they hope. There are men who, filled with the Spirit of God, in the great crises that come to peoples and nations, are able to do all but miracles. They do all that men can do, and almost more. They fight their country's battles, make her laws, work out her reforms, build her up to be a power in the world. Still, just because they are able to do so much, men hope in them more than they ought to, and there is disappointment.

But there is one man, the Christ of God, you cannot hope in too much. To hope in Him is to have christian hope. He came down from Heaven to men, and He told them that He had come to save the world, to build up its ruins, to teach the nations peace and love, to work out the good to be that all the ages had been dreaming of and hoping for. Men looked at Him, so helpless like, no crown on His head, no army at His back, no wealth, no influence, a poor young man from an obscure Galilean village, and they wondered at His claims and aims, and had their doubts. But He went to work, and showed them what He could do. He preached sermons, uttered words that took a deep hold of men's hearts and did them good, woke up in them new ideas of life and destiny; and, some believed in Him, and followed Him, and hoped in Him. And so the work began, and grew. That was centuries ago. And it has been growing ever since, and He is now the hope of millions. No longer is He on the earth as once. No longer does He go about as once, helping the wretched, blessing the poor, saving sinners. He has passed within the veil separating the seen from the awful unseen; He dwells in the glory unapproachable, inaccessible. Still, He is. Men know He is. His people are sure He is, and that He is as much to them there as He could be here. They have faith in His power; they believe His word, and they have His word; they trust His love, and they hope in the ultimate triumph of His cross.

The world to-day is very far from being all it should be, all perhaps it was hoped it would be by this time, and men are not slow to say, the gospel has been a tremendous failure, the Christ has not fulfilled the expectations He led men to form with regard to what He would do for them and the world. And if He has failed in the past, is that not a ground to believe that He will fail in the future, that the whole fabric of the christian faith will some day collapse like many another glorious bubble? Thus, men, who have no faith in Christ, who have nothing to hope from Him, reason, and trouble weak trembling souls.

Now, I freely grant, that christians in the past have had hopes that have not been fulfilled, and have dreamed dreams as to the future glory of the christian church that have not thus far been realized. Often and often has the millenium been fixed when it was to be, the year, the day, but the time has come and gone, and the millenium is not yet, and more than that, it may never be as men have been dreaming of. Not likely indeed. But while granting that mistakes have been made in the past, groundless expectations cherished, as to what the gospel was to do for the world, and no doubt there will be such false hopes in the future as in the past; still, it is not true, that the gospel has been a failure, or is going to be a failure. Look everywhere, and he is blind indeed who cannot see the triumphs of the cross, the blessed effects for good in the world of the gospel. All we see in the shape of material progress, our civilization, our liberties, our educational advantages, our institutions of light and love, we owe in a very important sense to the gospel. The gospel a failure! No; it has been a grand success. If it goes on

doing for the world for another thousand years as it has been during the past, and we have every reason to believe that it will do better, what a blessed world it must be! Every nation will be christianized, every island evangelized, every city a holy city, the world Christ's.

But the hope the text speaks of is the hope the christian has with regard to his own future. Here you are, O christian, and you know that in a few years you will not be here. The house you call yours to-day, and the few acres or few feet you call yours, will not be yours any longer. The business you devote yourself to with all the might you have will pass into other hands. The money you have been gathering and hoarding through busy years will be some one else's. The place, the position, that knows you now will know you no more forever. But you look up to the unseen Jesus, and you say, with a light in your face: "My hope is in Him, and all that does not trouble me, for I know He will do for me as I cannot do for myself, nor the world can do for me, even when it does the best it can. I have my dreams and desires as to what the Heaven is He is bringing me to, but I cannot know now just what it is to be. This I do know, however, it will be good enough for me, for it will be with Him, and what is good enough for Him, ought to be good enough for me, too good. It will be better than I can know, better than I can dream of, better than I can hope, for I read here, that 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man the things He hath prepared for them that love Him;' and this also: 'Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.'"

Thus, christian hope is hope in Jesus. It is to be with Him and like Him, and how much there is in that. To be with Jesus—what a privilege! To be like Jesus—what a glory! The christian's hope is a glorious hope, for it is Christ. Again, The reflex influence of the christian's hope upon his present life, his character, his plans and aims, his ways and works. It purifies him. "And every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself."

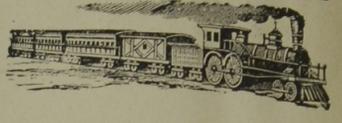
The effect of hope is always of an elevating character. Let us suppose that you have the hope that you will one day fill a high position in the world, a place of power and rank, a ruler's seat, one of the most responsible and honorable official positions within your reach. You have that hope. It possesses you. It is no mere passing fancy with you, an airy vision; it is a strong lasting hope. It has taken hold of you, and abides with you, and seems to grow upon you. As a result of such a life, you prepare for its realization. You qualify yourself as you can for the place you hope to fill, so that when it comes, you will know what to do. Thus, though you are when you begin to hope a poor nobody, a mere hewer of wood, under the elevating and purifying influence of your hope, you grow to be fit for the position you hoped to occupy, and sure enough you get to it at last, and when you do get to it you are found to be grandly worthy of it. And why? simply because you hoped.

A poor ragged boy out in the country toiling day by day for bread, stops sometimes as he toils, and dreams and hopes. He wants to be something else than what he is, but he knows not as yet what. He feels he cannot live out his life in this poor hard hand-to-mouth way. So he hopes and dreams, and as he hopes and dreams, his hopes and dreams seem to take shape. A hope that he can be something, like a seed, finds a lodgment in his boy-brain, and it begins to grow. When he comes home in the evening from his toil, he lies down with his head to the fire, and in the flickering fire-light, he reads, or on the hearthstone he works out Euclid's problems. And so this goes on till the boy-student is ready for college, and where there is a will there is always a way, a roundabout way perhaps, but still a way. By and by he graduates, and the way opens up before him, till he stands high up, a king among men, a power for good among the people. It was hope that made him what he is.

And, my hearer, who cannot hope? It requires no capital to hope. It requires no schooling to hope. It requires no special advantages of any kind. And yet, the man who can hope to some purpose can make himself a career, can hew out for himself a destiny. You can hope, my brother, you can at least hope, for nothing is easier, and yet, if you can hope, you can do anything.

But it is when we come to christian hope where we see its grandest reflex influence on life and character at work.

Here is a man, so poor, his circumstances hard in the extreme, his lot one of toil and hardship and suffering, nothing to live for that you would call worth living for, and yet that poor man has in his bosom a hope that pierces the azure, and rests not till it rests in Him who is the hope and help of the ages, and because he has that blessed hope, he rises above his straitened circumstances, he shakes himself from the dust, and sings



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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, Vanchooro, Bangor, Portland, Boston, and points West, St. John St. Andrew's, St. Stephen, Houlton, Woodstock.

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