

Seven Scenes from the Last Week of Christ's Life.

Scene I. A home in the little town of Bethany, two miles east of Jerusalem—the home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus. A supper table spread for a feast, and, reclining around it the guests—the twelve disciples, the most important people of the village, Lazarus, whom Christ had raised from the dead, and Christ himself, traveling toward Jerusalem, but resting with friends on the way.

Martha, serving as ever. Mary, as on another occasion, at Jesus' feet; on her heart the shadow of the awful cross, whose weight must fall upon the shoulders of him whose sympathy had been her solace in the dark hour of death, whose boundless love had comforted her and hers in many bygone times and through whose gentle teachings she had learned the lessons of Life. She is pouring upon his feet the ointment, whose perfume must speak of the gratitude she cannot express. Judas looking on, to whose greedy eyes the costly spikenard appears as but the number of bright gold pieces paid as its price.

"Why this waste?" cries the betrayer of Christ, his hand upon the money bags.

"This might have been sold for much and given to the poor." And the disciples remembering the crowd that had but lately pressed them on all sides—poor, wretched, hungry—echo the cry, "Why this waste?" while before their hidden eyes is the gift of God for all time to the poor of this world, through whose poverty only might sinners become rich; and beside him Mary, a representative of those loving hearts from whom alone the poor need such help—her ointment in her hand, the hairs of her head as a towel to wipe the feet of him who loved the world so much as to die for it, and in her heart something of his own divine affection. "The anointing of Jesus at Bethany."

Scene II. Traveling toward Jerusalem a royal procession. In the midst rides the King, with the garments of his followers as saddle cloths.

A stream of people coming from Jerusalem meets another stream of people on the way from Bethany. The one turns, the other advances, and all help to swell the great procession marching toward the city of David, the city of the king, the city of the holy temple of God.

And ever as they advance their shouts are raised heavenward, telling of the coming of the Messiah.

In that procession are the haughty scribes and rulers, the Greek traders, the common people, the outcast, the maimed, the lame, the blind, the halt whom Christ had healed; his disciples, his secret disciples, the curious, the chance traveler and the many just and devout attendants of the feast of the Passover.

The crowd surges and swells; those in advance cut and strew palm branches in the way. And now a turn in the quiet country road brings Jerusalem before them in all its grandeur, rising by terraces heavenward; the glittering white marble of Herod's colonnade running for a thousand feet along the platform and rising two hundred feet; the gorgeous golden gate—but, gleaming above all, the magnificent gilt and marble of Herod's temple.

Within the city, those whose doom is sealed; who, having rejected their only Saviour, must pay the penalty. And Christ beholding the city, weeps, while the excited and unheeding multitude are crying, "Hosanna, Hosanna," and the angels of God, the invisible part of the procession, look down as the King, the lowly Nazarene, the Man of Sorrows, and his strange cortege, according to the prophecy of past ages, enter the gates of the city.

"Jesus triumphal entry into Jerusalem."

Scene III. Thursday, in the temple at Jerusalem. The last day of the Passover, the last day of Christ's public teaching on earth, in which his coming sufferings in abeyance to the great need of mankind, he uses his whole energy in the effort to compel men to see in him the promised Messiah.

On the morning walk from Bethany with the disciples he had pointed out the doom of all unfruitful workers, in the fate of the condemned fig tree; and they, beholding the withered leaves, childishly marvel at his power.

And again he told them of mountains being removed and the means by which it is accomplished; for have they not mountains to remove, this little band of twelve unlearned men, who without money must make their way in the world, without armies must conquer Rome, and without rank must contend with wealth, pride, customs and prejudice, and must commence the work of Christianizing the world?

Then, entering the temple, Christ teaches for the last time. Happy they, who, curiously and carelessly entering the temple at Jerusalem on that Tuesday forenoon, carry away with them the words of eternal life.

Standing at the door are the Greeks who are come seeking Jesus—perhaps curiously, perhaps with ambitious plans for a place in the new kingdom soon to be established, perhaps with invitations to turn from the unfriendly Jews to their own people; but, seeking him for what reason they may, they find him.

Standing before them is the new king and surely he is speaking of the coming kingdom, for he says, answering their thoughts, "the hour is coming"—but "the hour" he tells them is the hour of his death.

This the King who but yesterday marched in royal splendor into the royal city; this the lowly son of man who in speaking of his shameful death, shrinks from the agony before him; yet stands, nevertheless, resolute and obedient to the Father in heaven.

