

Matthew Devotionals-F B Meyer

F B Meyer Our Daily Homily The Gospel of Matthew

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Matthew 1:21

It is He that shall save his people from their sins. (r.v.)

This is the mission of Immanuel. He came, not as the Jews expected, to break the yoke of Caesar and re-establish the kingdom of David; but to break the yoke of sin, and set up the sinless kingdom of God. The Church has too often misunderstood the object of his advent, as though He meant simply to save from the consequences and results of sin. This were too limited a program for the Son of God. To cancel the results and leave the bitter cause; to deliver from the penalty, but not from the power; to rescue his people from the grasp of a broken law, but confess Himself unable to deal with the bad virus of the blood—this were to fail. No; dare to take this announcement in its full and glorious meaning, written as it is on the portico of our Savior's life.

What an admixture of blood flowed through his veins! Let your eye glance through the list of his genealogy. Men and women, notorious for their evil character, lie in the direct line of his descent. This was permitted, that lie might fully represent our fallen race; that no sinner, however bad, should be abashed to claim his help; and that it should be clearly shown how powerless sin was to tarnish or taint the holiness of his sinless nature. Made in the likeness of sinful flesh, He knew no sin. The germs of corruption could find no welcome in his heart.

Art thou one of his people? Hast thou accepted his rule, and allied thyself with Him. For if so, He shall save thee. Though possessed with seven devils, He will drive them out.

Matthew 2:11

They offered unto Him gifts, Gold.... (marg.).

Gold is for the king. It is meet that Matthew should tell this story: for his is pre-eminently the royal Gospel. Long before the Lord was born, these Eastern sages must have been started on their way, whither and to worship whom they knew not: but an ancient prophecy had foretold that to this babe should be offered of the gold of Sheba, and that kings should bring Him the riches of the Gentiles.

How useful this gold was to Joseph in the following months! It helped him to defray the cost of the journey into Egypt and back, and to maintain his precious charges there. The Heavenly Father knew what those needs would be, and met them by anticipation. If you concern yourself in the affairs of his kingdom, and will obey the warnings and directions He gives; if you dare to step out on the path of literal obedience — you will find that God will become responsible and defray all costs. Gold is naught to Him. He can make it out of common dust by a word.

It is sweet to think of all the gold presented to Jesus in after ages. The wealth of the rich, the golden ornaments taken from the person, the tiny pieces of gold which represent the patient savings of the poor — all these have made up the flowing river of which those golden gifts of the Magi were the first trickling drops. Have you given gold to Him, you who know Him, not as the babe only, but as the Man of the Cross; not as man merely, but as the Son of the Highest! You may have given Him copper in abundance, and silver in handfuls; but let your future gifts to Him be of the best. Or, if poverty restrains you, let the philosopher's stone of Love turn the meaner metals to gold.

Matthew 3:1.

In those days cometh John the Baptist.

The Evangelist is fond of the present tense, "cometh." Yes, these records are true to all time. You tell me that they happened nineteen centuries ago. Certainly; but they happened yesterday, and are happening today. Remember that He is the same yesterday, today, and for ever. He was, and is, and is to come. Christ was born into the world, but He is always being born into the hearts of men in Regeneration. John preceded and announced his advent in the wilderness of Judaea; and he is always preparing

his way into the hearts and lives of men. It is doubtful whether Jesus ever comes into the heart of mature manhood without the previous work of a John the Baptist. Of days of conviction of sin, of remorse, of repentance, we may truly say, "In those days cometh John the Baptist."

John the Baptist is sadly needed today. Much of what we call Christianity is but Christianized heathenism. It glozes over covetousness, luxurious self-indulgence, compliance with fashion and worldliness; it admits into its high places men who thrive on the oppression of the poor; it condones the oppression of the native races, the sale of opium and spirits, the shameless traffic in impurity; it rears the ideals of the world in the place of the changeless cross of the slain Christ with its divine sorrow and blood. Ah, we need that John the Baptist should come with his stern words about the axe, the winnowing-fan, and the fire. Nothing less will avail to prepare the way for a new coming of Christ.

Each age has had its John the Baptist. Now St. Bernard; now Savonarola; now John Knox. With sonorous, ringing voice the herald has prepared the way of the King: "He cometh to judge the world!"

Matthew 4:1

Jesus was led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.

Yesterday, the opened heavens; today, the burning cinders of the wilderness of temptation. Then the voice of the Father owning Him as the Well-beloved; now the hiss of the tempter. Then the teeming crowds; now the desert solitude and silence, broken only by the cry of the wild beast. Then the Spirit as a nesting dove, but now as a compelling force. Wherever there is the Christ-life, it passes through these same experiences. The Holy Spirit often anticipates coming trial by granting some great revelation of God; but He who gives the one leads into the other, that the precious bestowments of God's grace may be rendered permanent.

