

J H Jowett-Daily Meditation 3

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MY DAILY MEDITATION for the Circling Year by John Henry Jowett

MARCH

MARCH 1

OVERCHARGING THE HEART

Luke 21:25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36.

HERE is a great peril. Our hearts may be "overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares." Our mode of living may send our spirits to sleep. Yes, we may so ill-use our bodies that the watchman sleeps at his post! We can over-eat, and dim our moral sight. A man's daily meals have vital relationship with his vision of the Lord. If I would have a clear spirit I must not overburden the flesh.

And therefore am I bidden to "take heed" to myself. I must exercise common sense, the most important of all the senses. I must put a bridle upon my appetite, and hold it in subjection to my Lord.

And I must "watch!" The devil is surpassingly cunning, and, if he can, he will mix an opiate even with the sacramental wine. He will lure me among the winsome poppies, and put me into a perilous sleep.

And I must "pray!" I have a great and glorious Defender! Let me humbly yet confidently use Him, and I shall be delivered from the snares of appetite, and from the benumbing influence of all excess.

MARCH 2

THE POWER OF THE CROSS

John 10:11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18.

I LAY down my life." In that supreme sacrifice all other sacrifices turn pale. In the power of that sacrifice the blackest guilt finds forgiveness. Its energies seek out the ruined and desolate life with glorious offer of renewal. When the Lord laid down His life the entire race found a new beginning. Our hope is born at the Cross. It is there that "the burden of our sin rolls away." In His night we find daybreak. When He said, "It is finished," our soul could sing, "Life is begun."

And so pilgrims gather at the Cross. Songs are heard there, the "sweetest ever sung by mortal tongues." And the power of the Cross never wanes. Its glorious grace reaches the soul to-day as in the earliest days. It inspires the despairing heart. It transforms the mind. It remakes the tissues of the will. There is no shattered power that the power of the Cross cannot restore. "We are complete in Him."

"In the Cross of Christ I glory,

Towering o'er the wrecks of time;

All the light of sacred story

Gathers round its head sublime.”

MARCH 3

PREPARING FOR THE BRIDE

John 14:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 19, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14

OUR Lord has prepared a place. It is the Bridegroom “getting the house ready” for the bride. And, therefore, the preparations are not made grudgingly and with slow reluctance. Everything is of the best, and done with the swift delight of love. “Come, for all things are now ready.”

And our Lord will fetch His bride to the prepared place. “I am the way.” We become so wrapt up in Him that nothing else counts. I once travelled through the Black Country with a fascinating friend, and I never saw it! And we can become so absorbed in our glorious Bridegroom that we shall be almost oblivious of adverse circumstances which may beset us. Yes, even this is possible: “He that believeth in Me shall never see death!”

“I will receive you unto Myself.” The last obscuring veil is to be rent, and we are to see Him “face to face.” And that will be home, for that will be satisfaction and peace. The deepest hunger of the soul will be gratified in a glorious contentment, and we shall find that “the half hath not been told.”

MARCH 4

THE GREAT COMPANION

John 14:15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31.

AND so even the road is to have the home-feeling in it. “I will not leave you orphans.” Yes; there is to be something of home even in the way to it. I find something of Devonshire even in Dorsetshire; Shropshire gives me a taste of Wales. My Lord will not leave me comfortless. Heaven runs over, and I find its bounty before I arrive at its gate. The “Valley of Baca” becomes “a well.”

And there are to be wonderful visions to speed the pilgrim’s feet. “I will manifest Myself unto him.” At unexpected corners the glory will break! We shall be assuming that we have picked up a common traveller, and suddenly we shall discover it is the Lord, for He will be made known to us “in the breaking of bread.” And at many “risings” of the road, where the climbing is stiff and burdensome, we shall be inspired with many a glorious view, and we shall see “the land that is very far off.”

The one condition is, that I keep His word. If I am obedient, He will appear unto me, and the humdrum road will shine with miracles of grace.