"Father glorify thy name" he cries, and the assuring voice of the Father answers him.

The multitude listens in wonder. "It thunders," say some. Others think an angel has spoken. But, standing there what think the Greeks, and what think they of the King?

"Greeks seeking Jesus."

Scene IV. On the way from Jerusalem to Bethany, Jesus and the disciples are traveling; Christ's public teaching done.

And now to the disciples He speaks of the Kingdom of Heaven, likening it to ten virgins. During the years to come they will meet as Christ has met, those who, through the Gospel shall become wise in their preparation for the bride-groom's coming; and also, they must sorrow, though not as he, the sinner's sacrifice, has sorrowed over those who can by no means be made other than foolish,—who will eternally neglect the all-important oil in their lamps.

Yet to all classes must the Gospel be preached, and they the preachers must watch; not knowing when to themselves or to others the bride-groom may come; but knowing with all certainty that the door standing now so freely open will at some time be closed forever; shutting in to the feast and the joy thereof, those who are wise; while to the foolish it must stand forever barred.

With these thoughts the disciples are traveling to Bethany; and on their hearts rests the solemnity of Christ's teaching, of the great untried future and of the closed door.

"Parable of the ten virgins."

Scene V. An upper room in Jerusalem—upon the table the paschal lamb, the wine and bitter herbs for the last meal of the Passover and there, ready to partake, Christ and the disciples. But the dusty and travel-stained feet of the company must first be washed and who shall do it? Not the disciples, any of whom may soon be called to important duties in the new kingdom and who are even now disputing as to who shall be the greatest in that kingdom; and so Christ must wash their feet. And then while they are quietly eating the Passover Christ startles them all. "One of you," he says, "shall betray me." Betray him the beloved Master who was so soon to leave them, their Saviour and helper and dearest friend on earth! And yet Christ speaks and it must be so. And they begin to question "Is it I?"

All sin in the heart of each of them stands forth clearly to their vision, and doubting themselves they fear. Peter so impulsive and quick to err trembles at the words; and the others, sincere, loving though faulty hearts, with no such intentional blackness of sin, are afraid. Even John, leaning on Jesus' bosom, must ask "Is it I?" But it is Judas, the black-hearted son of perdition who will do the deed, who, holding in one hand the life of the Saviour and in the other the thirty pieces of silver, has compared the two and finds the silver of greater value, and who even now must needs hasten away to finish his work.

And now the Lord's Supper—the last supper—the last time Christ as the Son of Man will enjoy social intercourse with his friends; and the cross is very near and sorrow is very heavy in the hearts of the disciples, even as Christ himself is exceeding sorrowful.

All the journeyings to and fro, the doing of good together, the teaching and receiving of instruction, the wondrous miracles of mercy—at an end. The Brother and more than Friend is to leave them alone.

They understand vaguely something of what his shameful death must be; and he has told them that they are to carry on the work in his stead—the great work which as yet they hardly comprehend.

No heart can understand the feelings of these personal friends of Jesus at this time, nor finite mind enter into the infinite sorrow of the divine Son of God while for a moment they linger, Christ and the disciples—the past with its mixture of joys and sorrows behind, and before them the blackness of suffering and death.

"The Lord's Supper."

Scene VI. The garden of Gethsemane, the midnight hour.

Silence, except for the rustling of the leaves of the trees. The disciples asleep, for they are weary. The Father and the holy angels watching from above. The Saviour alone with his agony; and in the distance Judas and the soldiers coming to take him away.

"Jesus in Gethsemane."

Scene VII. Calvary, the cross, Christ. The shameful trials and the journey along the unutterably weary road are past. They have brought him here to die.

Through the gentle hands which never did aught but good to man, they have driven the nails, and into the feet that never failed in their weary journeyings for the welfare of man.

He came from heaven the Son of God to show the world the way unto life and happiness, and men mistook him for a malefactor and are putting him to death; while in his agony he pleads for the Father's forgiveness for them.

Around the cross his mother—the sorrow of whose heart no human being may know—the disciple whom he loved and other friends, all powerless to help him. Unbelievers mocking him as they pass. No help on earth and deserted by heaven; for the Saviour of the world, if he would be such, must suffer and conquer unaided; while heaven waits and the destiny of the world hangs in the balance, and the long hours of darkness and silence move so slowly. But the afternoon of that great day as of all other days must wane; and now at the ninth hour, the expiring cry of the Son of Man becomes the shout of victory of the ages. "It is finished."

