

# Sisters All!

Dear Martha,

If you notice a fragrant, smoky scent to this letter, you know already that I've been burning leaves! It is such a wonderful time of year to be outdoors, to take walks in the hills, and to taste the new cider and the frost-sweetened grapes.

There is something about the harvest season that inspires in people everywhere a sense of gratitude. The exact time for the expression of it doesn't really matter. (We have just had ours, but yours will not come until next month.) The important thing is that the thanksgiving spirit welling up in us at this season is so universal that it seems almost instinctive.

For the beauty of the earth,

For the beauty of the skies,

For the love which from our birth

Over and around us lies,

Christ our God, to Thee we raise

This our hymn of grateful praise.

Thus Christians in all ages have responded to God's great gifts of nature, home, and loved ones, as well as to the intangible values of love, truth, faith, and goodness.

Along with these more obvious blessings, we might also recognize God's benign influence on humanity that has led to so many of the daily benefits which we call civilization. We enjoy comforts and conveniences every day that were unknown a century or two ago. We seldom think about or really appreciate the humane laws of government that protect a citizen from arrest without cause and shield him from the injurious punishments that were once a common occurrence.

Most of us are well aware of the great progress in medicine toward extending our life expectancy and enabling us to live out our days in a high degree of health and vigor. When we stop to think about it, we may even appreciate the limitless opportunities for advancement to simple, ordinary people today, in contrast to the social and economic barriers that used to restrict them.

All these advantages we inherit from the God-fearing hard-working generations that preceded us. Our sense of obligation impels us to cherish these blessings and strive to press forward to even better things. Another way we can discharge our debt to the past is to retain the keen edge of gratitude for what we have. This implies a spirit of thankfulness as an integral part of our attitude to life. Such an outlook enables us to see the good in our circumstances just as they are, in spite of disadvantages and frustrations.

Your husband's faults have a good side; try concentrating on that. A houseful of babies means a lot of work, but it also means plenty to love and laugh over. A single life has lonely times (no one is entirely exempt from that affliction), but it provides unique freedom to engage in many and varied activities. Everyone's circumstances contain a mixture of bane and blessing. It is the perspective one has that often changes life from defeat to victory.

"Let thy saints rejoice in goodness," says the writer of 11 Chronicles (9:41). We may choose to wear either the "garment of praise" or the "spirit of heaviness," the cheerful outlook of gratitude or the woeful garb of complaint. It would do us good to read the Psalms again and see how often David managed to praise God in the midst of his troubles. "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed; I will sing and give praise." (Psa. 57: 7)

May our own hearts, in the midst of today's needs and anxieties, be likewise "fixed" in victorious praise and thanksgiving to our King.

Your loving sister,  
Mary

## SABBATH OBSERVANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

The observance of the Christian Sabbath has been, and should continue to be, a major concern of our people. The purpose of this report is not to present statistics, but to suggest ways and means of using the Lord's Day to better advantage. We abhor the careless attitude of worldly people toward this day, the unbridled pursuit of pleasure, and the open Sunday for the sale of all kinds of merchandise. Reports from some quarters indicate that the volume of sales on furniture, food, cars, etc., reaches its zenith on Sunday, and there is every indication that this trend will continue.

If we could place all the blame on the unchurched and the unbeliever our situation would be more desirable, but the problem lies closer to home and has its effect on our Christian Society. There are some signs of decline regarding Sabbath observance in our own church life. Possibly, there is a lack of emphasis and Biblical instruction on the subject, although we are convinced the real problem is one of neglect and indifference. The long weekend has encouraged more travel, more time spent in recreation, and more frequent absence from the services of the church.

The words, "We'll be away for the weekend" reaches the pastor's ears with an ominous sound. "We visited relatives or went on a picnic and just could not get back for the evening service". These things are straws in the wind, pointing out a trend in the wrong direction. We have been startled to observe Christian people buying ice cream and other unnecessary articles on the Lord's Day.

For a few positive suggestions regarding the Christian use of Sabbath. First of all, the Sabbath is a day of worship. There is a growing tendency to be Sunday morning church goers, and then be through for the day. Some parents advocate the idea that their children should make the decision as to their church attendance, and as a consequence they are absent from the family pew. It is a rare sight to see entire families in church together. We should give one day wholly to the Lord, and every Christian should be present at all scheduled services of the local church, whenever possible. Some individuals enjoy travelling to religious services at a distance thus creating a good excuse for a Sunday trip, and an escape from the burden of the local work.

The Sabbath is a day of rest. We need the quietness of a day free from the distractions of the daily routine. It can be a time for the family to enjoy helpful conversation, appropriate music, christian literature, or an interesting Bible discussion.

Children are as active on Sundays as on other days, and parents can formulate ways to keep them engaged in wholesome and interesting pursuits.

The Sabbath is a day of service. The Sabbath not only exercises restrictions but provides an opportunity for Christian service. James defines pure religion in the practical terms of service, "To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction". Here is a wide open door. A neglected area of ministry. The shut-ins, the aged, those confined to hospitals and nursing homes. Jesus said, "The Sabbath is made for man". He is to exercise wise control over himself, his family, and his influence. "If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honor him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. "Isaiah 58:13, 14.

The King's Highway