

SOME SUNDAY SERMONS FROM SALEM PULPITS

Sermon by Rev. Fred C. Taylor in the First Methodist church on Sunday morning.

Bible text: "Except a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains a single grain, but if it dies it bears rich fruit."

The larger and richer life comes through the observance of the law of service and sacrifice. It may appear to be a contradiction of terms to say that we live by dying or perishing by losing, but it is through this way that the harvest or fruitage comes.

This law operates in the world of nature. The grain of wheat propagates itself through sacrifice and death. It is buried in the earth that it might lose itself in a richer and larger harvest.

If the seed would live a single grain it must save itself and not die, but if it would live and be glorified in a golden harvest and give to the world a higher and nobler service, then it must submit to this stern inexorable law of self-denial and sacrifice.

The daffodil and tulip bulbs sacrifice themselves in bringing forth the wonderful blossoms as well as multiplying themselves. Safed the Sage wrote the parable of the silver dollars in the tessellated floor of the old Palmer House hotel in Chicago and told how in fifty years they were worn away and lost to their owner. But the bulbs which are planted in the earth to die, bring forth a rich harvest and live again in the larger way.

This law of sacrifice found its highest expression in the life of Jesus Christ. He gave a shining example of sacrifice for others. In toil and service and death, he gave himself that others might be enriched and enabled.

The words of scorn and unbelief addressed to him by his enemies when he hung upon the cross "He saved others, himself He cannot save" were expressive of the law that operated in his life. He could not save himself and at the same time save others.

When Peter said to him "Pity

than those of our text. Yet the quest of the soul is to attain that moral perfection.

Other religions have not set impossible standards for their adherents. The ancient Hebrew code was quite attainable. It did not require super-human self-control to demand only "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." Neither was it impossible to "love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy." The moral standards of Mohammed and Confucius and Buddha are quite possible. But centuries of Confucianism left Chinese womanhood with bound feet; Hinduism left Indian wife-buying and infant marriage bargains; while Mohammedan ethics left mangled Armenia.

The law of the larger life in the Christian religion is that of suffering and sacrifice in service to others. All human progress, and effective service comes in this way. When the self-life dies in a devotion to some high ideal or vision there will be a golden harvest of noble deeds.

Only when mankind loses itself in sacrifice for others does nobility live and become glorified. Henry Ford says "The success of acquisition is dead coal, but the success by contribution is living fire." Like the grain of wheat we must be willing to give ourselves if we would bear a rich harvest.

When we die to self and sin we live in new life of righteousness. Paul expressed it in the words "I live, yet not I but Christ liveth in me."

Martin Luther expressed it "If someone should knock at my heart's door and ask 'who lives there?' I must not say, 'Martin Luther lives here,' for Martin Luther is dead, Jesus Christ lives here."

The glory of Phillips Brooks was that he gave himself for others. Countless others, like Francis Willard, Russell Conwell, and Jane Adams have followed this law of the larger life, and in the sacrifice of themselves have been glorified in the richer harvest. And at last in the death of the body, if we are faithful, and true to our God, we will live in the glorified life of immortality.

The doctrine of personal purity which Jesus taught sounded impossible. Indeed too many people today fall short of the goal. Yet every honest Christian strives to be "pure in heart" that he may "see God." And the whole race has been enabled by its effort to come up to Jesus' ideal in this regard.

All life is a warfare: the beloved wages a Christian warfare against all the powers of evil. There are alternating periods of quiet and attack. There are evil days when our moral and spiritual attainments are assaulted.

These assaults arise from our position in the world, our ignorance and inexperience, and the magazine of combustible within us called our passions, appetites, and desires. Assualts are sudden by nature. They spring out of the vicissitudes of life, as we alternate between the joys of prosperity and the mid-winter of our adversities. Like the closing of an ambush, the springing of a lion, or the coming of a thief in the night, evil assaults us.

Armour is useful in proportion as it is worn and exercised before the attack. There is no time to put it on in the emergency. We put on the armour of God by previous knowledge of God's truth and previous practice of the Christian virtues.

Our armour consists of the girdle of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the helmet of salvation, the shoes of peace, the shield of faith, and the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God. That is to say, our armour is made out of certain habits and dispositions of mind and heart induced by much attention to the Divine.

We put the armour on by seeking the "secret places of the Most High" in prayer, and feeding on His word. We put the armour on by cultivating an attitude of dependence and receptivity towards God. We fight not in our own strength, but in God's, as David did when he triumphed over Goliath.

Every successful resistance increases our firmness of footing, builds up our confidence, adds to our strength, and makes future victory more probable. Therefore, let us do all to arm ourselves with God's armour, and then let us obey the world.

A sermon preached at First Congregational Church by Charles E. Ward.

"Be ye perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect."

The success of the Christian religion has been largely due to its impossible moral standards. By life and teaching Jesus set ethical goals that seemed utterly beyond the reach of man. Perhaps none of his words sounded more absurd.

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