MARCH 5

THE TENT AND THE BUILDING

2Corinthians 5:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.

AT present we live in a tent—“the earthly house of this tabernacle.” And often the tent is very rickety. There are rents through which the rain enters, and it trembles ominously in the great storm. Some tents are frail from the very beginning, half-rotten when they are put up, and they have no defence even against the breeze. But even the strongest tent becomes weather-worn and threadbare, and in the long run it “falls in a heap!” And what then?

We shall exchange the frail tent for the solid house! “If the earthly house of this tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” When we are unclothed we shall find ourselves clothed with our house which is from heaven. The glory of this transition can only be confessed by “the saints in light.” To awake, and discover that the creaking, breaking cords are left behind, that all the leakages are over, that we are no longer exposed to the cutting wind, that pain is passed, and sickness, and death—this must be a wonder of inconceivable ecstasy!

And “absent from the body” we shall be “present with the Lord.”

MARCH 6

HOME-LIFE IN GOD

John 17:20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26.

THE home-life in God is to be a life of perfect union—“I in them, and Thou in Me.” Home is only another name for union. It is the

perfect fusion of life with life, the harmonizing of differences as many different notes combine to form the mystery of choral song. And so will it be in the home-land! Our manifold individualities will be retained, but we shall "fit into one another," and in the perfect harmony we shall hear the "new song" of heaven.

And we are to prepare that union by the contemplation of the glory of the Lord. "That they may behold My glory." Yes, and we can begin to do that now. We can lift our eyes away from the ugly compromises of men and fix them upon the radiant holiness of the Lord. We can look away from the dirty Alpine village and gaze upon the virgin snow of the uplifted heights. "Looking unto Jesus!"

And in that contemplation we shall most assuredly become transformed. "I have given unto them the glory which Thou gavest Me." That is our wonderful possibility. For thee and me is this prize offered, we can "awake in His likeness."

MARCH 7

THINGS MISSING IN HEAVEN

Revelation 21:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7

WHAT a number of "conspicuous absences" there are to be in "the home-land!"

No more sea! John was in Patmos, and the sea rolled between him and his kinsmen. The sea was a minister of estrangement. But in the home-country every cause of separation is to be done away, and the family life is to be one of inconceivable intimacy. No more sea!

And no more pain! Its work is done, and therefore the worker is put away. When the building is completed the scaffolding may be removed. When the patient is in good health the medicine bottles can be dispensed with. And so shall it be with pain and all its attendants. "The inhabitant never says: 'I am sick!'"

And no more death! "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is Death." Yes, he, too, shall drop his scythe, and his lax hand shall destroy no more for ever. Death himself shall die! And all things that have shared his work shall die with him. "The former things have passed away." The wedding-peal which welcomes the Lamb's bride will ring the funeral knell of Death and all his sable company.

MARCH 8

THE CITIZENS OF THE HOME-LAND

Revelation 7:9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17.

THE citizen of "the home-land" wears white robes. His habits are perfectly clean. And the purity which he wears is a Divine gift and not a human accomplishment. It cannot be attained by self-sacrifice; it is ours through the sacrifice of our Lord. "They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

And every citizen of the home-land bears a palm in his hand. It is the emblem of conquest and sovereignty. By the grace of Christ they have been lifted above self and sin, and the devil, and death, and "made to sit with Him" on His throne. The palm is the heavenly symbol that all their spiritual enemies are under their feet.

And every citizen of the home-land takes part in the new song. The home-folk are therefore one in purity, one in self-conquest, and one in praise. "Salvation unto our God which sitteth upon the throne!" In that melody of thankfulness their union is deepened and enriched.

And we, too, can begin now to wear the white robe! And even now can we carry the palm! And even now we can join in the song of ceaseless praise.

MARCH 9

NEARING HOME!

2Timothy 4:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.

