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—THE—

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TALMAGE'S SERMON.

HE FINDS MANY LESSONS IN
THE JOY OF COMING HOME.

Of All Words in the Language None Conveys So Many Sweet Suggestions as the Word Home—Joy of Christians and Angels Over the Convert.

Again in Brooklyn.

Rev. Dr. Talmage, having concluded his round the world tour, selected as the subject for last Sunday's discourse through the press, "Home Again," the text chosen being Luke xv, 24, "Bring hither the fatted calf and kill it."

In all ages of the world it has been customary to celebrate joyful events by festivities—the singing of treatises, the proclamation of peace, the Christmas, the marriage. However much on other days of the year our table may have stunted supply, on Thanksgiving day there must be something bounteous, and all the comfortable homes of Christendom have at some time celebrated joyful events by banquet and festivity.

The Joyful Feast.

Something has happened in the old homestead greater than anything that has ever happened before. A favorite son, whom the world supposed would become a vagabond and outlaw forever, has got tired of sightseeing and has returned to his father's house. The world said he never would come back. Now, having returned to his father's house, the father proclaims celebration. There is a calf in the paddock that has been kept up and fed to its most capacity, so as to be ready for some occasion of joy that might come along.

Ah, there never will be a grander day on the old homestead than this day. Let the butchers do their work and the housekeepers bring in to the table the smoking meat. The musicians will take their place and the gay groups will move up and down the floor. All the friends and neighbors are gathered in, and extra supply is sent out to the table of the servants. The father presides at the table and says grace and thanks God that his long absent son is home again. Oh, how they missed him! How glad they are to have him back! One brother indeed stands pointing at the back door and says, "This is a great addition to nothing. This had boy should be chastened instead of greeted. Veal is too good for him!" But the father says, "Nothing is too good; nothing is good enough."

There sits the young man, glad at the hearty reception, but a shadow of sorrow flitting across his brow at the remembrance of the trouble he had seen. All ready now. Let the covers lift. Music. He was dead and he is alive again! He was lost, and he is found! By such bold imagery does the Bible set forth the merry-making when a soul comes home to God.

The Redeemed Son.

First of all, there is the new convert's joy. It is no tame thing to become a Christian. The most tremendous moment in a man's life is when he surrenders himself to God. The grandest time on the father's homestead is when the boy comes back. Among the great throng who in the parlors of my church professed Christ one night was a young man, who next morning rang my doorbell and said, "Sir, I cannot contain myself with the joy I feel. I came here this morning to express it. I have found more joy in five minutes in serving God than in all the years of my profligacy, and I came to say so."

You have seen perhaps a man running for his physical liberty and the officers of the law after him, and you saw him escape, or afterward you heard the judge had pardoned him, and how great was the relief of that rescued man! But it is a very tame thing that compared with the running for one's everlasting life, the terrors of the law after him, and Christ coming in to pardon and bless and rescue and save. You remember John Bunyan, in his great story, tells how the pilgrim put his fingers in his ears and ran, crying, "Life, life, eternal life!" A poor car driver, after having had to struggle to support his family for years, suddenly was informed that a large inheritance was his, and there was joy amounting to bewilderment, but that is a small thing compared with the experience of one when he has put in his hands the title deed to the joys, the raptures, the splendors of heaven, and he can truly say, "His mansions are mine, his temples are mine; his songs are mine, his God is mine."

Oh, it is no tame thing to become a Christian. It is a merry-making. It is the killing of the fatted calf. It is jubilee. You know the Bible never compares it to a funeral, but always compares it to something bright. It is more apt to be compared to a banquet than anything else. It is compared in the Bible to the water—bright, flashing water—to the morning, rosy dawn, fire worked, mountain transfigured morning. I wish I could to-day take all the Bible expressions about pardon and peace and life and comfort and hope and Heaven, and twist them into one garland, and put it on the brow of the humblest child of God in all this land, and cry, "Wear it, wear it now, wear it forever, son of God, daughter of the Lord God Almighty! Oh, the joy of the new convert! Oh, the gladness of the Christian service!"

St. Paul's Testimony.

