

## In Memoriam.

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“His Lord said unto him, well done, thou good and faithful servant : thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things : enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”—MATTHEW xxv., 21.

In these words, which form part of an extended parable, our Lord represents the triumphant close of the believer's life of earthly service. We are here introduced into the solemnities of eternity. We behold the servant standing in the presence of the Divine Master, rendering up the account of his life-work, and receiving his Lord's approving verdict. It is not in the heart of the servant to think highly of his own work, for he has learned from Christ himself to say, when he has done all, “I am an unprofitable servant.” But the Lord in the text speaks not in the strict language of the law, but in the gracious language of the Gospel. The imperfections and blemishes have for ever passed away from the work under review, while the workman himself is presented “without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.” As we gaze upon this picture before us, our minds are wholly occupied with the thought that, whatever estimate may be made of the servant's work on earth by fallible men, that work is rewarded in Heaven with divine recognition and commendation, and from that decisive verdict there can be no appeal.

What greater comfort could be imparted to those who mourn the loss of a Christian worker than to believe that he has been received into the gracious presence of the Lord, and has tasted of the pleasures that are at God's right hand? What greater inspi-

ration could be given to those who are left to carry on the work of God than to be assured that the crown of righteousness, which is given to the faithful servant, awaits all those who in the same spirit devote themselves to the Master's service?

As a Christian church we cherish the hope that he whose loss we lament this day, has received the promise of the text; and we trust that his departure from us may be so blest and sanctified that we shall all be led to labour with redoubled zeal and energy for the Saviour.

In bringing this text before you in detail, I shall ask you to consider:—

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE A SERVICE;

THE SPIRIT IN WHICH THIS SERVICE IS TO BE PERFORMED;

THE REWARDS WHICH THIS SERVICE SECURES.

#### THE CHRISTIAN LIFE A SERVICE.

The Christian life in its very nature must be a service, for the Saviour shows that the Christian is a branch of the True Vine, and that by abiding in the Vine by living faith and love, "the same bringeth forth much fruit."

We render service to the Saviour by the exhibition of Christian character. The character of the true Christian man—the whole atmosphere which surrounds his personality and distinguishes him from his brethren, as well as that in which he is like his brethren—bears witness to the truth of Christ, honours the Divine Teacher, "adorns the doctrine of God," and encourages us who behold this exhibition of Christian life to put into practice the truths and precepts of the gospel. This is one of the noblest and most beneficial services which can be rendered to the Master, and to the Church of which He is the Head. A holy character pleads for God more persuasively than an eloquent tongue.

We render service to Christ by speaking the truth as we know

it, as we have realised it filling and satisfying the heart and mind, giving peace to the conscience, strengthening the will in its holy resolutions, and nourishing all the powers of the spiritual life. Let us speak only of that we know, and testify only of that we have seen. Let our testimony be that of our own heart's knowledge. Let us give no second-hand evidence for the truth of God, but witness of that which our own souls have felt and known of the power and blessedness of the Gospel. No man who thus speaks spends his strength in vain, for the hearts of the hearers respond to his own—"He fashioneth their hearts alike." Of every good and faithful servant the words are applicable, "Ye know how we exhorted and comforted, and charged everyone of you, as a father doth his children, that ye should walk worthy of the Lord, who hath called you to His kingdom and glory."

How does this sphere of Christian service expand before our eyes, as we think of the good and faithful servant, who in season and out of season seeks to do his Master's work! Time would fail me to speak of the sphere of prayer for the Church and the world; of the sphere of official duties connected with the Church; of the sphere of charity—comforting the distressed, consoling the bereaved, feeding the hungry, and clothing the naked. Whatever we do in any sphere with a single eye to the glory of God, even though it be but giving a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, or ministering unto the least of the children of God, Christ accepts and honours what is done at the great day of judgment, saying, "Ye have done it unto Me."

In further considering this branch of the subject, I remark:

*The living principle of this service is faith.*

Faith in Christ—in His sacrifice, claims, offices, promises—lies at the basis of everything distinctively Christian; Christian thought, feeling, character, work; in a word, all the fruit of the

believer's life springs from the vitalizing principle of faith, which draws its nourishment from Christ, the life.

The good and faithful servant works in faith, believes in the appointed means, believes in the grace and power of the Holy Spirit to make human instrumentality effective to the conversion and sanctification of men. He recognises that the responsibility of effort belongs to him, while the measure of success is altogether in the hands of God. It is his to use the means with all faithfulness and earnestness, it is God's to remember and make fruitful his "work of faith and labour of love."

