

The Wonderful Works of God

"O give thanks unto the Lord! Call upon His Name! Make known His deeds among the people. Sing unto Him: sing psalms unto Him! Talk ye of all His wondrous works!"—Psalm 105:1-2

THE readings this morning have brought before us two of the greatest men that appeared in the nation of Israel—Ezekiel and Jesus. And they are the only men given the title, "Son of man"—except once to Daniel.

The prophet Ezekiel is first brought to our notice near the city of Babylon in the year 592 BC. He had been taken to Babylon five years previously, when Nebuchadnezzar carried away Jehoiachin and set up Zedekiah in his place. Daniel, taken to Babylon a little earlier, in the reign of Jehoiakim, is already well-known, and Jeremiah was prophesying before Zedekiah in Jerusalem.

From Ezekiel 1:1, it would appear that he began his ministry at the age of 30, as did John the Baptist, and also the greater "Son of Man," whom Ezekiel typifies. Thirty was the age set by the Law to begin the Tabernacle service.

It would be interesting and instructive to follow him through his ministry, but this morning let us consider some of the things concerning the greater Son of Man. We have been listening to his voice this morning—a privilege and blessing for which we ought to be devoutly thankful. Let us always remember with awe, as we read or hear the Scriptures, that this Book is a direct message from the great Creator of the universe—the most marvelous, wonderful thing in the world today.

If we value Jesus as he deserves to be valued, if we realize the greatness of his mission of Life, we shall ever listen to him eagerly, and be profoundly thankful and attentive. These words can transform us into creatures of spiritual beauty, true offspring of God, if we will let them dwell in us richly.

When the Memorial was instituted, the Lord Jesus was present to speak living words of instruction and comfort. This was a glorious privilege that the apostles enjoyed, a privilege that we are unable to experience. Jesus is not here, nor has he appointed anyone in his place. But in God's great mercy, we do have his very words, and we can read them as we did this morning.

Our privilege in this respect is greater than it may seem. There are thousands who have his words—but how few understand them!

Although he is not here for us to look upon, and to hear his voice as the apostles heard it, yet what we do this morning is done by his authority. It comes to us through the apostle Paul, who, in writing to the Corinthians said (1 Cor. 11:23-24) —

“For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread:

“And when he had given thanks, he brake it and said, Take, eat: this is my body which is given for you: *this do in remembrance of me.*”

Now Paul "praised" the Corinthian brethren that they kept the ordinances he had delivered unto them. Do you not think he would do the same to us if he were alive? If Paul would be pleased, who transmitted the command, then surely Christ also would also be pleased, who gave the command to thus remember him. But what if we for any reason fail to so remember him?

Therefore, no matter how frail we may be, we can at least enjoy the supreme satisfaction and happiness, as we meet each first day of the week in the darkness and silence of his absence, that what we do is well-pleasing to him, as we bring him into remembrance in the manner of his own appointment.

He is not here to speak to us, but through the power of the Holy Spirit the words that he did speak have been faithfully recorded, and preserved safely down to our time. Therefore we can read them both in our homes and when we are together, as we are this morning. Do we fully appreciate the value of this privilege? What would life be without the light and comfort of the Word? His gracious words are full of instruction and encouragement. Just listen to Paul's advice in reference to them (Col. 3:16)—

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."

What beautiful expressions! If we restricted our 'admonishing' of one another to the spirit and sentiments of psalms and hymns, how much sweeter would our converse be, and how much more effective in mutual brotherly love! Let us take Paul's Spirit-inspired advice, and look at one of the psalms (105:1-7)—

"O give thanks unto the Lord! Call upon His Name. Make known His deeds among the people. Sing unto Him: sing psalms unto Him! Talk ye of all His wondrous works.

"Glory ye in His holy Name! *Let the heart of them REJOICE that seek the Lord!* Seek the Lord and HIS strength: seek His face evermore.

"Remember His marvelous works that He hath done; His wonders and the judgments of His mouth; O ye seed of Abraham His servant, ye children of Jacob His chosen. He is the Lord our God. His judgments are in all the earth."

How could anyone be unhappy or discontented who truly lived in this radiant spiritual atmosphere, whatever their brief present circumstances! In these first seven verses we have an exhortation to rise to the glory of our calling, and ceaselessly praise God; and in the remainder of the psalm we have a brief history of the people of Israel from the calling of Abraham to the entering of the land. This shows how God cared for His people, and why they should praise Him in constant joyfulness.

But one might say, Those words were addressed to the people of Israel. That is true — but do they not apply to US? Have we not, through the belief and obedience of the Gospel, become the seed of Abraham, as it is written in Gal. 3:27-29—

"For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

So then this psalm does apply to us, and does appeal to us to lift up our hearts and voices in joyful praise. And what a wonderful exhortation, and what beautiful ideas are expressed in these few verses!

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"O GIVE THANKS UNTO THE LORD!"

"Do we not do this? Yes, we do. Our hymns are songs of thanksgiving, and our prayers are always first in expression of our thanks as we gather together each first day of the week. In fact, our entire

life, IF we truly seek after righteousness, is — and must be— a life of thanksgiving to God for His great goodness to us.