You have seen sometimes a man in a religious assembly get up and give his experience. Well, Paul gave his experience. He rose in the presence of two churches—the church on earth and the church in Heaven—and he said, "Now, this is my experience: Sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet possessing all things." If all the people who read this sermon knew the people of the Christian religion, they would all pass over into the kingdom of God the next moment. When Daniel Sandeman was dying of cholera, his attendant said, "Have you much

pain?" "Oh," he replied, "since I found the Lord I have never had any pain except sin." Then they said to him, "Would you like to send a message to your friends?" "Yes, I would. Tell them that only last night the love of Jesus came rushing into my soul like the surges of the sea, and I had to cry out: 'Stop, Lord! It is enough! Stop, Lord—enough!' Oh, the joys of this Christian religion!"

Oh, it is a great religion to live by, and it is a great religion to die by. There is only one heart throbbing between you and that religion—this moment. Just look into the face of your pardoning God and surrender yourself for time and for eternity, and He is yours, and Heaven is yours, and all is yours. Some of you, like the young man of the text, have gone far astray. I know not the history, but you know it—you know it.

When a young man went forth into life, the legend says, his guardian angel went forth with him, and getting him into a field the guardian angel swept a circle clear around where the young man stood. It was a circle of virtue and honor, and he must not step beyond that circle. Armed foes came down, but were obliged to halt at the circle. They could not pass, but one day a temptress, with diamonded hand, strove to pass, and the tempted soul took it, and by that one fell grip was brought beyond the circle and died. Some of you have stepped beyond that circle. Would you not like this day, by the grace of God, to step back.

This, I say to you, is your hour of salvation. There was in the closing hours of Queen Anne what is called the clock scene. Flat down on the pillow in helpless sickness, she could not move her head or move her hand. She was waiting for the hour when the ministers of State should gather in angry contest, and worried and worn out by the coming hour, and in momentary absence of the nurse, in the power—strange power which delirium sometimes gives—she arose and stood in front of the clock and stood there watching the clock, when the nurse returned. The nurse said, "Do you see anything peculiar about that clock?" She made no answer, but soon died. There is a clock scene in every history. If some of you would rise from the bed of lethargy and come out of your delirium of sin and look on the clock of your destiny this moment, you would see and hear something you have not seen or heard before, and every tick of the minute, and every swing of the pendulum would say, "Now, now, now, now!" Oh, come home to your Father's house! Come, oh, prodigal, from the wilderness! Come home, come home!

You remember reading the story of a king who on some great day of festivity scattered silver and gold among the people, who sent valuable presents to his courtiers, but methinks when a soul comes back God is so glad that to express his joy he flings out new world's into space, kindles up new suns and rolls among the white robed anthems of the redeemed a greater hallelulah, while with a voice that reverberates among the mountains of frankincense and is echoed back from the everlasting gates he cries, "This, my son, was dead and is alive again!"

At the opening of the exposition in New Orleans I saw a Mexican flutist, and he played the solo, and then afterward the eight or ten bands of music, accompanied by the great organ, came in. But the sound of that one flute as compared with all the orchestra was greater than all the combined joy of the universe when compared with the resounding heart of Almighty God.

For ten years a father went three times a day to the depot. His son went off in aggravating circumstances, but the father said, "He will come back." The strain was too much, and his mind parted, and three times a day the father went. In the early morning he watched the train—its arrival, the stepping out of the passengers and then the departure of the train, watching the advance of the train, watching the train's departure. At night there again, he watched the coming, watching the going, for ten years. He was sure his son would come back. God has been watching and waiting for some of you, my brothers, ten years, twenty years, thirty years, forty years, perhaps fifty years, waiting, waiting, watching, watching, and if this morning the prodigal should come home what a scene of gladness and festivity, and how the great Father's heart would rejoice at your coming home! You will come, some of you, will you not? You will! You will!

God's Ministers Rejoice.

I notice also that when a prodigal comes home there is the joy of the ministers of religion. Oh, it is a grand thing to preach this gospel. I know there has been a great deal said about the trials and hardships of the Christian ministry. I wish somebody would write a good, rousing book about the joys of the Christian ministry. Since I entered the profession I have seen more of the goodness of God than I will be able to celebrate in all eternity. I know some boast about their equilibrium, but they do not break down with emotion. But I confess to you plainly that when I see a man coming to God and giving up his sin in body, mind, and soul I transport.

When I see a man who is bound hand and foot in evil habit emancipated, I rejoice over it as though it were my own emancipation. When in our common service such throngs of young and old stood up at the altars, and in the presence of Heaven and earth and hell attested their allegiance to Jesus Christ, I felt a joy something akin to that which the apostle describes when he says: "Whether in the body I cannot tell, or out of the body I cannot tell, God knoweth."

