

WHAT IS A SERMON?

Some master-mind gave expression to a wonderful truth when he said: "A sermon is not a manufactured product, but a spiritual creation. It is not a machine which a man can construct in his sermonic shop, and set running in the pulpit like the electric toys which one sees running in the shop window.

"A sermon is an exhalation, a spiritual vapor emerging from the oceanic depths of the preacher's soul, an influence flowing from an interior fountain hidden in the depths of personality, a perfume from spiritual roses blooming in the garden of the heart.

"A sermon is the life-blood of a Christian spirit. A preacher dies in the art of preaching. He lays down his life for his brethren. He saves others; himself he cannot save. The pulpit is a Golgotha in which the preacher gives his life for the life of the world."

No man can do this great work of preaching as God wants it done except he be full of the Holy Ghost and faith. The one absorbing thought of the Holy Ghost preacher is that his sermon will meet the expectation of the God who sent him to preach the Word and meet the desired need.

Might not the following selected hints on preaching help to make all of our sermons more effective?

"Make no apologies. If you have the Lord's message, declare it; if not, hold your peace. Have short prefaces and introductions. Say your best things first, and stop before you get prosy.

"Leave self out of the pulpit, and take Jesus in. Defend the Gospel and let the Lord defend you and your character.

"Do not get excited too soon. Do not run away from your hearers. Engine drive-wheels whirl fast on icy tracks, but when they draw anything they go slower. It takes a cold hammer to bend hot iron. Heat up the people, but keep your hammer wet and cool. Do not bawl and scream. Too much water stops mill-wheels, and too much noise drowns sense. Empty vessels ring the loudest. Powder is not shot. Thunder is harmless. Lightning kills. If you have lightning, you can afford to thunder.

"An ounce bullet will kill quicker than a sack of wool. If your talk is narrow and shallow, do make it short. If it is deep and strong, the stream may run longer. Do not think every brook is deep because you cannot see the bottom of it, nor call a man a deep diver because he always brings up mud.

"Do not scold the people. Do not abuse the people who come to meeting rainy days because others are too lazy to attend. Preach the best to the smallest assemblies. Jesus preached to one woman at the well, and got all Sychar out to hear Him next time. Ventilate your meeting room. Sleeping in church is due oftener to bad air than to bad manners. Do not repeat sentences, saying, 'As I said before.' If you said it before, don't say it again. Do not end sentences, passages of Scripture, or quotations with 'and so forth;' say what you mean, and stop. Leave out all words you cannot define.

"Stop preaching and talk to folks. Come down from your stilted ways and sacred tones, and become 'as a little child.' Tell stories; Jesus did and the common people heard Him gladly. Relate your experiences; Paul did, and you can hardly do better than he. One fact that you have seen or felt is worth a bushel of moldy ideas dug out of moldier books. Change the subject if it goes hard. Do not tire yourself out and everyone

else. Do not preach until the middle of your sermon buries the beginning and is buried by the end. Beware of long prayers, except in your closet. Where weariness begins, devotion ends. Look people in the face, and live so that you are not afraid to do it.

"Take long breaths. Fill your lungs, and keep them full. Stop to breathe before the air is exhausted. Then you will not finish each sentence with a terrible gasp, as if you were dying for the want of air, as some good people do, and so strain their lungs, and never find it out, because their friends dare not tell them, and so leave them to make sport for the Philistines."—Mrs. Ray L. Kimbrough in *Church Herald and Holiness Banner*.

CRISTIANITY AND PATRIOTISM

"Patriotism is a Christian virtue. The Bible is explicit in its statements concerning the moral and ethical relationships which the individual Christian bears toward those in governmental authority. The genuine Christian attitude must ever be that of whole-hearted allegiance to the right. In proportion as this ideal is steadfastly maintained in individual life will it permeate civil institutions and become the ideal of this country. The goal of every true Christian should be that of making his own country a righteous and holy nation.

"One of the most difficult situations which public officials face in the exercise of their duties is the lack of sufficient public sentiment to render law enforcement possible. Again and again has this note been sounded forth in clarion-like tones by those in positions of authority, and it is becoming increasingly incumbent upon every Christian to make his influence tell for righteousness in civil and political affairs.

"The rich heritage which the present generation enjoys was not won without effort and struggle, nor will it be maintained without that same enthusiasm for righteousness. The battles have not all been fought. There are threatening clouds on the distant horizons of practically every nation. The struggle to outlaw war is commendable, but there are other things as destructive perhaps as war. There are subtle evils which inject themselves insidiously and break down the morale of the people. The nations of the earth have collapsed and civilizations have gone down only when the moral and spiritual forces which supported them have given way. Holy Writ has declared and all history confirms the truth that righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people."—*Herald of Holiness*.

"POWER FROM ON HIGH"

"And, behold, I send the promise of the Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high,"—(Luke 24:49).

This pentecostal bestowment, while it is the source of spiritual character and spiritual enjoyment to the believer, is equally the source of spiritual power, and its power is fully adequate to all the demands of the high commission of the believer and the Church; and no other endowments are adequate, however accessory to the work of the Church, without it. He is the indispensable ally of the ministry and the Church. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." Wesley was devout, useful, exemplary; but he received this bestowment, and then rose to an efficiency which amazed his age. Thomas Chalmers received it, and the scholar, theologian and preacher became an

evangelistic wonder to this world and the Church of his day. There are thousands of ministers, Sunday School teachers and Christian workers, once toilsome, earnest, but without fruit, who today, not more laborious or faithful, are seeing glorious harvests on these heretofore barren fields, because they have received the Holy Ghost. Whatever the Church has to do, whether it be the saving of the impenitent, or the reclaiming of the backslidden or the quickening of the unspiritual, or the entire sanctification of the spiritually hungry, this bestowment is adequate to its accomplishment. And wherever this anointing is experienced, the whole work of salvation and spiritual edification is carried forward.—Dr. S. A. Keen.

HOLDING A COIN

An incident is told of the wealthy owner of a large business in Norway who had once been a poor boy, tending cattle in the country.

One day the boy asked his sister to do his work for him and promised, if she would, that she should hold a coin in her hand all day. Money was so rare in that family that the child gladly did her brother's work for the simple payment of grasping the gleaming coin, which she had to return to him at night.

Many years afterwards, when the boy had become a rich man, he told the incident to a friend. By that time he had allowed his money to occupy such a large place in his life that it had crowded out the desires after the things of God which he had once possessed.

When he had finished the story of his sister's simplicity, which he had told with a laugh, his listener rejoined, 'And that is all you get. You can hold your wealth to the end of your life, and then you will have as little as when you began, and the whole of your earthly life will be gone forever.'

Dear boys and girls, take Christ as your Savior, and you will have something real for your possession, even eternal life, the gift of God, (Rom. 6:23). And this gift will not only be yours for this life, but it will be yours for all eternity. How much more precious it is then, than gold which perisheth!—*The Life Line*.

ON RETIREMENT

A minister who is over seventy years of age recently retired from the active pastorate. He still supplies pulpits at times, and aids ministers in holding special services. The following lines, written by himself, show how he views his retirement. We commend them to all retired spirits.

Retired

The family car had travelled far,
And had a bit old-fashioned gown,
What shall we do: repair, renew?
Or change for one untried, unknown?
We took it to a master hand,
Whose skill made all its action grand,
It carries on as if inspired,
Replenished, beautified, re-tired.

The preacher prophet-man of years,
Grown old and grey with toils and tears,
Shall we whose hearts he helped make true
Discard him for the newest new
Or trusting to the Master Hand
To make his ripened life more grand,
To love and lift, truly inspired,
For rarer service since retired.