"MAKE KNOWN HIS DEEDS AMONG THE PEOPLE"

There are many ways in which we do, and must do, this. The work in our Sunday Schools is highly important, as also are our public lectures. But due to the growing apathy of people in general to divine things, it is difficult to get people to attend.

Our Fraternal Gatherings are also important. While they are, in the first place designed for the benefit of believers, there are many who attend who are not yet such. But in these difficult days, personal contact seems to stand at the top—and a personal manifestation, in all our dealings with all with whom we come in contact, that we "have been with Jesus."

"SING UNTO HIM, SING PSALMS UNTO HIM"

This is not only the appeal of the Psalmist of old, but was superbly expressed by Paul in the words quoted—

"Teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing *with grace in your hearts* to the Lord."

We do this each time we gather here, and we also do it in our homes. But the flesh is weak and forgetful, and thoughtless habit grows on us. Let us always be sure that there IS "grace in our hearts" whenever we sing praise to God — that our minds are on the words and thoughts, and our hearts are in tune, and not concerned with the faults of others, or the quality of their singing. To sing with any spirit but grace is gross disrespect for God.

"TALK YE OF ALL HIS WONDROUS WORKS"

This is what we have gathered to do and to set our minds upon this morning. To talk and think about God and His works is to cleanse and purify the mind, to enlarge it, to raise it up from petty to eternal things, to warm and vivify and stimulate it. What a difference between the ordinary natural mind and the mind that has been fed and nourished upon wholesome, spiritual things! Here is the essence and the process that must gradually transform us—

"Thou shalt teach them—*these words and commands and works of God*—diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up" (Deut 6:7).

These are the solemn, parting words of Moses to Israel, as he addressed them for the last time, on the plains of Moab. Here is the single-minded dedication that God requires. Is it a burden— this constant application of the mind to the things of God? It should not be. It must not be. Rather it must be our delight. All are interested in something. A life without interest is a dread and dismal life. What greater interest than real, eternal, meaningful things—the perfecting of the divine character, and the marvelous unfolding and progress of the divine purpose, through all those fascinating and instructive scenes from the Garden of Eden to the faithful John of Patmos—and on into the endless future with the glorious visions he beheld. A burden? That is what fleshly, childish, wilful Israel said.

"Teach them DILIGENTLY unto thy children "

For those of us who are parents, this is our supreme test—for, said Jesus—

“Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.”

Let us therefore ask ourselves, What does the abundance of MY heart consist of? Can we say like the Psalmist—

"O how love I Thy Law! It is my meditation *all the day*. "How sweet are Thy words unto my taste! Yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth" (Psa. 119:97 & 103).

If we love God's law—which is reflected in the law of Christ — the effect upon us will be as expressed in the same Psalm, v. 165:

"Great peace have they who love Thy law: and nothing shall offend them."

What a glorious assurance and guarantee! In this dark age of fret and sorrow and trouble, can we really conceive of this wonderful condition of mind?—insulated by the love of God from all worry and concern. It can be ours—if we truly desire it and seek it instead of the things of this life.

"GLORY YE IN HIS HOLY NAME"

This goes right to the point, and forces us soberly and thoughtfully to ask ourselves, In what DO we glory? Mankind glories in many things: beauty, strength, riches, honor, and its various forms of accomplishment and "wisdom." But none of these things are pleasing to our heavenly Father, for He says (Jer. 9:23-24)—

"Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom; neither let the mighty man glory in his might; let not the rich man glory in his riches.

"But let him that glorieth glory in this- that he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the Lord which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth:

"For in THESE things I delight, saith the Lord."

Where can we find those who glory in His Name? Are they not among the seed of Abraham the faithful, who left all to follow God wherever He should lead him? If so, the question that comes before us is, Are we pleasing God in this respect? The seed of Abraham are a very special group, and they think and act and live in a very special way.

"LET THE HEART OF THEM REJOICE THAT SEEK THE LORD"

Paul, by the Spirit, gives us the following commands, which are the formula for the Spirit-guaranteed peace of God'

"Rejoice evermore; and pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:16-17)

"Rejoice in the Lord: and again I say, REJOICE!" (Phil. 4:4)

What is the BASIS of our rejoicing? To rejoice without a good and dependable reason is just self-delusion. This is not something to be forced, but to be realized and comprehended in the heart. Is not our basis the knowledge of the glorious God, and the appreciation and thankfulness for the saving Truth which we have received, and the assured hope of the coming of the Lord Jesus; the hope of the resurrection; the hope of salvation?

If there is one people upon this earth who have a sound reason to rejoice, an insuppressible necessity to rejoice, surely it is we. This is manifested in the words of Psa. 89:15-16, and is reflected in our Anthem 29, which we are to sing this morning—

"Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Thy countenance.

"In Thy Name shall they REJOICE ALL THE DAY, and in Thy righteousness shall they be exalted."

"SEEK HIS FACE EVERMORE"

What are God's wishes in this respect? In His appearance to Solomon, He said (2 Chron 7:14)—

"If My people which are called by My Name shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways; "Then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin."