Would you give the bread of life to thousands? You must refuse to use your opportunity to make bread for your own gratification. You cannot use your power for others and for yourself. If you elect to use it for them, you must be content to wait till the Father sends his angels to minister to you. In the meanwhile live by faith on his words.

Would you teach the magnificence of a faith that can trust God to preserve it, though it steps from the mountain brow on to thin air? You must refuse to use it for purposes of ostentation; and wait till God, not Satan, calls.

Would you win the kingdoms of the world? You must obtain them, not by methods which commend themselves to human prudence, but through the death of the cross and the falling into the ground to die. There are two mountains in the Gospel: this, as it opens; that of the Ascension at its close. The valley of death lies between. But the traversing of this valley was necessary, ere Christ could say, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth."

Matthew 5:45

That ye may be sons of your Father which is in heaven. (r.v.)

We are made sons by regeneration, through faith in the Son; but we are called to make our calling and election sure — to approve and vindicate our right to that sacred name. We can only do this by showing in word and act that the Divine life and principles animate us.

Jesus teaches that the life of God in the hearts of his children will show itself in pure and unaffected love. He says in effect, "God is good: God forgives: God bears with wrong and sin: God loves those who hate Him, blesses those who curse, bestows his favors on the false and unjust, suffers long and is kind; believes, hopes, bears all things. Therefore, if you are his children, do as He does, as I do: follow Me: live as I live: become as a bird, a lily, a little child: be pure, merciful, lowly, gentle, strong in righteousness — and you will be called the sons of God; yours will be the kingdom of heaven."

There were several things the Lord could not say fully in this opening statement. That obedience to his precepts would inevitably conduct them to a cross; that the strength for such a life could only be secured through the coming of the Comforter; that the progress of the Kingdom would be slow and arduous — these things were for the time veiled and hidden. But his main object was to teach that Christianity must be a life after the model of God's. Christian disciple, art thou living this life? Not by a creed, a ritual, a profession; but by living the life, is thy true nature discerned, whether thou art wheat or tare, child or hypocrite. Sometimes we are called to be as the sun, ripening souls by our genial love; at other times we refresh them as rain watering the grass.

Matthew 6:18

Thy Father which is in secret,... which seeth in secret.

How fondly Jesus repeats these words (Matthew 6:4, 6, 18). Though compelled to live so much in the public gaze of men, his heart was always sighing for the secret place of fellowship with his Father, who waited for Him there.

Of course, the main object of those paragraphs was to withdraw his disciples from the excessive outwardness of the age in which He spoke, and which necessarily detracted from the singleness, directness, and simplicity of the religious life. It is impossible to perform our religious duties before men, without insensibly considering what impression we are producing, and how far their estimation of us is being enhanced. And in so far as we seek these things, the stream is contaminated with mud and silt, and becomes turbid. We have just as much religious life as we show to God in secret — just that, no less, no more. Whatever is not wrought between thee and God, with no record but his eye, is chaff which the wind driveth away.

Here is a test for our alms, our prayers, and our fasting from sin and self-indulgence. If we do any of these to maintain or increase the consideration that men have of us, they count for nothing in the eye of God. But whatever is done for Him alone will secure his inevitable notice and reward. Dwell on that very definite assurance: "Shall recompense thee." There is no doubt about it. For every petition breathed into his ear; for every sigh and tear; for every abstinence from sin and self there will be a certain recompense, after the Divine measure. Such seeds shall have a prolific harvest. Seek then the secret place, where prying eyes cannot follow, and curious ears cannot overhear.

Matthew 7:2

With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you.

This is an invariable principle. Christ did not make it true by saying it; He said it because it was true. There are at least three policies of life — that of the churl, who never gives unless he is compelled; of the niggard, who metes out from the tiniest measure on which he can lay hands; of the bountiful man, who is ever meting out his stores with lavish hand. If he gives, it is to his uttermost; if he loves, it is with all his heart; if he forgives, he crowns the forgiven one with lovingkindness; if he puts his hand to constructing aught, every part of it bears trace of the wealth of his taste, and gift, and self-sacrifice.

It might be supposed that such a policy would lead to bankruptcy of resources and speedy impoverishment; and for fear of this most refrain from adopting it. They either do not give, or give stintingly and fearfully. But the remarkable fact is, that when a man is using this large measure towards others, they catch it up and fill it with their bountifulness towards him. They mete out their love and gifts according to the measure of his giving. This is an invariable principle: begin serving men with a miser's hand, and they will do the same to you; begin, on the contrary, by serving men without stint, and they will do the same to you.

Live a royal life, child of God, as becomes such a Father. Give, expecting nothing again, with full measure, pressed down, and running over. Give, not so much money, as love, and tenderness, and human sympathy: give as one who is always receiving from the boundless resources of God. And, provided always that thy motives are pure, it will come back to thee. God will see thee bountifully rewarded.