HERE is a most valiant pilgrim nearing home! By the mercy of Christ he can look back upon a brave day, and there's a fine hopeful light in the evening sky.

He has fought well! "I have fought a good fight." And his has been a hard field. The enemy has ever regarded him as a leader in the army of the Lord and against him has the fiercest fight been waged. But he has never lost or stained his flag.

And he has run well! "I have finished my course." There was no melancholy turning back when the feverish start had cooled. There was no shrinking when the biting wind of malice and persecution swept across his track. On and on he ran, with increasing speed and ardour, until he reached the goal.

And well had he guarded his treasure! "I have kept the faith." He was the custodian of "unsearchable riches," and he watched, day and night, lest any infernal burglar should despoil him of his wealth. He guarded his gospel, his liberty, his hope, as the sentinels guard the crown jewels in the Tower.

And now the hard day is nearly over. "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord will give me at that day."

MARCH 10

EXALTATION BY SEPARATION

2Corinthians 6:11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18.

WHEN we turn away from the world, and leave it, we ourselves are not left to desolation and orphan-hood. When we "come out from among them" the Lord receives us! He is waiting for us. The new companionship is ours the moment the old companionship is ended. "I will not leave you comfortless." What we have lost is compensated by infinite and eternal gain. We have lost "the whole world" and gained "the unsearchable riches of Christ."

And therefore separation is exaltation. We leave the muddy pleasures of Sodom and we "drink of the river of His pleasures." We leave "the garish day," and all the feverish life of Vanity Fair, and He maketh us "to lie down in green pastures," "He leadeth us beside the still waters." We leave a transient sensation, we receive the bread of eternity. We forfeit fireworks, we gain the stars!

What fools we are, and blind! We prefer the scorched desert of Sodom to the garden of Eden. We prefer a loud reputation to noble character. We prefer delirium to joy. We prefer human applause to the praise of God. We prefer a fading garland to the crown of life. Lord, that we may receive our sight!

MARCH 11

GOOD AND BAD ROADS

Psalms 1:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

THERE is nothing breaks up more speedily than a badly-made road. Every season is its enemy and works for its destruction. Fierce heat and intensest cold both strive for its undoing. And "the way of the ungodly" is an appallingly bad road. There is rottenness in its foundations, and there is built into it "wood, and hay, and stubble," How can it stand? "The Spirit of the Lord breatheth upon it," and it is surely brought to nought. All the forces of holiness are pledged to its destruction, and they shall pick it to pieces, and shall scatter its elements to the winds.

"I am the way!" That road remains sound "in all generations." Changing circumstances cannot affect its stability. It is proof against every tempest, and against the most violent heat. It is a road in which little children can walk in happiness and in which old people can walk in peace. It is firm in the day of life, and it is absolutely sure in the hour of death. It never yields! "Thou hast set my feet upon a rock and hast established my goings." "This is the way, walk ye in it."

MARCH 12

THE COMING OF THE LORD

Luke 17:22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32.

IN a certain very real way the Lord is coming every moment. And the great art of Christian living is to be able to discern Him when He arrives. He may appear as the village carpenter; or we may "suppose Him to be one of the gardeners," and we may mistake His appearing! He may meet us in some lowly duty, or in some seemingly unpleasant task. He may shine in the cheeriness of some triumph, or whisper to us in a message of good news. "I come again." And if our eyes are open we shall see Him coming continually. It is by this perception that the value of our life is measured and weighed.

But He will also come again "suddenly," when the soul will be translated into unknown climes. He will come again in the sable robes of death. Shall we know Him? Will our eyes be so keen and true that we shall be able to pierce the dark veil and say "It is the Lord!" This has been the joyful experience of countless multitudes. When the summons came their souls went forth, not as victims to encounter death, but as the bride "to meet the bridegroom!" They had intimacy with Him in life; they had glorious fellowship with

Him in death!

