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### Our Pulpit.

**Duty to Our Unfortunates**

SERMON PREACHED BY

**REV. A. J. MOWATT.**

In St. Paul's Church, Fredericton, June 10th.

"Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.—LUKE X. 36, 37.

A lawyer, who, it would appear, was better at asking questions and suggesting difficulties than he was at doing his own religious duties, had put to our Lord this grandest of all questions: 'Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He did not put the question because he felt his need of light for himself; he put it rather as a test question. As for himself he knew all about it, or thought he knew all about it, but he wanted to find out what Jesus knew about it. Jesus did not answer him directly, but answered him by asking him back as to what the law said: 'What is written in the law? How readest thou? You see He began with the man of law on his own ground, and where he was perfectly at home. He plumed himself, I imagine in his law knowledge, and he answered promptly and correctly: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself.' Jesus told him he had given the right answer, and then said: 'This do, and thou shalt live.'

In a moment, however, the shrewd lawyer saw he had come out only second best in this tilt with Jesus. He had asked the question with a view to catch Jesus—catch Him in His orthodoxy, expose His ignorance, or get some hold against Him; and he had not only caught Jesus, but had himself been caught rather. This led him to make another attempt to gain his purpose, and so he abruptly asked: 'And who is my neighbor?'

The Pharisees, and the lawyer would belong to the sect, had some fine-spun theories on the question, 'Who is my neighbor? They made out that their neighbor could not be a Gentile, nor a foreigner, nor indeed anybody but the one or two or three they were pleased to regard as such. The truth was, with their false assumptions and nice distinctions, they, to a very large extent, abused and perverted all true benevolence, and became utterly selfish. And the lawyer had been taking refuge, as men are so sure to do, for his own neglect of benevolence, in those subtle questions of the Pharisees with regard to the neighbor. 'Who is my neighbor,' he asks with something like a challenge, 'that I am to love as myself?'

This led Jesus to narrate the touching illustrative story or parable of the good Samaritan. The scene is laid on the road between Jerusalem and Jericho, a much-travelled road, but one then, as now, infested with robbers. One part of the road is called the Path of Blood, because so many deeds of violence had been done there. It was not at all uncommon to find a murdered or half-murdered traveller lying on the road.

You see yonder the poor unfortunate wretch lie in the Bloody Pass! He is in a sad case, dreadfully wounded, left for dead, I suppose, for dead men tell no tales. But those gaping wounds are mouths crying out to Heaven for vengeance, and pleading mutely for mercy, and they will not plead in vain. Presently a priest comes riding along down from Jerusalem where he has been at tending to his official duties in the temple, and when his eyes behold the poor wretch lying just where he was struck down, he reins his ass over to the other side of the road, as far over as he can get. He does not dismount to find out whether the man is dead or alive, and if alive, in what way and how far he can minister to his relief. No. 'He murmurs to himself as he passes perhaps: How shocking! The sight of blood I cannot bear; it makes me sick. Why doesn't he crawl off into the bushes out of sight? He might have frightened my spirited animal, and caused it to run off with me, and it might have thrown me and broken my neck, and what a loss that would have been to the church! Why doesn't the government, or somebody, look after that poor mangled fellow? What a sermon I will preach about it the next time I am to occupy the temple pulpit! Such are his reflections as he rides away.

The next to come along is a Levite. He is another temple official, but not so high up as the priest. He is mounted too. Almost everybody of any consequence rides. When he comes to where the poor man lies, he dismounts and draws near to where he is, and tells him how sorry he is to find him in such a sad case. He speaks tenderly, and asks him if he is badly hurt, and hopes he will recover. The man takes no notice, for he is too weak from loss of blood and neglect and exposure to take any notice. And so after a while the tender-hearted Levite, lamenting his inability to do anything, remounts his beast, and rides on leaving the poor man as he found him.

And this man is their brother. He has Abraham's blood in his veins. He kneels at the same altar, holds to the same creed, worships the same God. Now, I ask, what sort of neighborliness do you call that or brotherliness, if you like that better? Is not their treatment almost as cruel as that of the highway-men? Neglect, you know, will kill men as thoroughly, although not quite as fast perhaps, as bludgeons. The bandits with their bludgeons half killed the man, and the priest and Levite with their neglect come along and want to do the other half.