Matthew 8:9

A man under authority, having soldiers under me.

The centurion's faith set Christ marveling. First, because it was found in such an unlikely place. Here was a Gentile who had come from the West, and was sitting down with Abraham in the Kingdom of God. Secondly, because of its greatness: "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel."

This Roman officer applied to our Lord principles with which he was cognizant through his connection with the army, he knew that he had no power over other men in his individual capacity, or apart from his organic connection with the machinery of government. If he said to one man Come; to another Go; to his servant Do this, and his command was immediately obeyed — it was entirely due to his own obedience, in turn, to the authority which was over himself. So long as he obeyed that authority, he represented it; and it passed through him to compel obedience to his commands. This is the principle he applied to our Lord.

He recognized that Jesus of Nazareth was always acting under the authority of his Heavenly Father, and he inferred, therefore, that He could wield the power of God as he could that of Rome. As the authority of the Caesars flowed through his own yielded life, so the authority of God over diseases, demons, and all else, would flow through Christ's.

What a profound principle is here! Learn to obey, and you shall rule. Yield yourself absolutely to God, and God's power shall pass through your heart and life. Be under Divine authority, and you shall be able to say, Go, come, do this. All things serve the man who serves Jesus Christ. Absolute consecration to God, as a soldier is surrendered to his country, is the condition of power.

Matthew 9:22

Thy faith hath made thee whole.

Wholeness and holiness are identical: the one of the body; the other of the soul. They are closely related to the word Health, and all

may be procured through faith. Holiness, wholeness of heart, health — and all by faith. There are three steps to this blessed state — of wholeness of soul.

First, we must believe that it is attainable. For we never feel morally bound to do, attempt, or choose, what we do not believe to be within our reach. But all questions on the matter are settled for evermore by such words as, “Be ye holy, for I am holy”; and “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.”

Second, we must consecrate ourselves to God. In other words, by the help of the Holy Spirit, we must determine and resolve that we will be wholly the Lord’s. We must come to a fixed resolve to break off from every known sin; to walk, so far as we know them, in the way of God’s commandments; to be and do and suffer all his righteous will. This must be our deliberate resolve for all coming time; and if we are unable to make the resolve, through the frailty of our nature and the strength of our old sins, we must at least tell God that we are willing for this to become our unvacillating attitude.

Third, we must believe, absolutely, that God does accept the consecration we have made, and will do all that He has promised, by infilling us with his Holy Spirit, and working in us that which is pleasing in his sight. Nay, we must not only believe that He will do it, we must ask and claim that He should do it; we must, like this woman, touch Christ and obtain his healing virtue.

Matthew 10:27

What I tell you in the darkness, speak ye in the light.

These striking words are applicable to us all, Our Lord is constantly taking us into the dark, that He may tell us things. Into the dark of the shadowed home, where bereavement has drawn down the blinds; into the dark of the lonely, desolate life, here some infirmity closes us in from the light and stir of life; into the dark of some crushing sorrow and disappointment. Then He tells us his secrets, great and wonderful, eternal and infinite. The eye, which has become dazzled by the glare of earth, becomes able to behold the heavenly constellations; and the ear to detect the undertones of his voice, which is often drowned amid the tumult of earth’s strident cries.

But such revelations always imply a corresponding responsibility — that speak ye in the light — that proclaim upon the housetops. We are not meant to linger always in the dark, or stay in the closet; presently we shall be summoned to take our place in the rush and storm of life; and when that moment comes, we are to speak and proclaim what we have learnt.

This gives a new meaning to suffering, the saddest element in which is often its apparent aimlessness. “How useless I am.” “What am I doing for the betterment of men?” “Wherefore this waste of the precious spikenard of my soul.” Such are the desperate laments of the sufferer. But God has a purpose in it all. He has withdrawn his child to the higher altitudes of fellowship, that he may hear God speaking face to face, and bear the message to his fellows at the mountain foot. Were the forty days wasted that Moses spent on the Mount, or the period spent at Horeb by Elijah, or the years spent in Arabia by Paul?

Matthew 11:6

Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me.

A friend has turned these words into another beatitude — The blessedness of the unoffended. The Baptist was tempted to take offence with Christ, first, because of his long delay in asserting Himself as the promised Messiah; and secondly, because of his apparent indifference to his own welfare. “If He be all that I expected, why does He leave me in this sad plight, extending to me no word of comfort; making no attempt to free me from these dark, damp cells.”

Are there not such hours in our lives still? We say, If He really love us and is entrusted with all power, why does He not deliver us from this difficult and irksome condition? Why does He not hurl these prison walls to the ground? Why does He not vindicate and bring me out to the light of life and joy?