MARCH 13

SICKNESS AMONG CHRIST'S FRIENDS

John 11:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16.

AND so sickness can enter the circle of the friends of the Lord. "He whom Thou lovest is sick." My sicknesses do not mean that I have lost His favour. The shadow is His, as well as the sunshine. When He removes me from the glare of boisterous health it may be because of some spiritual fern which needs the ministry of the shade. "This sickness is ... for the glory of God." Something beautiful will spring out of the shadowed seclusion, something which shall spread abroad the name and fame of God.

And, therefore, I do not wonder at the Lord's delay. He did not hasten away to the sick friend: "He abode two days still in the same place where He was." Shall I put it like this: the awaking bulbs were not yet ready for the brighter light—just a little more shade! We are impatient to get healthy; the Lord desires that we become holy. Our physical sickness is continued in order that we may put on spiritual strength.

And there are others besides sick Lazarus concerned in the sickness: "I am glad for your sakes I was not there." The disciples were included in the divine scheme. Their spiritual welfare was to be affected by it. Let me ever remember that the circle affected by sickness is always wider than the patient's bed. And may God be glorified in all!

MARCH 14

"EVEN NOW!"

John 11:17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31.

LET me consider this marvellous confession of Martha's faith. "I know that even now, whatsoever Thou wilt ask of God, God will give it Thee!" Mark the "even now"! Lazarus was dead, and it was midnight in the desolate home. But "even now"! Beautiful it is when a soul's most awful crises are the seasons of its most radiant faith! Beautiful it is when our lamp shines steadily in the tempest, and when our spiritual confidence remains unshaken like a gloriously rooted tree. Beautiful it is when in our midnight men can hear the strains of the "even now"!

And let me consider the wonder of the Divine response. "I am the resurrection and the life." A faith like Martha's will always win the Saviour's best. And here is an overwhelming best before which we can only bow in silent homage and awe. He is the Fountain in whom the stagnant brook shall find currency again. He is the Life in whom the fallen dead shall rise to their feet again.

And what is this? "Whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die!" We shall go to sleep, but we shall never taste the bitterness of death. In the very act of closing our material eyes we shall open our spiritual eyes, and find ourselves at home!

MARCH 15

JESUS AT A GRAVE

John 11:32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45.

HERE is Jesus weeping. "Jesus wept." Why did He weep? Perhaps He wept out of sheer sympathy with the tears of others. And perhaps, too, He wept because some of our tears were needless. If we were better men we should know more of the love and purpose of our Lord, and perhaps many of our tears would be dried. Still, here is the sweet and heartening evangel. He sympathizes with my grief! Never a bitter tear is shed without my Lord sharing the tang and the pang.

Here is Jesus praying! "Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me." Then it is not so much a prayer as a thanksgiving. He gives thanks for what He is "about to receive." Is this my way? Perhaps I do it before I take a meal. Do I do it before I begin to live the day? In the morning do I thank my God for what I am about to receive? Can I confidently give thanks before I receive the gifts of God, before the dish-covers are removed? Can I trust Him?

And here is Jesus commanding, clothed in sovereign power: "Lazarus, come forth!" That is the same voice which "in the beginning created the heavens and the earth."

MARCH 16

THE NEMESIS OF BIGOTRY

John 11:46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57

FEARFUL nemesis waits upon the spirit of bigotry. Oliver Wendell Holmes has said that bigotry is like the pupil of the eye, the more light you pour into it the more it contracts. The scribes and Pharisees became smaller men the more the Lord revealed His glory. In the raising of Lazarus they saw nothing of the glory of the resurrection life, nothing of the joy of the reunited family, nothing of the gracious ministry of the Lord! "Darkness had blinded their eyes."

And it is also the nemesis of bigotry to be bitter, cruel, and violent. They sought to kill the Giver of life!