Have not ministers a right to rejoice when a prodigal comes home? They blow the trumpet, and ought they not to be glad of the gathering of the host? They pointed to the full supply, and ought they not to rejoice when souls ought to be hark for water brooks? They came forth saying, "All things are now ready." Ought they not to

rejoice when the prodigal sits down at the banquet?

Value of a Calm Mind.

Life insurance men will all tell you that ministers of religion, as a class, live longer than any other. It is confirmed by the statistics of all those who calculate upon human longevity. Why is it? There is more draft upon the nervous system than in any other profession, and their toil is most exhausting. I have seen ministers kept on miserable stipends by parsimonious congregations, when the men of God were perplexed almost to death by questions of livelihood and had not enough nutritious food to keep any fire in their temperament. No fuel, no fire. I have sometimes seen the inside of the life of many of the American clergymen—never accepting their hospitality, because they cannot afford it—but I have seen them struggle on with salaries of \$300 and \$400 a year, the average less than that, their struggle well depicted by the western missionary who says in a letter: "Thank you for your last remittance. Until it came we had not any meat in our house for one year, and all last winter, although it was a severe winter, our children wore their summer clothes."

And these men of God I find in different parts of the land struggling against annoyances and exasperations innumerable, some of them week after week entertaining agents who have maps to sell and submitting themselves to all styles of annoyance, and yet without complaint and cheerful of soul. How do you account for the fact that these life insurance men tell us that ministers as a class live longer than any others? It is because of the joy of their work, the joy of the harvest field, the joy of greeting prodigals home to their Father's house.

Rejoice in All Innocence.

We are in sympathy with all innocent hilarities. We can enjoy a hearty song, and we can be merry with the merriest, but those of us who have toiled in the service are ready to testify that all these joys are tame compared with the satisfaction of seeing men enter the kingdom of God. The great era of every minister are the outpourings of the Holy Ghost, and I thank God I have seen twenty of them.

I notice also when the prodigal comes back all earnest Christians rejoice. If you stood on a promontory, and there was a hurricane at sea, and it was blowing toward the shore, and you saw people get ashore in the lifeboats, and the very last man got on the rocks in safety, you could not control your joy. And it is a glad time when the church of God sees men who are tossed on the ocean of their sins plant their feet in the rock Christ Jesus.

No Long Prayers Needed.

When prodigals come home, just hear those Christians sing. It is not a dull tone you hear at such times. Just hear those Christians pray! It is not a stereotyped supplication we have heard over and over again for twenty years, but a putting of the case in the hands of God with an importunate pleading. Men never pray at great length unless they have nothing to say, and their hearts are hard and cold. All the prayers in the Bible that were answered were short prayers: "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" "Lord, that I may receive my sight!" "Lord, save me, or I perish." The longest prayer, Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple, less than eight minutes in length, according to the ordinary rate of enunciation.

And just hear them pray now that the prodigals are coming home! Just see them shake hands. No putting forth of the four tips of the fingers in a formal way, but a hearty grasp, where the muscles of the heart seem to clench the fingers of one hand around the other hand. And then see those Christian faces, how illumined they are! And see that old man get up and with the same voice that he sang fifty years ago in the old country meeting house say, "Now, Lord, lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." There was a man of Keith who was hurled into prison in time of persecution, and one day he got off his shackles, and he came and stood by the prison door, and when the jailer was opening the door with one stroke he struck down the man who had incarcerated him. Passing along the streets of London, he wondered where his family was. He did not dare to ask lest he excite suspicion, but, passing along a little way from the prison, he saw a Keith tankard and a cup that belonged to the family from generation to generation—he saw it in a window. His family, hoping that some day he would get clear, came and lived as near as they could to the prison house, and they set that Keith tankard in the window, hoping he would see it. And he came along and saw it and knocked at the door and went in, and the long absent family were all together again. Oh, if you would start for the kingdom of God to-day, I think some of you would find nearly all your families around the holy tankard of the holy communion—fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters around that sacred tankard which commemorates the love of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Oh, it will be a great communion day when your whole family sits around the sacred tankard. One on earth, one in Heaven.

The Heavenly Festival.

Once more I remark that when the prodigal gets back the inhabitants of Heaven keep festival. I am very certain of it. If you have never seen a telegraphic chart, you have no idea how many cities are connected together and how many lands. Nearly all the neighborhoods of the earth seem reticulated, and news flies from city to city, and from continent to continent, but more rapidly go the tidings from earth to Heaven, and when a prodigal returns it is announced before the throne of God, and if those souls to-day should enter the kingdom there would be some one in the Heavenly kingdom to say: "That's my father," "That's my mother," "That's my son," "That's my daughter," "That's

my friend," "That's the one I used to pray for." "That's the one for whom I wept so many tears," and one soul would say "Hosanna!" and another soul would say "Hallelulah!"