But the Lord made no attempt to emancipate his servant; and He seems to be unmindful of our sore straits. All He did for John was to send him materials on which his faith should feed, and rise to a stronger, nobler growth. “Go back,” He said in effect to John, “tell him what I can do; he is not mistaken — I have all power, I am the expected King; and if I do not come to his help in the way he expects, it is not through lack of power and willingness, but because of reasons of Divine policy and government, to which I must be true. Tell him to trust Me, though I do not deliver him. Assure him of the blessedness which must accrue to those who are not offended at my apparent neglect. I will explain all to him some day.” Thus He speaks still. He does not attempt to apologize, or to explain — He only asks our trust; and promises blessedness to those who do not stumble at life’s mysteries.

Matthew 12:5, 7

Have ye not read in the law? ... If ye had known what this meaneth....

The Pharisees were great sticklers for rites and ceremonies. Their religion consisted in little else than a perpetual round of outward observances. They believed that they were thus observing and maintaining the ancient Mosaic code. In their judgment, great human necessities, like hunger, must be subordinate to their minute exactions. Our Lord, on the other hand, claimed that the laws of God, as written in the nature of man, must have a priority over merely ceremonial enactments. And He showed that his contention was supported by those Scriptures on which they rested their case.

There are two ways of studying Scripture. The one deals with its letter; the other compares Scripture with Scripture, and seeks to fathom its profound and eternal meaning. Do not read as the scribe, but as the Son of Man. Do not rest in the outward rite, but in the spiritual attitude of which the rite was intended to be the expression. Everywhere there is One greater than the Temple; greater than the rigorous exactions of the Jewish Sabbath; greater than the code on which Pharisaism insisted.

All through the Old Testament you may detect the spirit of the New; the mercy in which God delights, the pitiful appreciation of the frailty and hunger of the nature He has made. The New Testament is in accord with the Old of Scripture, and the older Testament of man's nature, as God made it at first.

It is highly important to remember this. The God who redeems is He who created all things by his word, and for his pleasure. Is it likely that He will contradict his original design, and undo what cost Him thought and care? Surely not; He is pledged only to undo the evil which has marred his work.

Matthew 13:11

Unto you it is given to know.

In explanation of this statement, our Lord reiterates his favorite saying: "Whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have abundance." His disciples had already given heed to his words. On the thin soil of their hearts the precious seed had already begun to germinate: and as it throve, it prepared the way for more and more to follow.

In the case of the crowds that pressed around Him, however, there was no such earnest giving heed. They were content with the interest, the beauty and grace, of his nature-teaching, without a thought of its deeper aspects. Hearing, they did not understand; seeing, they did not perceive; face to face with Incarnate Truth, they thought only that He had a pleasant voice, and could play skilfully on the harp.

First, Understand what you hear. Do not be content to have a merely intellectual appreciation of its force or beauty; but open your heart to meditate and ponder it. It is only thus that truth really strikes its roots into the soul, and defies the birds.

Second, Beware of the response of mere emotion. Too many of these receive the word with joy. Their expressions of interest and pleasure are loud and emphatic. Tears course down their cheeks. You think them most hopeful. But it passes like the sunshine and cloud of an April day.

Third, Guard against cares and worldly success. The first, of the poor; the second, of the rich. There is not room in the heart, or nutrition in the soul, for the absorbing pursuit of both earth and heaven, of time and eternity.

Fourth, Practise what you hear. Remember that not the hearers of the word, but the doers of the work, are blessed.

Matthew 14:19

Looking up to heaven, He blessed, and brake, and gave.

Stonewall Jackson was once asked what he meant when he used the expression, "Instant in prayer." "I will give you," he said, "my idea of it for illustration, if you will allow it, and not think that I am setting myself up as a model for others." On being assured that there would be no misjudgment, he went on to say; "I have so fixed the habit in my own mind, that I never raise a glass of water to my lips without a moment's asking of God's blessing. I never seal a letter without putting a word of prayer under the seal. I never take a letter from the poet without a brief sending of my thoughts heavenward. I never change my classes in the section room without a minute's petition on the cadets who go out and those who come in." "And don't you sometimes forget this?" "I think I can say that I scarcely do; the habit has become almost as fixed as breathing."

And if this was the habit of the servant, how much more of the Master. Frequently, in the Gospels, we are told of his heavenward look. It was as though He were always looking up for his Father's smile, direction, and benediction; so that He could be assured that what He was engaged in was in the line of his Father's Purpose, and that He might gain the needed power to act and wisdom to speak.

It is only thus that we shall be able to meet the hunger of our times. Our slender stores will not avail for so great a multitude. But if we bring them to Him, and place them in his hands, and look up to heaven for his enablement, we shall break and break again till all

have sufficed and left. But this habit can only be maintained by those who go into the mountain of prolonged fellowship.

Matthew 15:28

Be it done unto thee even as thou wilt. (r.v.).