It is the ministry of light to ripen and sweeten the dispositions. "The fruit of the light is in all goodness." It is the ministry of the darkness to make men sour and unsympathetic, and revengeful, and to so pervert the heart as to make it a minister of poison and death.

And yet, how powerless is bigotry in the long run! It can no more stay the progress of the Kingdom than King Canute could check the flowing tide! Bigotry slew the Lord, and He rose again! And so it ever is. "Truth crushed to earth shall rise again; the eternal years of God are hers."

MARCH 17

THE COMMONPLACE OF DEATH

Luke 7:11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18.

DEATH is never a commonplace. We never become so accustomed to funerals as not to see them. Everybody sees the mournful procession go along the street. A momentary awe steals over the flippant thought, and for one brief season the superficial opens into the infinite abyss.

And yet, while a thousand are arrested, only a few are compassionate. There can be awe without pity; there can be interest without service. When this humble funeral train trudged out of the city of Nain our Lord halted, and His heart melted! There was an "aching void," and He longed to fill it. There was a bleeding, broken heart, and He yearned to stand and heal it. He found His own joy in removing another's tears, His own satisfaction in another's peace.

"The Lord hath visited His people!" That is what the people said, and I do not wonder at the saying! And let me, too, be a humble visitor in the troubled ways of men! Let my heart be a well of sweet compassion to all the sons and daughters of grief! Like Barnabas, let me be "a son of consolation."

MARCH 18

SERENITY IN THE TEMPEST

Job 19:23, 24, 25, 26, 27

PERHAPS I am akin to Job in having experienced the pressure of calamity. I have felt the shock of adverse circumstances, and the house of my life has trembled in the convulsion. Or death has been to my door and has returned again and again, and every time he has left me weeping! All God's billows have gone over me! Verily, I can take my place by the patriarch Job.

But can I share his witness, "I know that my Redeemer liveth"? (Job 19:25) Have I a calm assurance that my ruler is not caprice, and that my comings and goings are not determined by unfeeling chance? When death knocked at my door, did I know that the King had sent him? When some cherished scheme toppled into ruin, had I any thought that the Lord's hand was concerned in the shaking? Even when my circumstances are dubious, and I cannot trace a gracious purpose, do I know that my Vindicator liveth, and that some day He will justify all the happenings of the troubled road?

I will pay for this gracious confidence. I would have a firm step even among disappointments; yea, I would "sing songs in the night!"

MARCH 19

DEATH AS MY SERVANT

Revelation 20:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.

EVEN now I would rise from the dead. Even now I would know "the power of His resurrection." Even now I would taste the rapture of the deathless life. And this is my glorious prerogative in grace. Yes, even now I can be "risen with Christ," and "death shall no more have dominion over me!"

And yet I must die! Yes, but the old enemy shall now be my friend. He will not be my master, but my servant. He shall just be the porter, to open the door into my Father's house, into the home of unspeakable blessedness and glory. Death shall not hurt me!

I have seen a little child fall asleep while out in the streets of the city, and the kind nurse has taken charge of the sleeper, and when the little one awaked she was at home, and she opened her eyes upon her mother's face.

So shall it be with all who are alive in Christ, and who have risen from a spiritual grave. They shall just fall into a brief sweet sleep, and gentle death shall usher them into the glory of the endless day.

MARCH 20

THE LORD IS AT HAND!

"Ye know not what hour your Lord doth come."

—Matthew 24:42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51.

THEN let me always live as though my Lord were at the gate! Let me arrange my affairs on the assumption that the next to lift the latch will be the King. When I am out with my friend, walking and talking, let me assume that just round the corner I may meet the Lord.

And so let me practise meeting Him! Said a mother to me one day concerning her long-absent boy: "I lay a place for him at every meal! His seat is always ready!" May I not do this for my Lord? May I not make a place for Him in all my affairs—my choices, my pleasures, my times of business, my season of rest? He may come just now; let His place be ready!