But something better than to die on the road through cruelty and neglect is in store for the poor wretch. The good Samaritan comes along on his way down to Jericho on business. He is neither priest nor Levite, he is a layman. The priest and Levite would call him a heathen, because he worships at Gerizim, and not at Jerusalem, and with a toss of the head and a haughty look they would say: 'Keep off from us, for we are holier than thou.' And yet, that so-called heathen has a kindness of soul—I should say rather, a Christliness, that they did not have. When he comes to the place where the unfortunate man is lying on the road, he at once dismounts, and, tying his ass, he bends over him with tears in his eyes and pity in his look, and is shocked to see him in so wretched a plight. He finds that there is still life in him, but his wounds are deep and ugly, and he is not sure that he can recover. But he has nothing to do with that. It is his, to do the best he can, and leave results with God. He is not of his church, nor of his nationality. He is a hated and hateful Jew, who, if he had his tongue, and was strong and well enough to do it, would call him dog perhaps, spit in his face, and refuse to let his heathen hands touch him; but alas! the poor fellow is too weak and far gone to know or care what is being done for him, and who is doing it. The good Samaritan knows very well that he is doing a thankless task, and has a non-paying job on his hands, but at least he is a brother-man, and he will do all he can for him. So he does more than the priest, who, although the man was one of his own flock, kept over on the other side of the road, and passed on; and more than the Levite, who came and looked on him as he lay, and wept over him, and was very sympathetic and all that, but who, after a while, went away without doing, or trying to do, anything to relieve him.

The Samaritan is not satisfied with shedding a few tears, and saying, 'Oh my! He goes to his saddle-bags, and gets some wine out of one bottle, and some olive oil out of another, and mixes them together, and pours the mixture into the man's wounds. Then he binds them up as well as he can. And then lifting the man in his arms as gently as he can, he sets him aside his ass, and walking by his side he supports him. Perhaps it is five or six miles to the nearest hostelry, and he is in a hurry, and finds it exhausting to walk so far, still he will not leave him. And when he comes to the hostelry, he is not satisfied with what he has done. He spends the night with him, watching at his bedside, and ministering to his relief, and comfort with the tenderness of a nurse. And then next morning, when it is necessary for him to proceed on his journey, he pays out of his own pocket for his lodging during the night, and in addition he advances money for his proper care-taking till he should return. Thus does the good Samaritan, and the fragrance of his good deed fills the world with its sweetness, and ever since he is the noble representative of all who reach out a helping-hand to the unfortunate and neglected around them.

But what have we to do with all this? Simply this, that on our streets today lies the man that fell among thieves, and we may be the priest passing by on the other side, or the Levite with our useless tears and sympathies, and not the good Samaritan with our

practical christian benevolence. Jesus asked the lawyer, and He asks us to-day: 'Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves? And the lawyer had to admit, and had the good sense to admit: 'He that shewed mercy on him.' And then came home to him with a thrust the application, and it is for us as well as for him: 'Go, and do thou likewise.'

Now first, a word or two as to our unfortunates. Among us are young people from homes in the country who are at school or service, and sometimes in the way of their duty they meet with serious accidents; they fall and all but kill themselves, mangle themselves with their tools while at work, break a limb and do themselves grievous bodily harm. Or, they take a disease, contract a cold, lose their health, and so are laid aside for weeks or months. They may be friendless strangers, with no one to take them in and nurse them well; or, as sometimes happens, the disease may be such that no one cares to take them in. Thus they are in very great danger of being turned out on the street helpless with disease, and left to be uncared for and neglected; or, what is almost as bad, they are so ill cared for that their recovery is retarded, or rendered, impossible. I call such people unfortunates, and we can understand, I think, how they may be ready to perish on our christian streets to-day as well as long ago on the robber-infested road between Jerusalem and Jericho.

And then there is another class of unfortunates. We have among us, I am sorry to say, those who have given themselves up to the beastly habit of intemperance. They have fooled with intoxicants until they are no longer able to control themselves. They have gone on drinking until they are in the hands of a tyranny that is terrible. They have been lured on by those whose interest it is to have them intemperate. And so it comes to pass that in a very real sense they are the man that fell among thieves. Our modern thieves strip the poor wretch of everything—not his clothes and money only, but his respectability, his usefulness, his position, his character, his happiness, his hope for both time and eternity. When they are done with stripping him, they turn him out on the streets, helpless, wounded, to die. And alas! sometimes the poor wretch dies before the help of the good Samaritans among us can reach him, and we have a few of them among us, and as full of generous-heartedness and open handed helpfulness as the Good Samaritan himself.

Such are some of our unfortunates, and those who are so through drink are the most so of all. More are wounded and worse wounded in this way than by any other way, in fact, than by all other ways put together. When you come to inquire into the accidents that befall men, the how and why of their illness and injuries, their break-neck falls, their dangerous cuts and contusions, their poor health, you so often find that their drunkenness is at the back of it all. And still men will drink, and there are those who will traffic in it, and so there are always poor unfortunates who can neither care for themselves nor have they friends to care for them.