This was a remarkable permission. It is not often that Christ takes the key to his stores out of the bunch which hangs at his girdle, and entrusts it to a soul, saying in effect, Take what you will. "Of the work of my hands, command ye Me."

1. We must intercede for others.—This woman came for her child. We must always be on our guard when we ask much for self, lest somehow our requests be prompted by self-aggrandizement. If we do ask for power, wisdom, or likeness to Christ, let it be that we may help others better. The apostle says that Christ "loosed us from our sins ... and made us priests" (Revelation 1:5–6, r.v.). We all need this loosing, that we may become intercessors.

2. We must accord Christ his right place.—The Canaanitish woman came to Him as the Son of David, and He answered her not a word. She had no claim on Him as such. That He was the Jews' Messiah could not help her. She had given Him that title by courtesy and hearsay. It was necessary that by his silence she should be driven to find Him for herself. When she gave Him a universal title, and said, Lord, help me! worshipping at his feet, she was a step nearer the goal.

3. We must answer his affirmations with Yea.—He told her what She was. She was an alien and outcast. She was not part of the chosen family; she must understand her true position, and take it. And she did. She said, Yea, Lord. If you can perfectly accept God's will, so that it shall take the place of your own; if you will take your place among the dogs beneath the table, you are sure to obtain answers to your prayers—God can let you have your way, because it will be his.

Matthew 16:22

Have mercy on Thee, Lord! This shall never be unto Thee.(r.v., marg.)

Throughout his life these words were perpetually flung at the heart of Christ. Spare Thyself this hunger, the devil said in the wilderness, on the threshold of his public ministry; spare Thyself this agonizing death, he said again in the garden, on the eve of the crucifixion.

It is noticeable that the cross was surrounded by voices that repeated the same words. They that passed by it wagged their heads, and said, "Thou that destroyest the temple and buildest it in three days, save Thyself." The chief priests mocked Him, with the scribes and elders, and said, "Can He not save Himself?" The soldiers also mocked Him, coming to Him, offering Him vinegar, and saying, "If Thou art the King of the Jews, save Thyself." And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on Him, saying, "Art not Thou the Christ? save Thy self and us." All these voices spoke after the methods of human wisdom.

This made our Lord turn so quickly on Peter, saying, "Get thee behind Me, Satan: thou art a stumbling-block unto Me." How often are the same words addressed to us: "Pity thyself. Have mercy on your sensitive human nature; do not be too lavish with your money; give yourself a little more licence." But it cannot be. You cannot save others and yourself as well. Those that would follow Jesus in his steps of redemptive help to mankind must deny themselves, take up the cross, and follow Him into rejection, shame, spitting, and the grave. They who have mercy on themselves will never show much to others, or receive much; but the merciful are blessed, because they obtain mercy. Thus mercy is "twice blest; it blesses him that gives, and him that takes."

Matthew 17:3

Behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with Him.

Luke tells us that they "spoke of his decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem." Moses as representing the Law, would remind Him that if as God's Lamb He must die, yet as God's Lamb He would redeem countless myriads. Elijah, as representative of the prophets, would dwell on the glory that would accrue to the Father. These thoughts were familiar enough to the mind of our blessed Master; yet they must have gladdened and strengthened Him, as they fell from other lips: the more so when they conversed together on the certain splendor of the resurrection morning that should follow his decease.

And where could there have been found greater subjects than this wondrous death, and his glorious resurrection? Here the attributes of God find their most complete and most harmonious exemplification. Here the problems of human sin and salvation are met and solved. Here the travail of Creation meets with its answer and key. Here are sown the seeds of the new heavens and earth, in which shall dwell righteousness and peace. Here is the point of unity between all ages, all dispensations, all beings, all worlds. Here blend men and angels; departed spirits and the denizens of other spheres; Peter, James, and John, with Moses and Elijah, and all with the great God Himself, whose voice is heard falling in benediction from the opened heaven.

We, too, must often climb the mount of transfiguration in holy reverie; for the nearer we get to the Cross, and the more we meditate

upon the decease accomplished at Jerusalem, the closer we shall come into the center of things; the deeper will be our harmony with ourselves and all other noble spirits and with God Himself.

Matthew 18:15

Go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone.

“Where is thy brother, child?”

“I do not know, Lord; I have not seen or spoken to him these many days; and, as far as I am concerned, I would not mind if I never saw him again; he is as good as lost to me.”

“Hast thou wronged him, that this gulf has yawned between you? Remember that I said, if on coming to the altar, thou shouldest remember that thy brother hath some complaint against thee, thou wert to leave thy gift, and seek to be reconciled; then return to often thy gift.”

“Yes, Lord, I remember well. But that is not the case now; my brother has nothing against me; he is in the wrong, not I; he has trespassed against me, not I against him. It is therefore for him to come to me, not for me to go to him.”