*Its inspiring power is love.*

As of old, so still, the power that enables the Christian servant to make sacrifices, to engage and continue in arduous work, the inspiration that changes what otherwise would be felt as drudgery into joyous service comes from love. "The love of Christ constraineth us." This is a truth still inscribed on the banner of the Church, a truth to which the present age of evangelistic and missionary effort bears as emphatic a witness as the ages of Christian life which have gone before. The love of Christ that led Him to live, to suffer, to die for us, constrains us who believe with its mighty power to serve Him. As an irresistible wind, so it fills the sails of our purposes, and carries us onward in all our Christian efforts. But the love of Christ creates within the believer a corresponding love to the Saviour, and leads him in loving sympathy to labour for the spiritual good of his fellow men. No man can be a good and faithful servant whose heart is "dry as summer dust," whose nature is not tender and sympathetic towards the weak and erring, towards the sinful and the suffering. He who would serve the Lord on earth must, like Him, "go about doing good" among the outcasts, among the poor and despised, and be a friend of the publicans and sinners.

*Its highest motive is the glory of God.*

The motives that prompt men to action are in many cases hidden from the sight of others, and are thus frequently the subject of great misconceptions. But the motive of the good and faithful servant is not hidden, it cannot be hidden; it is open, palpable, and like the "ointment in the right hand, bewrayeth itself;" for it sweetly perfumes all that he does for the Master. "Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." This motive dignifies every action that otherwise would be poor and mean. It makes all things beautiful as the sunbeams that give the flowers their glowing colours.

"Teach me, my God and King,  
In all things Thee to see;  
And what I do in anything,  
To do it as for Thee.

All may of Thee partake;  
Nothing so small can be,  
But draws, when acted for Thy sake,  
Greatness and worth from Thee."

*Its sustaining forces.*

By the supply of the Spirit of Christ; by the ministry of the Word, which is as bread to the soul; by the strength that comes to the soul through prayer—the dew that descends upon the believer from the throne of grace; by Christian fellowship, in which the heart is refreshed by intercourse and communion in the ordinances of the Gospel; by such forces the servant is sustained in his labours when otherwise the hands would grow weary and the heart sick, and the spirit faint, and the worker fail, and the work cease.

May this living principle, this inspiring power, this high motive and these sustaining forces be ours in the day of Christian service,

so that we may labour on through difficulties and discouragements, or it please God with success, until to each of us there shall be given the divine reward, "Well done good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of Thy Lord."

Let us now consider :

THE SPIRIT IN WHICH THIS SERVICE IS TO BE PERFORMED.

*It must be performed in the spirit of entire consecration.*

The bestowment of talents is altogether in the hands of the Master. It is in His sovereign right to give to one servant five, to another two, and to another one. The bare fact of the inequality in the number of talents the servants possess, has nothing to do with the duty and spirit of Christian service. It is the duty of every believer to consecrate to the service of Christ either the one talent or the five talents he may possess. There should be no room for pride in the heart of the servant who possesses five talents, for all have come from the bountiful hand of God. There should be no room for despair in his heart who has only one talent, because he serves a Lord who increases ability where He beholds the faithful and diligent use of that already in operation. Let us then willingly give all we have, all we are to the service of the Saviour,—our powers of mind, gifts of wisdom, honours, riches, gifts of grace.

"Take my life and let it be consecrated Lord to Thee ;  
Take myself and I will be ever, only, all for Thee."

*It must be performed in a spirit of conscientiousness.*

The good and faithful servant discharges with diligence and care the duties which are laid ready to his hand. Christian ambition to serve God is not of the worldly sort that will work only in a conspicuous position.

"The trivial round, the common task,  
Will furnish all we ought to ask ;

Room to deny ourselves ; a road  
To bring us daily nearer God."

The little things of life test the quality of our service more fully than the great and exciting scenes, in which, too frequently, we act before the multitude for the sake of effect. "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much." Faithfulness in a few things on earth leads to the honour of being ruler over many things in heaven.

Another element in this conscientiousness to be exemplified, is loyalty to the unseen Saviour. Christ is not visibly present with us. He is "away in a far country." There, in that land so far away from the sin, corruption, sorrow, and death of this lower sphere, Christ is the glorious object of worship, the theme of everlasting songs, the source of unspeakable joy to the spirits of just men made perfect. It is required of us that we be faithful to our absent Master, loyally serving Him whose face we cannot see. May we all labour as ever under our "great Taskmaster's eye," as ever under the inspiring influence of His words: "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life."