If He delay, I must not become careless. If He give me further liberty, I must not take liberties with it. Here is the golden principle, ever to live, ever to think, ever to work as though the Lord had already arrived. For indeed, He has, and when the veil is rent I shall find Him at my side.

MARCH 21

IN THE GOLDEN CITY

Isaiah 52:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12.

AND so these are the glories of the golden city. There is wakefulness. "Awake! awake!" In the golden city none will be asleep. Everybody will be bright-eyed, clear-minded, looking upon all beautiful things with fresh and ready receptiveness. "The eyes of them that see shall not be dim."

There is strength. "Put on thy strength!" There will be no broken wills in the golden city, and no broken hearts. No one will walk with a limp! Everybody will go with a brave stride as to the strains of a band. And no one will tire of living, and the inhabitant never says, "I am sick."

And there is beauty. "Put on thy beautiful garments." Bare strength might not be attractive. But strength clothed in beauty is a very gracious thing. The tender mosses on the granite make it winsome. Strength is companionable when it is united with grace. In the golden city there will be tender sentiment as well as rigid conviction.

And these glories will be our defence. A positive virtue is our best rampart against vice. A robust health is the best protection against the epidemic. "The prince of this world cometh, and he hath nothing in me."

MARCH 22

COUNSEL AND MIGHT

Psalms 119:33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40.

THE psalmist prays for an illumined understanding. "Teach me, O Lord, the way of Thy statutes." We are so prone to be children of the twilight, and to see things out of their true proportions. Therefore do we need to be daily taught. I must go into the school of the Lord, and in docility of spirit I must sit at His feet. "O, teach me, Lord, teach even me!"

And the psalmist prays for rectified inclinations. "Incline my heart unto Thy testimonies." We so often have the wrong bias, the fatal taste, and our desires are all against the will of the Lord. If only my leanings were toward the Lord how swift my progress would be! I strive to walk after holiness, while my inclinations are in the realm of sin. And so I need a clean mouth, with an appetite for the beautiful and the true. "Blessed are they that hunger after righteousness."

And the psalmist prays for a strenuous will. "Make me to go in the path of Thy commandments." He is praying for "go," for moral persistence, for power to crash through all obstacles which may impede his heavenly progress. And such is my need. Good Lord,

endow me with a will like “an iron pillar,” and help me to “stand in the evil day.”

MARCH 23

THE DARK BETRAYAL

John 18:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14.

OUR Master was betrayed by a disciple, “one of the twelve.” The blow came from one of “His own household.” The world employed a “friend” to execute its dark design. And so our intimacy with Christ may be our peril; our very association may be made our temptation. The devil would rather gain one belonging to the inner circle than a thousand who stand confessed as the friends of the world. What am I doing in the kingdom? Can I be trusted? Or am I in the pay of the evil one?

And our Master was betrayed in the garden of prayer. In the most hallowed place the betrayer gave the most unholy kiss. He brought his defilement into the most awe-inspiring sanctuary the world has ever known. And so may it be with me. I can kindle the unclean fire in the church. I can stab my Lord when I am on my knees. While I am in apparent devotion I can be in league with the powers of darkness.

And this “dark betrayal” was for money! The Lord of Glory was bartered for thirty pieces of silver! And the difference between Judas and many men is that they often sell their Lord for less! From the power of Mammon, and from the blindness which falls upon his victims, good Lord, deliver me!

MARCH 24

IN GETHSEMANE

Luke 22:39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46.

SURELY this is the very Holy of Holies! It were well for us to fall on our knees and “be silent unto the Lord.” I would quietly listen to the awful words, “Remove this cup from Me!” and I would listen again and again until never again do I hold a cheap religion. It is in this garden that we learn the real values of things, and come to know the price at which our redemption was bought. No one can remain in Gethsemane and retain a frivolous and flippant spirit.