“Is it likely that he will come to thee?”

“I do not think it is, Lord. He is not one of thy disciples; and it is most unlikely that he will ever cross my threshold to apologize and ask forgiveness.”

“Then thou must go to him, and tell him his fault between thee and him alone, and do thy best to win him back.”

“But I think he is most likely to put the wrong construction on my going, and to account that I feel myself in the wrong.”

“Thou art thy brother’s keeper, and thou must win him out of his fault, and lovelessness, and wandering. He is drifting away—not from thee only, but from Me. I know he was in the wrong at first; but thou art in the wrong now, and thou must go and tell him his fault, and try to wash his feet and win him back.”

Matthew 19:8

Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, suffered you....

This is a very profound principle, which is of immense value in dealing with Scripture. There were certain precepts and commands given to Israel, which are not of lasting obligation, because they were stages in their moral discipline and education. It would have been impossible to lift them suddenly from the degradation into which they had sunk in Egypt, to the glorious levels of Isaiah or the Sermon on the Mount: so God’s dealings with them were graduated and progressive.

Such were the regulations about a plurality of wives, the keeping of bond-slaves, the treatment of captives, the destruction of their foes. With respect to these, our Lord says, Moses interposed a parenthesis of legislation, which was a stage higher than anything known among the surrounding nations, though it was not God’s normal or original code.

What was true of Israel is true of us. We do not realize, in the first stage of our redemption, all that is included in the word “Sin.” We are like men enveloped in morning mist, which permits them to descry only the bolder outlines of the cliffs around them, but as yet veils the minuter eminences or depressions. As the mist clears, surrounding objects become ever more distinctly defined: so that the know more of God, we know ourselves better, and realize what sin is, and come to see it where we had never guessed its presence. Thus we condemn today what we permitted five years ago. It is interesting to find in these words of Christ the germ of an argument which his apostle used afterwards in the Epistle to the Galatians with such marvellous force. He said the Mosaic dispensation was a parenthesis; but it cannot disannul God’s primal institution (Galatians 3:15–17).

Matthew 20:22

We are able.

This is the cry of youth—ardent, impulsive, self confident. It does not wait to calculate the ridges and hummocks that lie between it and its goal, but supposes that it will be able to skate the entire distance over the glistening azure-blue ice. Without hesitation it counts on being able to brave all difficulty, surmount all hardship, drink the cup, and be baptized with the baptism.

But these men slept in Gethsemane, forsook the Master when He was arrested, and one of them at least failed Him at the cross. Creature-might cannot carry us in the hour of our greatest peril. We can vaunt ourselves as we may; but we have to learn that we can only follow Christ in his cup and baptism, after we have been endued with the Spirit of Pentecost. I once knew two who said

these words to God, when He presented them with the cup of suffering and death. They did not know all it involved; and they confessed afterwards that they could never have stood to their choice, had they not been graciously and repeatedly enabled. But at the end they could not wish it to have been otherwise.

How different were the experiences of these two men! To one the cup and baptism came swiftly, when he fell beneath the beheading axe of Herod (Act 12:2); to the other they came in long, long years of sharing in the patience of Jesus Christ. These are different aspects of the same fellowship of suffering—swift death, or long waiting; but in both nearness to Jesus. We have no right to cherish the assurance of sitting right and left of the throne, if that only means our own power, authority, glory. But if it means nearness to Jesus, we may count on it with the utmost assurance.

Matthew 21:22

All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.

This was a very remarkable answer; showing that the Lord, in his human life, was the Author and Finisher of the life of faith. He did not quote his Divine Power and Godhead as the cause of the withering of the fig-tree; but proceeded to give a lesson on faith, as much as to say that He had wrought the miracle by faith in his Father, and that they could do as He had done, if only they had a similar faith.

Where we get wrong in prayer is that we are all self-willed. We set ourselves to pray for things; we vow to sit up all night to bring God round to our way of thinking; we use strong cryings, tears, and protestations; we endeavor to work ourselves into a frame of faith; we think we believe; we shut the doors of our heart against the tiniest suggestion or suspicion that we do not believe. And then we are surprised if the fig-tree does not wither, or the mountains remove.

Where are we wrong? It is not hard to see. There is too much of self and the energy of the flesh in all this. We can only believe for a thing when we are in such union with God that his thought and purpose can freely flow into its, suggesting, what we should pray for, and leading us to that point in which there is a perfect sympathy and understanding between us and the Divine mind. Faith is always the product of such a frame as this. Be sure that you are on the line of God's purpose. Wait for Him till the impulses of nature have subsided, and the soul is hushed and still. Then the Spirit will lead you to ask what is in the will of God to give, and you will know instantly that the Spirit according to the will of God.

Matthew 22:37

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God ... with all thy mind.