*It must be performed in the spirit of unworldliness.*

The servant of Christ is not called to his work by the powers of the world ; his labours are not directed by the principles of the world ; he is not subject to the authority of the world ; and, therefore, he does not court the smiles of the world, nor does he fear its frown. He looks only to his Divine Master for His approval, and is content to leave his work to His all-wise and gracious judgment. Christian service brings its own reward in the present life, in the joy that springs up in the soul when we speak to others of the deep things of God, and when we see the children of our ministry "walking in the truth." The service is spiritual, and its rewards are spiritual.

There is another element in this spirit of unworldliness, that is the sense and feeling of living "under the powers of the world to come;" the consciousness of the solemn truth, that life is short, and that the hours of man's working-day are numbered, and will soon come to an end. Under the influence of this feeling, we have seen how eagerly the spirit of the Christian worker strives to compress into the narrow limits of his earthly life a very large amount of work for his Lord. It seems in some cases as if the soul had a dim presentiment that the night is drawing on rapidly when no man can work. Let us not forget that we have but "twelve hours in the day." It may be that we have already reached the noon, and the sun is swiftly taking his westward course, and the shades of evening will soon darken our life. O, that when the night comes, each of us may be able to say: "I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do."

#### THE REWARDS WHICH THIS SERVICE SECURES.

*There is the approving word of the Master:*

"Well done, thou good and faithful servant." The work comes beneath the inspection of the Master, while the servant stands by, and then those lips, into which "grace is poured," open, and the word of divine approval falls upon the spirit of the just upon his entrance into heaven. Can there be a more blessed reward than to

"Hear the Judge pronounce our name  
With blessings on our head."

It is a judgment passed upon the servant and his work by infinite love, by infallible wisdom, and will never be reversed. It is a verdict which will be echoed by the rejoicing shouts of welcome from the glorified spirits in heaven.

*There is participation in the Master's joy.*

"Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." "The image on which

this language rests is that of a festival, with which the master celebrates his return, in the joy of which each of the servants, so soon as he has rendered his account, and shown that he has been true to his master's interests in his absence, is bidden freely to share."

When on earth Christ prayed, "Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory." Now that Christ is in heaven He freely admits every good and faithful servant whose work is finished, to this beatific vision. But not only do they behold His glory, He grants them the unspeakable privilege of sharing in it. He calls them into the banquet hall, and gives them the place His wisdom and love have prepared. He makes them "drink of the river of His pleasures." The Saviour "sees of the travail of His soul and is satisfied;" the servant who has "travailed in birth again" for souls, now enters into participation of the Saviour's satisfaction. By service on earth, by afflictions, by fierce struggles, the spirits of just men are made capable of the joy of Christ in heaven; and from the battlefields of earth, those who have been faithful to their Lord, rise to participate in His heavenly glory. "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne."

*There is exaltation to Heavenly dignity and service.*

"Be thou ruler over many things." Heaven is the "Saints' everlasting rest." Heaven is rest from weariness and pain; rest from disappointment and sorrow of heart over any for whom we have laboured, who "have forsaken us, having loved this present world;" rest from the burden of care inseparable from earthly service; but heaven is not inactivity. It is a sphere of ceaseless labour, of blessed, painless toil. It is a land of high honours and glorious dignities to all who have been faithful over their earthly

service. When the good and faithful servant is called away from the Church below to the Church above, it is the instinct of nature that makes us mourn his departure, but it is grace that keeps us from the sorrow of those "who have no hope."

Our loss is heaven's gain. Our friend enters upon other and higher service. The Lord says to him, "be thou ruler over many things." O, could that bright spirit look down from heaven to those who mourn his loss; could he speak and tell us of his heavenly service; we should weep no more, but rejoice in his joy, and triumph in his victory.

" And, doubtless, unto thee is given  
 A life that bears immortal fruit,  
 In such great offices as suit  
 The full-grown energies of Heaven.  
 But thou and I have shaken hands,  
 Till growing winters lay me low;  
 My paths are in the fields I know,  
 And thine in undiscovered lands."

I now draw near to the close of this discourse, by making a brief statement of one whose recent death has led me to bring this subject before you.