“And there appeared unto Him an angel from heaven, strengthening Him.” I know that angel! He has been to me. He has brought me angel’s food, even heavenly manna. Always and everywhere, when my soul has surrendered itself to the Divine will, the angel comes, and my soul is refreshed. The laying down of self is the taking up of God. When I lose my will I gain the Infinite. The moment of surrender is also the moment of conquest. When I consecrate my weakness I put on strength and majesty like a robe.

“And when He rose up from His prayer”—what then? Just this, He was quietly ready for anything, ready for the betraying kiss, ready for crucifixion. “Arise, let us be going.”

MARCH 25

THE FEAR OF MAN

John 18:15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27.

AND this is the disciple who had been surnamed “The Rock”! Our Lord looked into the morrow, and He saw Simon’s character, compacted by grace and discipline into a texture tough and firm as granite. But there is not much granite here! Peter is yet loose and yielding; more like a bending reed than an unshakable rock. A servant girl whispers, and his timid heart flings a lie to his lips and he denies his Lord.

Peter denied the Master, not because he coveted money, but because he feared men. He was not seeking crowns, but escaping frowns. He was not clutching at a garland, but avoiding a sword. It was not avarice but cowardice which determined his ways. He shrank from crucifixion! He saw a possible cross, and with a great lie he passed by on the other side.

But the Lord has not done with Peter. He is still “in the making.” Some day he will justify his new name. Some day we shall find it written: “When they saw the boldness of Peter, they marvelled”! Once a maid could make him tremble. Now he can stand in high places, “steadfast and unmovable”!

From the spirit of cowardice and from all temporizing, and from the unholy fear of man, deliver me, good Lord!

MARCH 26

THE KING OF KINGS

John 18:28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38.

WHAT a strange King our Lord appears, claiming mystic sovereignty, and yet betrayed by a false friend!

And yet, even in His apparent subjection His majestic kingliness stands revealed. When I watch the demeanours of Pilate and Jesus, I can see very clearly who it is who is on the throne; Pilate wears the outer trappings of royalty, but my Lord's is "the power and the glory." Pilate fusses about in a little "brief authority," but my Lord stands possessed of a serene dominion. Even at Pilate's judgment bar Jesus is the King.

But His kingdom is "not of this world." And therefore this King is unlike every other King. He seeks His possessions not by fighting, but by "lighting"; not by coercion, but by constraint. His servants do not go forth with swords, but with lamps; not to drive the peoples, but to lead them. His visible throne is a cross, and His conquests are made in the power of sacrifice.

And so His armaments are the Truth, and the Truth alone. "For this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the Truth." When the Truth wins and woos, the triumph is lasting. Garlands won by the sword perish before the evening. To be one of the King's subjects is to share His nature. "Everyone that is of the truth heareth My voice."

MARCH 27

THE SILENCE OF JESUS

"He answered him nothing!"

—Luke 23:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12.

AND yet, "Ask, and it shall be given you!" Yes, but everything depends upon the asking. Even in the realm of music there is a rudeness of approach which leaves true music silent. Whether the genius of music is to answer us or not depends upon our "touch." Herod's "touch" was wrong, and there was no response. Herod was flippant, and the Eternal was dumb. And I, too, may question a silent Lord. In the spiritual realm an idle curiosity is never permitted to see the crown jewels. Frivolousness never goes away from the royal Presence rich with surprises of grace. "Thy touch has still its ancient power!" So it has, but the healing touch is the gracious response to the touch of faith. "She touched Him, and...!"

"And Herod ... mocked Him." That was the real spirit behind the eager curiosity. And I, too, may mock my Lord! I may bow before Him, and array Him in apparent royalty, while all the time my spirit is full of flippancy and jeers. I may lustily sing: "Crown Him Lord of all," while I will not recognize His rights on a single square foot of the soil of my inheritance. And this it is to be the kinsman of Herod. And this, too, will be the issue; the heavens will be as brass, and the Lord will answer us nothing.