This was Adam's blessed privilege in Eden; but he missed it. The love of self took the place of the love of God. It is the aim of our blessed Lord to bring us back to that position. Perfect love is the sunlit peak to which his whole redemption tends. And perfect love would be perfect holiness. If a man were to love God and his neighbor as his first and chief and all-absorbing passion, there would be no room for sin to establish itself in his heart.

But does not this command seem altogether impracticable? It does; and it is impracticable to our mortal flesh. It is high; we cannot attain to it. Yet the very sublimity of the demand is intended to drive us to the Holy Ghost. He sheds abroad the love of God in hearts which are fully yielded to Him. If you desire that this love should be your privilege, lie down low before the flow of the River of Life, and it will fill every gully and inlet of your nature.

But, perhaps you are not of an emotional nature; you cannot gleam and flash, and shed tears, and light up with smiles. You cannot love God with your heart! Then see, the Lord says that you can love Him with your mind, i.e., with your intellect, your choice, your will. Probably this is where you have to begin. Give your mind, your will, your power of choice to God. Make Him first. Ask Him to take the helm of your life, and to control, inspire, and direct its every movement. Crown Him King. And when the will, which is the high priest of your nature, has put its crown of life on the head of Christ, who is God Incarnate, all the emotions and affections and faculties of heart and Life will come in to swell the court with their homage and acclaim.

Matthew 23:37

How often would I have gathered thy children together!

Only the greatest artists can make immortal pictures from simple domestic scenes. To detect the imperishable and the infinite in the common and ordinary, and to preserve it in such a form as to arrest the ages, this is the mark of consummate power. But how characteristic of Jesus—a broken bottleskin, a patched garment, a handful of girls shut out of a village feast—these are the subjects which He painted into never-to-be-forgotten pictures. Lord, give us childlike hearts that we may see the secrets that are hidden in common things!

But how this image arrests us! Who has not heard the cluck of the hen when danger was threatening her brood? She is quicker to

detect its proximity than her callow young; and she must needs insert herself between it and them. Ah, how often does the rush of life drown the call of Jesus to come under his wing for rest and safety!

Bunyan says that the hen has a variety of calls, some six or eight. Jesus also calls us for different purposes—sometimes to nestle near his heart for fellowship; sometimes for rest. Sometimes He calls us to feast on some rich dainty, to which He has directed us in the Word; and sometimes to hide in the shadow of his wings till dreaded evils pass us by.

Oh that we more often heard and obeyed that warning note! Probably there is never a temptation nor trial which is not thus anticipated and preceded. When passion overcomes you by a sudden rush, you must not impute your failure to any lapse in your Savior's care. He called you, but you could not hear. "How often!" Who can enumerate the many, many times when we have been summoned by Jesus nearer to Himself, but would not?

Matthew 24:32

The summer is nigh.

You say that it is rather overdue. The nipping winds and morning frosts have held back vegetation so long that it has seemed as if summer would never visit us, spreading her carpet on the earth, and giving her intense hues to stream and lake and sky. But summer is nigh in spite of all prognostications to the contrary, because He is nigh, who is the King of summer, whose presence makes summer. Be sure that He, and therefore it, is nigh, even at the doors.

He is always nigh, and those that love Him realize the perpetual summer of his presence; but his appearing, the parousia, is nigh. Presently the swing doors will be flung wide, and his triumphal procession will sweep into our view. Then the millennial summer of the world will break, and her long winter will be gone for ever. Then the bride will hear Him say: "The winter is over and gone; the time of the singing of birds is come: arise, my fair one, and come."

The rumours of war that frighten the nations; the slackening faith and waning love; the dissemination of the Gospel to all lands; the great movement now in progress in the midst of the ancient people of God; the decrease of conversion work in favor of the preparation of the Bride for the Bridegroom—all these are like the tender shoots of the fig-tree which show that the Lord is at hand. Oh, lonely and sequestered ones, by his appearing, and by our gathering together unto Him, be of good courage, and do the King's work.

Do you want perpetual summer in your soul? There is only one condition which needs to be fulfilled. You must leave the northern climes to dwell between the Tropics, where the sun is always on the throne of the sky. Thy sun shall no more go down.

Matthew 25:24

He also that had received the one talent came.(r.v.)

It is remarkable that the man who had one talent should hide it. If we had been told that he who had five had hidden one we should not have been surprised; but for the man who had only one to hide it!—this is startling; but it is true to life.

The people whose talents and opportunities are very slight and slender are they who are tempted to do nothing at all. "I can do so very little; it will not make much difference if I do nothing: I shall not be missed; my tiny push is not needed to turn the scale." That is the way they talk. They forget that an ounce-weight may turn the scales where hundred-weights are balanced. They do not realize that the last flake of white snow just oversets the gathering avalanche, and sends it into the vales beneath.