In the temple at Jerusalem the veil is rent; and forever the veil of the unknown between heaven and earth is rent in twain, and through eternity must be continued the song of victory begun by the Saviour on Calvary, "Christ Crucified."

ALICE M. SLOCOMB.

True Contentment.

The things to be desired for man in a healthy state, are that he should not see dreams, but realities; that he should not destroy life, but save it; and that he should be not rich, but content. . . . The most helpful and sacred work, therefore, which can at present be done for humanity, is to teach people (chiefly by example, as all best teaching must be done) not how "to better them-

selves," but how to "satisfy themselves." It is the curse of every evil nation and evil creature to eat and not be satisfied. The words of blessing are, that they shall eat and be satisfied. And as there is only one kind of water which quenches all thirst, so there is only one kind of bread which satisfies all hunger, the bread of justice or righteousness; which hungering after, men shall always be filled, that being the bread of heaven; but hungering after the bread, or wages, of unrighteousness, shall not be filled, that being the bread of Sodom.

And, in order to teach men how to be satisfied, it is necessary fully to understand the art and joy of humble life—this, at present, of all arts and sciences being the one most needing study. Humble life—that is to say, proposing to itself no future exaltation, but only a sweet continuance; not excluding the idea of fore-sight, but wholly of fore-sorrow, and taking no troublous thought for coming days: so, also, not excluding the idea of providence or provision, but wholly of accumulation—the life of domestic affection and domestic peace, full of sensitiveness to all elements of costless and kind pleasure—therefore, chiefly to the loveliness of the natural world.—Ruskin.

The Presence of God.

The reason that preaching is so commonly ineffectual is, that it calls on men oftener to work for God, than to behold God working for them. In every rebuke that we utter of men's vices, we put forth a claim upon their hearts. If for every assertion of God's demands from them, we could substitute a display of his kindness to them; if, side by side with every warning of death, we could exhibit proofs and promises of immortality; if, in fine, instead of assuming the being of an awful Deity, which men, though they cannot and dare not deny are always unwilling, sometimes unable, to conceive, we were to show them a near, visible, inevitable, but all-beneficent Deity, whose presence makes the earth itself a heaven, I think there would be fewer deaf children sitting in the market-place. At all events, whatever may be the inability in this present life to mingle the full enjoyment of the divine works with the full discharge of every practical duty, and confessedly in many cases this must be, let us not attribute the inconsistency to any indignity of the faculty of contemplation, but to the sin and the suffering of the fallen state, and the change of order from the keeping of the garden to the tilling of the ground. We cannot say how far it is right or agreeable with God's will, while men are perishing round about us, while grief and pain and wrath and impiety and death, and all the powers of the air, are working wildly and evermore, and the cry of blood going up to heaven, that any of us should take hand from the plough; but this we know, that there will come a time when the service of God shall be the beholding of him; and though in many stormy seas, where we are now driven up and down, His Spirit is dimly seen on the face of the waters, and we are left to cast anchors out of the stern, and wish for the day, that day will come, when, with the evangelists on the crystal and stable sea, all the creatures of God shall be full of eyes within, and there shall be "no more curse, but his servants shall serve him, and shall see his face."—Selected.

Some of God's richest gifts to us are in return for our choicest gifts to him, yielded at his call. God never asks us to surrender to him what is as our very life, or even yet more precious; but he is ready to give us, as we make the surrender, added life and richer returns than we can imagine or deem a possibility. He may even in return give us more of his very self. Thus it is that giving at God's call is receiving from God more than is given, though our gift be unspeakably precious. In view of this truth, when a new call comes to you from God, "Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." Such giving includes our best, our uttermost.

"Therefore bear thou, and query not,
Therefore dare thou, and fear thee not;
And though thy heart break, still the Lord
Shall be thy thousand-fold reward."

—Sunday School Times.

I Shall be Satisfied.

BY EMMA THARP HALE.

Looking back over this earth life,
At rest on the other side,
How small will seem this brief strife—
I shall be satisfied.

All of life's cares will be banished,
No evil will ever betide,
Sorrow and sin will have vanished,
I shall be satisfied.

No more of weakness and sorrow,
All of my tears will be dried,
Oh, what a blissful to-morrow—
I shall be satisfied.

Breaking away every fetter,
Casting each burden aside,
Leaving this life for a better—
I shall be satisfied.

There in his likeness forever
Lost in his love deep and wide,
Yielding the spirit life never,
I shall be satisfied.