The wonderful assurance is given in Psa. 34:10—

"They that seek the Lord shall not want any GOOD thing."

This is equivalent to the divine promise of Rom 8:28—

"All things work together for GOOD to them that love God."

Whatever happens to them is for good, and whatever is good they will eventually receive. Perhaps the most beautiful exhortation on this theme is found in Isa. 55:6-7—

"Seek ye the Lord while He may be found; call ye upon Him while He is near:

"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon."

Truly He is a God of love, and of infinite compassion—to those who humbly submit themselves to Him in all things.

The final appeal in Psa. 105 is—

"REMEMBER HIS MARVELOUS WORKS THAT HE HATH DONE"

The Psalmist makes this appeal, and then enumerates many of God's marvelous works in connection with Israel. This exhortation to continually let the mind dwell upon the works of God is ever before us in the Scriptures. God has said—

"REMEMBER, My people, WHAT I HAVE DONE!"

Four times in Psa. 107 we have these words—

"O that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men."

The works He has done are certainly wonderful. The reading of Psa. 105 alone is sufficient to open our eyes in astonishment, for who can do such colossal works, such marvels of power and wisdom? Surely, none but God. These contemplations are the divinely prescribed food for the mind, that it may

be cleansed and purified, and that it may grow up to spiritual maturity, and not stay on the ordinary childish and fleshly level of the world.

In our recent readings from Luke, we have had brought before us some of the miracles of Jesus. But even these were the works of his Father, for in John 14:10 he said—

"The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, He doeth the works."

Jesus was unique, both as to the perfect completeness of his yielding and submission to the will of God, and as to the perfect fulness of God's manifestation in him. But all good is of God. The apostle Paul reveals the marvelous truth that—

"It is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do of His good pleasure."

He couples this directly with the balancing exhortation—

"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."

These are deep and wonderful things, incomprehensible to the natural mind, as Paul tells the Corinthians brethren.

In the feeding of the 5000, we have a work which alone should convince anyone that Jesus was the Son of God; but many, just because they cannot understand how it was done, do not receive the record as truth. But do they understand the ordinary and usual works of God, as how the rich and abundant head of grain springs at the proper time from the tiny and long dormant seed?

Concerning this, bro. Roberts very fittingly observes—

"God has established the natural production of fish, and the materials of which bread is made; and if we consider these carefully, we surely must admit that they are miracles which we cannot comprehend."

"If we realize this, then why should it seem incredible if He hurry the process at any time? When we consider the planet on which we live, the sun, moon, and all the stars, how He has suspended them in space, and each follows its own orbit in perfect order—surely we will say that the feeding of 5000 people is a small matter for our God to perform."

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In Luke 9 we have one of the greatest and most significant events in the life of Christ. Indeed, the transfiguration is one of the "wonderful works of God." If there had been any doubt in the minds of the 3 apostles who accompanied him on that day, this would show them more conclusively than anything could, that Jesus was the Christ, the Anointed, the long-promised Messiah to whom all the prophets had given witness. How powerfully the apostles' minds were affected is shown by the words of Peter in his second epistle many years later (1:16-17)—

"For we have not followed cunningly devised fables when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were *EYEWITNESSES OF HIS MAJESTY*."

"For he received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased . . .

"And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount."

When writing this, Peter would recall how he was overcome by the dazzling sight, and saw Moses and Elijah with Jesus, and how he said (though he was "sore afraid")—

"Master, it is GOOD for us to be here!"

Though afraid, as all humble and sincere people would be under such glorious and awe-inspiring circumstances, still Peter's heart and love was there, with his Master in his glory.

Well, brethren and sisters, is it not good for us to be here this morning, praising the Lord for His goodness, and His wonderful works to the children of men? We too are in awe-inspiring circumstances, for we have drawn nigh unto the presence of God. Let us ever bear that in mind in all our meetings and services.

We have been baptized INTO CHRIST (what a close and intimate relationship to such a glorious personage), and are therefore Abraham's seed, and heirs according to those precious promises God made to him. Let us, therefore, give attention to Paul's words—

"Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?

"Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in NEWNESS OF LIFE."

If we, in this brief day of testing and preparation, have the wisdom to follow Paul's sound advice, and do walk in that new way of living that is essential to salvation, then we can look forward in joyful and peaceful hope to be among those of whom David speaks in Psa. 24. First he asks the question—

"Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?

Who shall stand in His holy place?"

Then he gives the searching but comforting answer—

"He that hath clean hands and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.

"He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation."

Let us therefore constantly examine our hands and our hearts -our deeds and our thoughts-by the pure Spirit-Word. Truly the standard IS high, but with God's help it is not impossible, for says Paul in 1 Cor. 10:13—

"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, Who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able: but will, with the temptation, also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

Having therefore this comforting assurance, beloved brethren, let us joyfully serve Him unto the end, with reverence and godly fear, ever fortifying and cleansing our minds with contemplation of the Wonderful Works of God. G.A.G. (The Berean 1975)