Our dear friend, Mr James Mathewson, who passed away on the 17th September, has left a memory that will be green and fragrant in many hearts while life shall last. We shall in thought hear again and again his cheerful voice; we shall picture in our imagination his happy smile; but we shall miss the inspiration and helpfulness of his friendship as we go further in the journey of life, and carry new burdens, and endure new trials. Yet shall we ever be thankful that it was our privilege to share for a time in that friendship. He was "a man greatly beloved," and beloved most dearly by those who knew him best. He exhibited true manliness of character, combined with a very sympathetic nature

towards all in suffering and distress. He abounded in charities, which were bestowed upon the needy without ostentatious display, and with a thoughtfulness and kindness which made his gifts doubly precious. He was a member of this Church for fourteen years, having been baptized by the late pastor, Rev. Charles Hill, in the year 1869. He threw himself with great ardour into the various branches of Christian service connected with the church. For sixteen years he discharged the duties of a Sabbath school teacher ; while for twelve years he filled the honourable position of superintendent of the school, and in this work he won and held the affections of the scholars and teachers by force of his Christian love and kindly manner. For a period of six years he acted as one of the deacons of the church, and his counsels, devotion, and untiring labours have tended very largely to the prosperity and stability of the church. In connection with the building of the new chapel he did much service, sparing neither time nor trouble, and not least among the duties of this work were those he had to discharge as treasurer to the undertaking.

In the prime of life, at the early age of thirty-five, he was called away from all earthly scenes to another world. During his last illness, of about four months, he was cheerful, hopeful, patient. He received the intimation of approaching death with Christian resignation. Not many days before his death he said, " I have no fears and no cares." The last time I held conversation with him, I read a portion of the thirteenth chapter of John's Gospel, and we talked together of Christ's abiding presence with his people. He confessed that he realised that presence on the sick bed. His last days were quiet, and absolutely painless ; the strong man falling gradually asleep, like a child upon his mother's breast. Yes, his departure was a sleep ; " he fell asleep in Jesus," and death touched his frame so gently with his cold hand, that the

grim messenger only gave another illustration of the words, "so He giveth His beloved sleep."

My friends, "he being dead yet speaketh." He speaks to us all ; by his example and his life he calls upon us to serve the Master whom he served ; to be good and faithful in our service ; and then when the night shall come to say with perfect resignation and joyfulness of spirit, "Now, Lord, lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation."

To the members of his family we express our deepest sympathy in their bereavement, and pray that all consolation and grace may be imparted to them from our Heavenly Father.

"May all love,  
His love unseen but felt, o'ershadow thee,  
The love of all thy sons encompass thee,  
The love of all thy daughters cherish thee,  
The love of all thy people comfort thee,  
Till God's love set thee at His side again."

With respect to the mysterious dispensation of providence, which has thus closed a most useful life, we can only say, "The will of the Lord be done." By patient resignation to the wisdom which is perfect, and the love which always seeks our good, let us check all murmuring ; let us calm our troubled hearts, and strengthen our souls ; believing that although we do not yet see "the bright light in the cloud" that darkens our path, the cloud will pass away and the light will yet shine upon us ; and when we bathe our spirits in its heavenly radiance we shall confess with all the redeemed host, "He hath done all things well."

"Where no shadow shall bewilder,  
Where life's vain parade is o'er,  
Where the sleep of sin is broken,  
And the dreamer dreams no more ;

Where no bond is ever sundered,  
Partings, claspings, sob and moan  
Midnight waking, twilight weeping,  
Heavy noontide—all are done ;  
Where the child has found its father,  
Where the father finds the child,  
Where dear families are gathered,  
That were scattered as the wild  
Brother, we shall meet and rest  
'Mid the holy and the blest !'



“The grave closed over Mr Mathewson’s remains on Thursday, 20th September, when a very large number of people were present at the funeral. The pastor of the Baptist Church conducted a short service at the grave, reading among other verses of Scripture, the following passages :—‘ I heard a voice from Heaven, saying unto me, Write, blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth. Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.’ ‘There remaineth, therefore, a rest to the people of God.’ The children connected with the Baptist Sunday School sang one of the favourite hymns of their late superintendent :—

‘ There is a better world, they say,  
Oh, so bright !  
Where sin and woe are done away,  
Oh, so bright !  
And music fills the balmy air,  
And angels bright and pure are there,  
And harps of gold and mansions fair.  
Oh, so bright ! oh, so bright !

No clouds e’er pass along its sky,  
Happy land !  
No tear-drop glistens in the eye,  
Happy land !  
They drink the gushing streams of grace,  
They gaze upon the Saviour’s face,  
Whose brightness fills the holy place,  
Happy land ! happy land !’

After the service, which from beginning to end was of a most impressive character, the scholars quietly passed the grave, and each dropped a flower or a blade of evergreen on the top of the coffin.”