Secondly, Our duty to unfortunates. Our Lord teaches us in the parable of the good Samaritan that there are three ways we may act towards them. Like the priest we may pass by on the other side. We may do nothing for them. No charity need come to our door. No want need appeal to us for aid. No hunger need come to our table to be fed. No nakedness need come to us to be clothed. No sorrow need apply to us for sympathy and help. We shut up our bowels of compassion from all need, and neither give nor do to help any cause. We think we have nothing to spare—neither money, nor love. We need all we have for ourselves. That is our way of doing, or not doing rather, for the unfortunates among us, and it is the priest's way modernized—passing by on the other side.

Then there is the Levite's way. He is not quite so hard-hearted and indifferent as to pass by on the other side. He has pity of a kind for the poor unfortunate wretch. He comes near where he lies stripped and wounded, and is profuse in his tears and expressions of sorrow and sympathy. He berates in unmeasured terms those who robbed and all but murdered him. But then he does nothing but weep and commiserate, and there is not much in that to lift a fallen man up or heal a hurt man's wounds.

And yet, just so it is with much of the sympathy of to-day. It rains tears. It has much to say, quotes poetry and

scripture, is very melo-dramatic, faints at the sight of blood, covers its eyes when anything disagreeable presents itself, and finally has to be borne away from the scene of woe in a fit of hysteria. Let anybody fall on the street, and what a rush to the spot there is instantly, and what a gush of sentiment and sympathy, but how little true helpfulness there is in it all for the fallen. When it comes to the lifting up-and-taking care part of the programme, the rushing and gushing people are found to have gone away like the Levite.

But there is still another way, that of the good Samaritan, and that is the only true way. He does not, you see, stand over the half-dead man pitying him, and weeping over him, and saying, 'Oh my! Nor does he get down on his knees, and pray the prayer of faith so-called, and then tell the man in the name of all that is good to rise up and walk. No. He gets some wine and oil, and he mixes them together into a soothing, cleansing, healing lotion, and pours it over and into the wounds. Then he binds them up as well as he can. Some people to-day would do nothing for the poor man but pray. If they anointed with oil at all, it would be ceremonially, or sacramentally, or emblematically, not medicinally, and there are those who would utterly prohibit the use of wine even medicinally. But the Samaritan belonged to the old school with its rugged commonsense practical way of doing things, and our Lord commends him in what he does. Then he follows up what he had done with such care as he can get, doing it himself as far as he can, and paying with his own money what he cannot do himself.

Now, it is practical sympathy our unfortunate ones want. They need help—not tears so much, not wordy exhortations, not prayers of faith only, but real hand-and-heart help. We may not be in circumstances, nor may we be called upon, to do as the good Samaritan did, but there are ten-thousand ways we may practically do as well for the unfortunate. It is not always wise nor safe to take off the street some one stricken down there by his own reckless indulgence or by some cruel disease, and bring him home to our family; but it is ours to see to it that he is cared for in some way, and if no door is open to receive him, then ours must be, and we must just take the risk. But practical christianity to-day provides hospitals and asylums for our unfortunates, and it is ours as a privilege to do what the good Samaritan teaches us to do, contribute to the support of such benevolent institutions.

I am glad that we have in our land a lazaretto for our lepers, an Insane asylum, and other benevolent institutions. I am glad, too, that in our own little city, we have an Almshouse, and a Deaf and Dum School, and that in a few days we are to have a hospital. These institutions are modern practical applications of the lessons taught us here by our Lord in the parable of the good Samaritan. To them we send our unfortunates, and they are cared for as we ourselves could not care for them—cared for with skill as well as kindness. We need other such institutions. We need a reformatory for young criminals somewhere, and we need a Home for dipso-maniacs.

The other day I had a brief conversation with one of our own ministers, who spent last winter in New York at College, and who gave much of his time to practical christianity. He visited, with a view to pick up ideas, the reformatories, and missions among the poor and wicked, of that great city, and he told me that the work done, and well done, is enormous. Among other places he had the pleasure of visiting the Home for Drunkards, and Opium-eaters, and such like, and hundreds of men from all parts of the land—doctors, lawyers, and even clergyman, more doctors however than any other profession, come there for treatment, and in a few weeks, or months, as the case may be, return to their homes and professions, not only reformed men, but renewed men, for the institution he visited was a thoroughly christian institution. He was present at the morning hour for worship, and the inmates, some forty men, read, verse about the Bible, and then knelt down to pray. It is in charge of a reformed drunkard, and he is wonderfully successful in winning men from their vices and leading them to the mighty loving helpful Christ. I refer to it, because I hope, that some day, there may be some such institution in our own land for this class of unfortunates. Drunkenness becomes a disease after a while, and needs skillful treatment; and it can be cured, and the unfortunate victim saved, and made a useful citizen, and a happy member of

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