



TALMAGE'S SERMON.

THE GOSPEL OF GOOD CHEER FOR THE SORROWING.

Rev. Dr. Talmage Draws Vivid Pictures of the Lengthening Shadows of Life—When Time Ends and Eternity Begins—The Light of Christ.

At the Close of Day.

Dr. Talmage's subject this week lights up the scenes of this life and sounds the gospel of good cheer for them all to receive it. His text was Luke xxiv, 29, "Abide with us, for it is toward evening."

Two villagers, having concluded their errand in Jerusalem, have started out at the city gate and are on their way to Emmaus, the place of their residence. They go with a sad heart. Jesus, who had been their admiration and their joy, had been basely massacred and entombed. As with sad face and broken heart they pass on their way, a stranger accosts them. They tell him their anxieties and bitterness of soul. He in turn talks to the thought of separation. You cannot bear to think that soon you will be called to the first hour, has looked upon you with affection unchangeable. But you see that life is ebbing and the grave will soon hide her from your sight. You sit quiet. You feel heavy hearted. The light is fading from the sky. The air is chill. It is toward evening.

You have long rejoiced in the care of a mother. You have done everything to make her last days happy. You have run with quick steps to wait upon her every want. Her presence has been a perpetual blessing in the household. But the fruit gatherers are looking wistfully at that tree. Her fruit is ripe for heaven. The gates are ready to flash open for her entrance. But your soul sinks at the thought of separation. You cannot bear to think that soon you will be called to the first hour, has looked upon you with affection unchangeable. But you see that life is ebbing and the grave will soon hide her from your sight. You sit quiet. You feel heavy hearted. The light is fading from the sky. The air is chill. It is toward evening.

You had a considerable estate and felt independent. In five minutes on one fair balance sheet you could see just how you stood in the world. But there came complications. Something that you imagined impossible happened. The best friend you had proved a traitor to your interests. A sudden crash of national misfortunes prostrated your credit. You may to-day be going on in business, but you feel anxious about where you are standing and fear that the next turning of the wheel will bring you prostrate. You foresee what you consider certain defalcation. You think of the anguish of telling your friends you are not worth a dollar. You know not how you will ever bring your children home from school. You wonder how you will stand the selling of your library or the moving into a plainer house. The misfortunes of life have accumulated. You wonder what makes the sky so dark. It is toward evening.

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Soothing the Soul.

Trouble is an apothecary that mixes a great many drafts, bitter and sour and nauseous, and you must drink some of them. Trouble puts up a great many packs, and you must carry some of them. There is no sandal so thick and well adjusted but some thorn will strike through it. There is no sound so sweet but that undertaker's screwdriver grates through it. In this swift shuffle of the human heart bonds of the threads must break. The journey from Jerusalem to Emmaus will soon be bounded. Our Bible in common sense, our observation, tell us in truth that we cannot mistake and ought not to disregard. It is toward evening.

Oh, then! for Jesus to abide with us. He sweetens the cup. He extracts the thorn. He wipes the tear. He hushes the tempest. He soothes the soul that flies to him for shelter. Let the night swoon and the eucalyptus cross the sea. Let the thunder roar. Soon all will be well. Christ on the sea to stop its tumult. Christ in the grave to scatter the darkness. Christ in the heavens to lead the way. Blessed all such. His arms will inclose them, his grace comfort them, his light cheer them, his sacrifice free them, his glory enchant them. If earthly estate takes wings, he will be an incorruptible treasure. If friends die, he will be their resurrection. Standing with us in the morning of our joy and in the noonday of our prosperity, he will not forsake us when the lustre has faded and it is toward evening.

The great want of all such is to have Jesus abide with them. It is a dismal thing to be getting old without the rejuvinating influence of religion. When we step on the down grade of life and see that it dips to the verge of the cold river, we want to behold some one near who will help us across it. When the sight loses its power to glance and gather up, we need the faith that can illuminate. When we feel the failure of the ear, we need the clear tones of that voice which in old times broke up the silence of the dead with evidence of mercy. When the dead of death have down whole forests of strength and beauty around us, and are left in solitude, we need the dove of divine mercy to sing in our branches.

When the shadows begin to fall and we feel that they are far spent, we need all the mountains, but the voice and command of him who stopped one sight at Emmaus.

The words of the text are pertinent to us all, from the fact that we are nearing the evening of day. I have heard it said that we ought to live in such a moment to be our last. I do not believe that theory. As far as preparation is concerned we ought always to be ready, but we cannot always be thinking of death, for we have duties in life that demand our attention. When a man is selling goods, it is his business to think of the bargain he is making. When a man is pleading in the courts, it is his duty to think of the interests of his clients. When a clerk is adding up his accounts, it is his duty to keep his mind upon the column of figures. He who fills up his life with thoughts of death is far from being the highest style of Christian. I knew a man who used often to say at night, "I wish I might die before morning." He became an infidel.

The Dark Night.

The request of the text is an appropriate exclamation for all those who are approached in the gloomy hour of temptation. There is nothing easier than to be good-natured when everything pleases, or to be humble when there is nothing to oppose us, for when we have not been assailed, or honest when we have not an inducement to fraud. But we have felt the grapple of some temptation. Your nature at some time quaked and groaned under the infernal force. You felt that the devil was after you. You saw your Christian graces retreating. You feared that you would fall in the awful wreath with sin and be thrown into the dust. The gloom thickened. The first indications of the head of hellish abomination. Who helped Paul shake the brazen gates of hell? Who acted like a good angel when all the crew howled in the Mediterranean shipwreck? Who helped the master to be, when one word of reprobation would have unfastened the wrists of the slave and put out the kindling fire? When the night of the soul came riding upon the despoiled of darkness? You may hang the room with the finest works of art, but what does death care for pictures? You may fill the house with the writings of wisdom and orphane, age, death, and weeping?

This ought not to be a depressing theme. Who wants to live here? Who wants to be born? The world has always treated me well, and every day I feel less and less like scolding and complaining. But yet I should not want to make this my eternal residence. I love to watch the clouds and bathe my soul in the blue seat of heaven. But I expect when the firmament is rolled away as a scroll to see a new heaven, grander, higher and more glorious. You ought to be willing to exchange your body that has headaches and sideaches and weaknesses innumerable, that limps with the stone bruise, or festers with the thorn, or flames on the funeral pyre of fever, for an incorporeal body and an eye that blinks not before the jasper gates and the great white throne. But between that and this there is an hour about which no man should be reckless or foolhardy. I doubt not your courage, but I tell you that you will want something better than a strong arm, a good aim and a trusty sword when you come to your last battle. You will need a better rope than any you have in your wardrobe to keep you warm in that place.

The prayer of the text is appropriate for all who are anticipating sorrow. The greatest folly that ever grew on this planet is the tendency to borrow trouble. But there are times when approaching sorrow is so evident that we need to be making special preparation for its coming.

One of your children has lately become

a favorite. The cry of that child strikes deeper into the heart than the cry of all the others. You think more about it. You give it more attention, not because it is an object of a treasure than the others, but because it is becoming frail. There is something in the cheek, in the eye and in the walk that makes you quite sure that the leaves of the tree are going to be scattered. The utmost nursing and medical attendance are ineffectual. The pulse becomes feeble, the complexion lighter, the step weaker, the laugh fainter. No more romping for that one through hall and parlor. The nursery is darkened by an approaching calamity. The heart feels with mournful anticipation that the sun is going down. Night speeds on. It is toward evening.

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