Pleased with the news, the saints below
In search their tongues employ.
Re-od the skies the tidings of,
And heaven is filled with joy.

Nor angels can their joy contain,
But kindle with new fire.
The singer's heart is found, they sing,
And strike the sounding lyre.

At the banquet of Lucullus sat Cleero, the orator. At the Macedonian festival sat Phillip, the conqueror. At the Grecian ban set Socrates, the philosopher, but at our Father's table sit all the returned prodigals, more than can urcers. The table is so wide its leaves reach across seas and across lands. Its guests are the redeemed of earth and the glorified of heaven. The ring of God's forgiveness on every hand, the robe of a Saviour's righteousness adrop from every shoulder. The wine that glows in the cups is from the bowls of 10,000 sacraments. Let all the redeemed of earth and all the glorified of Heaven rise, and with gleaming chalice drink to the return of a thousand prodigals. Sing, sing, sing! "Worthy is the lamb that was slain to receive blessing and riches and honor and glory and power, world without end!"

ODD GROUNDS FOR DIVORCE.

Some Interesting Statistics Cullied from a British Blue Book.

The British Government has issued a blue book on the subject of marriage and divorce, giving the laws of various countries, collected by British consuls and intended obviously as a basis for an international agreement on these momentous transactions, says the San Francisco Argonaut. The countries in which divorce laws are in force are France, Great Britain, Germany, Bavaria, Belgium, Denmark, Greece, Russia, Saxony, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the Australasian colonies. In most of these countries, as in most of our states, the usual grounds for divorce are adultery, desertion, imprisonment for felony, cruelty, and incurable incompatibility of temper. But the latter ground for divorce may not be pleaded in Belgium where the parties have lived together twenty-five years, or where the wife is over 45. In France a woman may get a divorce from her husband if he calls her a canaille before her children, or if he maltreats her mother, or if he refuses to supplement the civil ceremony with a religious ceremony when requested to oblige her to that extent. In Germany a divorce may be granted if one of the parties goes mad, but not if he or she becomes an idiot. In France a man may divorce his wife if she stays out all night, or, without his consent, attends theaters, or sports, or dinners, or places where men bathe. It is good ground for divorce in Greece that one of the parties to the marriage turns out to be a Jew. In Saxony a divorce may be granted on the ground of change of religion, and in Spain a wife may get a divorce on the ground that her husband is trying to force her to change her religion. In Sweden it would appear that a divorce would be granted on proof that one of the parties had not been vaccinated before marriage. In New South Wales and Victoria a husband may get a divorce from his wife on the ground that she has neglected her domestic duties for three years.

The Blue Book gives these figures, which show that the United States, which leads the world in most things, leads also in divorce: In 1885 the number of divorces was, in the United States, 13,472; in Switzerland, 920; in Denmark, 645; in France, 4,245; in Germany, 6,161; in Roumania, 541; in Holland, 339; in Austria, 1,178; in Belgium, 290; in Norway and Sweden, 207; in Australasia, 95; in Russia, 1,789; in Italy, 556; in Great Britain and Ireland, 508, and in Canada, 12.

The Last First.

Childish simplicity sometimes looks like deceitfulness without being it. It was a perfectly honest little girl who was asked by her father: "Well, Emily, have you got along nicely with your knitting while I've been away? Which stocking are you on now?" "On the second, papa." "Well, where's the other?" "Oh, I should have told you, papa, I begun on the second one!"—Youth's Companion.

Large Fruits the Best.

The Board of Agriculture is still studying the question of the most desirable standard for a scale of points in judging at the agricultural fairs. The question of fruits presents some peculiar difficulties because in the case of most fruits size is an important consideration, and as a rule the larger they are the better, while with vegetables a large overgrown article is usually of inferior quality.—Grange Home.

An Unfalling Sign.

"I tell you said Mrs. Hunkies, as she let the illustrated paper drop in her lap, 'our Senator is gettin' to be bigger an' bigger in national affairs.' 'What makes you think so?' 'These here comic pictures are makin' him uglier and uglier.'—Washin. ton Star.

As soon as it does no good, a man is willing to take care of himself.

Men seem to be too much one way, and women not enough another.