Are you one of these slenderly-endowed ones? And are you doing all you can? Are you doing anything? Even though you cannot do much in your isolation, you might join with others and do much. You might invest your little all in the bank of the Church, and trade as part of that heavenly corporation. Oh, disinter your one talent! Be sure you have one; ask the Master where and what it is; place yourself at his disposal. If it is only to carry refreshment to the harvesters—do that. Be thou faithful in thy very little.

We need not wait for the great future, to obtain this multiplication or withdrawal of our talents. They are already waxing or waning in our hands. There are many among us who, as life has progressed, have come into the use of powers of which at first they were perfectly ignorant; whilst others are losing, through misuse, the little they had.

Matthew 26:28

My blood of the covenant. (r.v.)

The first covenant was not ratified without blood. For when every commandment had been spoken by Moses, he took the blood of the calves and goats, sprinkled the people, and said, This is the blood of the covenant (Hebrew 9:19–20). So the second covenant must be refilled by blood; not by that of calves and goats, but by the precious blood of Jesus Himself. He who made the covenant

sealed it with his blood, that we might have strong assurance.

But Christ has put the cup which holds the emblem of his blood into our hands, and bids us drink it. What, then, do we mean when at the Supper we lift that sacred cup to our lips? Are we not saying by that significant act, Remember thy covenant! Are we not reminding Jesus that we are relying upon Him to do his part? Are we not pledging ourselves to Him as his own, bound to Him by indissoluble ties, and satisfied with his most blessed service?

Among the most precious promises of the new covenant is that in which God promises to remember our sins no more. Here is the ground which enables God to forgive so freely. The blood has been shed for many unto the remission of sins; the claims of infinite justice have been met; the righteous demands of a broken law satisfied; the barriers have been removed that might have restrained the manifestation of Divine love, though they could not obstruct the love. And now we may sit with Christ at his table in his kingdom, not rebels, but welcome guests.

Also among the promises of the new covenant is that in which God promises that we shall be his people, and He our God. This item also is presented by us in humble expectancy, whilst, in expectant faith, we say, Do as Thou hast said.

Matthew 27:32

Him they compelled to go with them, that he might bear His cross.(r.v.).

If we may judge from the familiar way in which Mark speaks of the sons of this Cyrenian, who the soldiers brutally compelled to carry our Savior's cross, we should infer that from this hour he became a Christian. He had little suspected such a thing in the early morning, when he left his lodging to attend to his business; but, being constrained to go to Calvary, he lingered there of his own accord through those anxious hours, and was led to feel that such a sufferer, to whom even Nature paid such homage, was worthy henceforth to receive his loyalty.

But how many of us are carrying our cross because we are compelled! There seems no alternative but to carry the dead weight of our cross with us every where, only wishing a hundred times each day that we might have respite. Dear soul, that cross is yet going to be the greatest blessing of your life if it lead you to the Crucified, and you find in Him what will transform it into the ladder which links earth with heaven, swaying beneath angel tread.

If Simon became a Christian, with what rapture trust he have reviewed that incident in his life! How easy it would have been to carry the cross had he known Jesus as he came to know Him afterwards! He would have needed no compelling! So if you saw the will of Jesus in your cross, and that you were carrying it with Him, how much easier it would be! But that is so. He is in it. Bear it with Him; out of the cross will fall a shower of flowers.

There is no such thing as chance in our lives. It might have seemed such that Simon was coming into Jerusalem at that moment. It was shown, however, to be part of the Eternal counsel. Dare to believe in the Divine purpose which orders your cross.

Matthew 28:5

The angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye!

The emphasis is on the pronoun ye. The angel meant, As for these sentinels that are quaking in dread and becoming as dead men, it is meet and natural that they should do so. They are strangers to Him whom ye seek, and are set here to do the work of his foes. But there is no need for those that seek Jesus to fear.

Are you seeking the forgiveness of your sins through his blood? Fear not ye! Do not fear that they are too many to be forgiven. Do not fear that you have not the right faith. Do not fear that you will find his door shut. Do not fear that He will always be remanding you of what you have cost Him. Do not fear that He will let you drift from Him again. Ye seek the Lord who was crucified. Fear not!

Are you seeking a closer identification with his death? Fear not! There is no possibility of realizing the life which is life indeed, except through identification with the death and grave of Jesus. We must sink deep down into reunion with Him who lay there as our representative. But as God takes us at our word, and begins to strip us of all we had taken pride in; as the fear of what may be involved crosses our hearts with its chill dread — again we may be assured as we hear the angel say, "Fear not, ye who seek Jesus that was crucified."

And when at last you are seeking to follow Him through the valley of shadow — Fear not! You will never see Him as He is, till this mortal is surrendered, and the house not made with hands entered. But if the heart faints, and the flesh fails, fear not ye, who through that mysterious change seek Jesus that was crucified, but now liveth for evermore at the right hand of God.