MARCH 28

THE CHOICE OF BARABBAS

Luke 23:13-24.

BARABBAS rather than Christ! The destroyer of life rather than the Giver of life! This was the choice of the people; and it is a choice which has often stained and defiled my own life.

When I choose revenge rather than forgiveness, I am preferring Barabbas to Christ. For revenge is a murderer, while forgiveness is a healer and saviour of men. But how often I have sent the sweet healer to the cross, and welcomed the murderer within my gate!

When I choose carnal passion before holiness, I am preferring Barabbas to Christ. For is there any murderer so destructive as carnality? And holiness stands waiting, ready to make me beautiful with the wondrous garments of grace. But I spurn the angel, and open my door to the beast.

The devil is always soliciting my service, and the devil "is a murderer from the beginning." Have I never preferred him, and sent my Lord to be "crucified afresh," and "put Him to an open shame"?

Again let me pray—for all my unholy and unwholesome choices, for all my preference of the murderer, forgive me, good Lord!

MARCH 29

MYSTIC ALARM-BELLS

Matthew 27:19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25.

PILATE was warned. Pilate's wife had a dream, and in the dream she had glimpses of reality, and when she awoke her soul was

troubled. "Have thou nothing to do with that just man!"

And I, too, have mysterious warnings when I am treading perilous ways. Sometimes the warning comes from a friend. Sometimes "the angel of the Lord stands in the way for an adversary." My conscience rings loudly like an alarm-bell in the dead of night. Yes, the warnings are clear and pertinent, but... !

Pilate ignored the warning, and handed the Lord to the revengeful will of the priests. Pilate defiled his heart, and then he washed his hands! What a petty attempt to escape the certain issues! And yet we have shared in the small evasion. We have crucified the Lord, and then we wear a crucifix. We violate the spirit, and then we do reverence to the letter. We hand the Lord over to be crucified, and then we practise the postures and gait of the saints. Yes, we have all sought an escape in outer ceremony from the nemesis of our shameful deeds.

My soul, attend thou to the mystic warnings, and "play the man"!

MARCH 30

THE VICTORY OF MEEKNESS

1Peter 2:17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25.

HEN I may be not only the betrayer, but the betrayed. In my inner circle there may be a friend who will play me false, and hand me over to the wolves. What then? Just this—I must imitate the grace of my Lord, and "consider Him."

There must be no violent retaliation. "When He was reviled, He reviled not again." The fire of revenge may singe or even scorch my enemy, but it will do far more damage to the furniture of my own soul. After every indulgence in vengeful passion some precious personal possession has been destroyed. The fact of the matter is, this fire cannot be kept burning without making fuel of the priceless furnishings of the soul. "Heat not a furnace for your foe so hot that it do singe yourself."

There must be a serene committal of the soul to the strong keeping of the Eternal God. "He committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously." This is the way of peace, as this is the way of victory. If ever the enemy is to be conquered this must be the mode of the conquest. When men persecute us, let us rest more implicitly in our God.

MARCH 31

AT THE CROSS!

Matthew 27:38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50.

LET me listen to the ribald jeers which were flung upon my Lord. And let me listen, not as a judge, but as one who has been in the company of the callous crowd. For I, too, have mocked Him! I have said: "Hail, King!" and I have bowed before Him, but it has been mock and empty homage! I have sung: "Crown Him Lord of all!" but there has been no real recognition of His sovereignty; mine has been a mock coronation. From the seat of the mocker, deliver me, good Lord!

And let me stand near the cross while that awful voice of desolation rends the heavens. "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" In that agonizing cry I am led to the real heart of the atonement. My Saviour was standing where His believers will never stand. That was the real death, the death of an inconceivable abandonment. And "He died for me!" He so died in order that I may never taste death. "He that liveth and believeth in Me shall never die."

Every believer will go to sleep, and through a short sleep he will wake in the glory of the Eternal Presence. But he will never die: no, never die!