

THE HUNGER OF THE HEART

The Sermon on the Mount with Jesus as its author ranks easily as first in character and importance of all sermons of all time. We would suggest the following facts in proof of its place of supreme importance: it was spoken by inspiration; it was proposed as containing the foundational truths of the gospel; in language, style of expression, graphic description and solemn appeal to mankind it easily ranks first. Even though we are reminded by some who claim to "rightly divide the word of truth" that they view this discourse as applying only to the kingdom age yet to be, we here record our judgment that the Sermon on the Mount was meant to have effect on its hearers then and now as being God's immediate challenge to duty, and we have no difficulty in receiving it in full harmony with the gospel of our time.

These nine "blesseds" are familiarly known as "The Beatitudes," from the word "beatitudo," which appears in the ancient Latin versions, and which means "felicity of the highest kind," the consummate bliss of the holy. It is a fact of importance that Jesus tuned His public ministry to this happy and joyful note of experience in God. To be saved is to be safe, and to be made holy, and useful, and devout, and reverential toward God and helpful toward our fellow men, but Jesus here passes up these various facts of experience in favor of the idea that to be saved means to be made happy. We have the conviction that we do not, as holiness people, realize on the joys of full salvation as we ought. In Heb. 12:1-2, we read of Jesus who "for the joy that was set before Him" He endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." Let us plan to live in the full joy of our faith.

Even though each one of these beatitudes is complete in itself, in another sense the list as here recorded in Matthew 5:1-12 is cumulative, beginning with the initial experience of awakening, which might be called the state of being "poor in spirit," and leading on over the road of our mourning, our sense of submission (here called "the meek"), our sense of hunger for God and righteousness, and the experiences both high and deep covered by these familiar statements. We are also impressed with the plain and simple process that Jesus here prescribed when He proposed the terms of the blessing and immediately stated the promise of fulfillment. For example, the "poor in spirit" are assured that "there is the kingdom of heaven;" and "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." Do not consent to an indefinite postponement of this promised blessing of the full joy, either on the terms of so-called dispensationalism or of mere procrastination. If you hunger and thirst for God's sake now you can be filled now.

These beatitudes are all stated in the terms of personal Christian experience, which is a fact of large meaning in connection with the words and work of Jesus as our Saviour. The humblest person in the world can open his heart to God and receive a supply of divine grace as ample and satisfying as the richest man could contain in his heart. The genius of the gospel in this particular is exceedingly practical; it means that God's greatest blessings of personal experience are brought to us directly from the Lord without merit of priest or prelate or even the Church itself. Jesus was always on the search of the individual. Even

though He spoke to the multitudes, when a single inquirer, such as Nicodemus made his way to the Lord, he was received and instructed as carefully as though his interest were the Lord's chief concern, as indeed they were for the moment.

There is a heart hunger for many things of time and of this world in our day: such as yearning for security, for wealth, and for pleasure; but we know that Jesus had the correct measure of "Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled."—Selected.

A MISSIONARY'S FIRST SERMON

The black men liked it little that a white man had come to live among them. And it was a strange way he had of living, too. He had a house of slabs, hewn with great labor from the trees, and entered by a door through which he passed without even stooping. What was he here for? What did he want?

They held many councils to determine what was best to be done. Two things held them in check: they had as yet seen no attempt at mischief on the part of the missionary; and they feared, in their superstition, the evil he might do if they provoked him. So the young American, just out of college, lived on in his house beside the river, writing down words as he learned them, giving medicine to people who were sick, when they were not too superstitious to take it; and telling them occasionally a strange story of one God who lived either up in the sky, or in America, or in some far-away place—they could not quite make out where—about whom the missionary read out of a Book.

One day there was a great council down on the other side of the river-bed, and the missionary sent his servant down among the natives to reason with them, and to say that the missionary was seeking to help the people and not to do them harm; that his wearing of clothing was no mark of diabolism, but only the harmless custom of the strange country from which he had come; and that he intended, just as soon as he learned the language sufficiently, to teach the people many useful things—how to build better homes, how to worship the white man's God—but all these were things which they did not care to learn.

Back from the council came the servant, the blood flowing from a great wound on the side of his head.

"Master," he said, "I have struck a native." "I think it is you who have been struck. Come, and I will bind your head," said the missionary, as he picked up a bandage.

"No, no!" said the servant. "Get your rifle! See, they are coming!"

"We will go and meet them," said the missionary, "but we will not take the rifle. We are safer without it, for if they wish to kill us, we could kill only one or two of them at first, and what good would that do us? Come."

Still holding the bandage, the missionary started for the river-bed, the wounded servant following. A hundred poisoned arrows were on the string; a hundred wicked spears were held by savage men. Naked and hideous, the natives stood ready to attack.

The missionary ran straight to the native chief. "Why do you seek to kill me?" he asked. "What harm have I done you? Ah, I see! My servant struck you when you struck

him. You, too, are bleeding. Come, I will help you."

He seized the chiefs' arm and dragged him, wondering, to one of the pools of water remaining in the river-bed, and called his servant to come. He made them both kneel beside the water, and he washed the wounds of them both. He tore the bandage in two, and with one half he bound up his servant's head, and with the other half he bound up the head of his enemy.

Lower and lower dropped the poisoned-arrow points and slacker grew the tension of the bow-strings as the wondering natives watched this process. When it was finished, the two men rose from their knees, each with his head bound round with clean white cloth, and each aching head more comfortable.

The black men could not understand it. They had confidently expected to see the missionary kill their chief when he had him on his knees, and had kept their weapons ready. What kind of man was this who had come to live among them, and who treated his enemies as he did his friends? It was too much for them to understand; but one thing was plain—they must not kill the missionary that day.

The missionary went back to his cabin and thanked God that a way had been provided whereby he could preach, even before he learned the language; for however little they understood the fullness of a love like this, they could not wholly fail to understand the meaning of the life he was living among them.—Selected.

THE DANGER OF DEBT

Debt is so degrading that if I owed a man a penny, I would walk twenty miles in the depth of winter to pay him, sooner than feel that I was under obligation. Poverty is hard, but debt is horrible. We may be poor but yet respectable; but a man in debt can not even respect himself. Some people seem to like to owe money; but I would as soon be a cat up a chimney with a fire lighted, or a fox with the hounds at my heels. An honest man thinks a purse full of other people's money is worse than an empty one. He cannot bear to eat other people's cheese, wear other people's shirts, and walk about in other people's shoes.

Show, style and smartness run away with a man's means, keep the family poor, and the father's nose down to the grindstone. Men burn the candle at both ends, and then say they are unfortunate. Why do they not put the saddle on the right horse and say they are extravagant?

Some people who have a dollar coming will spend four or five on the strength of it, which does not belong to them. Such a person is both insincere and dishonest. "Cut your coat according to your cloth," is sound advice; but cutting other people's cloth by running into debt is as truly thieving as four pence is a groat.

Habitual debtors can hardly help becoming liars; for they promise to pay, when they know they cannot; and when they have made up a lot of false excuses, they promise again, and they lie as fast as a horse can trot.—Chas. H. Spurgeon.

As we exercise this power of intercession with all perseverance, we shall be delivered from self with all its feeble prayers, and lifted up to that enlargement of heart in which the love of Christ can flow freely and fully through us.—Andrew Murray.