

The King's Highway

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FACING THE SUNRISE

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II.

Consider, in the second place, the Life that is to come under the Figure of a Sunrise.

"We are journeying . . . in the wilderness . . . toward the sunrising." I know there are many people who would make a different use of this lovely figure of the daybreak. They would make it a point to the day when the war is over and peace is re-established between the nations, or the day when as they hope, science and religion have combined to produce a permanent order of peace and justice on the earth. Now I am interested in peace. With all my heart I should rather see peace than war. I am interested in justice for all men and all groups of men. My soul rebels at the amount of injustice that we have in human society. But some of us are not very optimistic about the progress of man toward the goal of a just and warless world. Nor is that all. Some of us are inexpressibly thankful that the Christian faith, the Good News of Christ, has a message of cheer for those of us who would not in any case live to see the march of civilization to the gates of the golden age. Some of us will have laid down the body of this mortality before today's sun has set. Is there to be no daybreak for us? Must we think of the whole of life in terms of the few fleeting years lived out on this tear-bathed planet?

The answer to these questions leaps out from the resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord. It calls to us in the kindling phrases of St. Paul, and John and Peter. And what it says goes like this:

"We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Is there not the glory of the morning in those confident words?

Or the answer comes like this: "For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written. Death is swallowed up in victory." Does that not mean the sure transition from the desert to the dawn, from the wilderness to the sunrise?

Or the answer comes in accents such as these: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you." Doesn't that gleam with the fiery splendors of a cloudless sunburst?

One of the most untiring and successful of personal workers for Christ in his day was the late John Harper, who went down on the ill-fated Titanic in 1912. A friend says that he and Harper were standing on the deck of the Titanic the evening of that night when the fatal iceberg was struck. The proud mistress of the Atlantic was plowing full speed toward New York. As the two men gazed toward the western horizon over which the sun had lately slipped, Harper said: "It will be beautiful in the morning." He spoke both worse and better than he realized: worse, because the sun that rose the next morning on that wide expanse of water glared down on the spot where more than 1200 men and women had met their doom; better, because for him, and all others who were ready to meet their Maker, it was the dawn of that eternal day whose radiance is the unveiled face of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Now there are many things about that morning that are yet hidden from us. None the less, we long for its coming as watchers for the first streaks of light after a sleepless night. Let us say three things about it.

First, it will be a morning of light. A moment ago we spoke of the wilderness-features of the present life as suggestive of Paul's word, "Now we see through a glass darkly." We must now have the rest of that great word: "Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then shall I know even as I am known." We see only part of the circle at the moment, and the tiny segment we behold seems not to make sense, but on the other side of death's river God will show us the complete round of life, and we shall be satisfied. The pain we could not explain, the loss we felt was so baffling, the sorrow that drained our eyes of their uncomprehending tears—all will fall into their respective places to form the meaningful mosaic of our life below.

Second, it will be a morning of love. I am thinking of love as it will express itself in the perfected society of the redeemed ones. Even here, in serving life's apprenticeship, we learn that man was not made to live alone, to stand alone, to fight and suffer and pray and sing alone. He was made for fellowship. He craves the feeling of belonging, of belonging to others and having others belong to him. It is this God-given instinct that expresses itself in man's collective life—home, city, church, country.

Take now the best society that love can fashion out of our poor, infirm, redeemed humanity. It is the church, is it not? There is nothing finer this side the gates of pearl. Yet our fellowship, even among the most saintly souls, is often marred by misunderstandings, or strained by thoughtlessness, or broken by death. It is not so much the fault of love, as if it were deficient, as it is the

clumsiness and ignorance of the poor instrument through which it must express itself. But in the "morning," when the wilderness is past, we shall understand each other better. The little friction that always threaten to become separating chasms will be no more. We shall find our greatest joy, next to the delight of seeing our Saviour's face, in the comradeship of each other.

Third, it will be a morning of liberation. It was that towering Christian of the first century, St. Paul, who wrote, "We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened; not for that we would be unclothed but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life." Who among us, in the grace of God, has not felt it—this being weighed down and limited by our handicaps. It may be sickness; it may be blindness or deafness; it may be a lost hand or foot or eye; it may be the sheer weakness of the aging body. The burden is there.

Yet the morning of immortality, if it means anything at all, means that we shall be divinely released from these cramping limitations and annoying fetters. At the close of a lifting sermon on Easter Sunday, a woman of quiet, steady faith came down the aisle to greet her pastor. Her face carried more than the usual kindly light: it was radiant this morning, as she said to the minister: "You have given me new hope today. I have been lame all my life. I shall carry this lameness to the grave, but not beyond that!" "Not beyond that!" She was basking, you see, in some of the foregleams of that morning of release.

What a dawn it will be! Jacob released from his limp. Moses released from his stammering. Paul, released from his "thorn in the flesh." John Milton released from his blindness. William Wilberforce released from his hunched and twisted back. And all other noble souls who contended with lack and loss set forever free from their burdens!

They prayed and we pray:

"O Father! grant Thy love divine,
To make these mystic temples Thine!
When wasting age and wearying strife
Have sapped the leaning walls of life,
When darkness gathers over all,
And the last tottering pillars fall,
Take the poor dust Thy mercy warms,
And mould it into heavenly forms."

—Pentecostal Herald

GOD'S TOOLS

Extraordinary afflictions are not always the punishment of extraordinary sins, but sometimes the trial of extraordinary graces. God hath many sharp cutting instruments and rough files for the polishing of His jewels; and those He specially loves and means to make the most resplendent, He hath oftenest His tools upon.—Archbishop Leighton.

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