

## THE LARGER LIFE

By William Jennings Bryan, at Calvary M. E. church, New York, Sunday morning, April 21, 1912, and on several other occasions.

The one thought which I desire to impress upon your minds this morning is set forth in the subject, as announced, "The Larger Life." I did not come to speak to you as a minister; my work is along other lines. I will not attempt to put my work in the same class with the work of the minister, nor to assert that it approaches the minister's work in importance. Our work is to a great extent determined by environment. Our lives are not largely of our own choosing. The freedom that we have to decide in what part of the vineyard we will work, is not an unlimited freedom. But though my time is devoted to work which I think important, though less important than the work of the minister, I can not withhold from the minister such assistance as I may be able to render in the form of testimony. I know of no moral principle that is binding upon the minister that is not binding upon the layman; and I am so much opposed to the idea of monopoly that I am not willing that the ministers shall monopolize the joy that comes from service in the Christian life. And so this morning I desire to turn your attention for a few moments to what I believe to be a growing understanding of Christ's work.

Christ was a master in addition. He came not to subtract, but to add. We are told that He came "to bring life and immortality to light." Had the people been in darkness? Yes, there was a dispute when He came as to the answer that should be made to the searching question asked by Job: "If a man die shall he live again?" Christ answered the question: He came to bring immortality to light. But He came also to bring life to light, for the world had had but a poor conception of life. Man's vision, even of his existence here in this world, had been but a limited vision. Sometimes the Christian has placed too much emphasis, relatively, upon the future and not enough on the present. People used to read the Bible to find out what it said of Heaven; now they read it more to find what light it throws upon the pathway of today, for they have learned that where Christ spoke once of the world to come He spoke ten times of man's present relation to his fellowmen. People used to search the scriptures, and then retire from society and in seclusion seek to prepare themselves for future bliss; now they are coming to understand that to walk in the footsteps of the "Man of Galilee" they must go about doing good.

But we not only have the testimony of Paul that Christ came to shed a new and brighter light upon life, as well as upon immortality, but we have Christ's own words—the highest possible authority—that He came "that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."

If we were in the midst of a great agricultural community where everybody lived by farming—where the surface of the earth was cultivated and made to bring forth all that was necessary to meet man's physical needs; and some one should come, a stranger, and tell us that we were but scratching the surface, unconscious of hidden wealth; tell us that down a few feet in the ground we could find a vein of coal that would furnish us the heat for steam, and that we could convert it into light and motive power, we would be grateful to him for making known to us the larger wealth that we possessed, but possessed in ignorance. And, possibly, if we did not become too busy mining the coal and too absorbed in the enjoyment of the new wealth that it would bring, we might erect a monument to him, when he was dead, to show that we appreciated the service he had rendered.

And if, after we had for a while enjoyed the addition that this stranger had made to our possessions, another came and said, "You have discovered only two elements of your wealth; there is a third. Go down just a little farther and you will find a mine of gold, a mine from which everyone of you can draw enough of the precious metal to purchase everywhere and always whatever else you need for your welfare;" would we not feel grateful to the second stranger who thus multiplied our wealth still more? I know of no better way of illustrating what Christ came to do. He threw a brighter light upon existence and revealed to us a larger life.

Man first learned of his physical possessions;

he was absorbed in the pleasures that came through the body. But long before Christ appeared man had learned that the mind possessed a wealth greater than the body's store. Before the beginning of the Christian era man had learned that the delights of the mind are of a higher order and more permanent than the joys that the body can bring. But Christ came to tell us that there was yet an unexplored field; that there was yet a depth which man had not found; he came to reveal to man the larger, broader, deeper, higher joys of spiritual life. And Christ, when He revealed these new possessions, did not withdraw that which man had learned to know before. When Christ said, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness," He did not add that we must take this as a substitute for all other things. He did not ask us to compare that which He would give with that which we had before and calculate the difference in value. He said, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you."

Is there any excuse for not leading the larger life? Is there any excuse that any man can give for not being willing to make use of all his powers? Shall we allow the materialist to speak of being "more liberal" than we are, when he refuses to consider the most important element in life? I resent the charge of narrowness that the atheist brings against the Christian. The Christian is in a position to enjoy every good thing that an atheist can enjoy, and, in addition, those larger, better things that an atheist can not enjoy. I hope the time is not far distant when the egotism of those who think they are stronger than Christians in mental power, will vanish and when they will no longer assume a superiority over those who allow Christ to lead them into the larger way.

What is there that Christ would take from us that has value in it? Does He deny us the food that we need? No, the Christian is at liberty to eat; aye, not only at liberty, but it is his duty to eat enough to lift his body to the maximum of efficiency. If his passion is service, how can he render the largest service unless the instrument of service is in good order? All that Christ would deny to us in the form of food is excessive food, food that instead of helping, harms; the kind of food that burns the stomach out and makes man old while he is yet young. If Christians find that instead of looking for something to eat they are traveling from one watering place to another trying to improve their digestion they can not blame Christ. It may be because they pay too much attention to the body and not enough to the soul. Christ requires no physical concessions that are not for our good. There is not a good habit that Christ does not allow. He only prohibits those habits that decrease our strength, and reduce our capacity for work—habits that waste our bodies and make them unfit to be temples for the indwelling of His spirit.

So, in the intellectual world, what is there in the range of science, or history, or poetry, or art, that Christ forbids us to enjoy? All that He asks is that we shall remember that all these things are means to an end. Where will you find more learning than in the Christian world? Where will you find higher art than in the Christian world? Where will you find sweeter poetry than in the Christian world? All that Christ asks is that we shall train the mind for usefulness—that we shall not glory in our minds merely because we enjoy intellectual pursuits, but because a larger mind can do a larger work—because a more extended vision can be of greater assistance to those who rely upon the educated to see in advance coming dangers and warn against them. All these things are but the means we use for the development of that which is highest in the life and best in man.

Christ does not restrain our activities along any line of legitimate work. On the contrary he furnishes a higher incentive and a larger purpose. In domestic life, in business life and in political life—everywhere, the Christian is free to satisfy every worthy ambition, every noble impulse. The only injunction laid upon him is that God shall come first and all other things afterward. But this one injunction does not fetter effort; it simply directs one's energies. It is the compass by which we steer if we would sail the sea of life in safety.

There are no happier homes than the homes of Christendom, and the happiest homes in

Christendom are those in which God is enthroned, and in which His will is the supreme law of the household.

Nowhere is business more successfully conducted than in the Christian nations; nowhere does it rest upon a more substantial basis. And in the Christian nations no business men build more surely than those who daily live as in His presence.

Materialism can not deal successfully even with the material things of life. A spiritual viewpoint is necessary if one would see clearly; no one is farsighted who does not see farther than the eye can reach. Faith is a spiritual extension of the vision, and no one can afford to be without it. Faith also is necessary if one would resist the temptations which, if yielded to, drag men down. In order to successfully withstand the insidious allurements that beset life's way we must understand that wrongdoing automatically recoils upon the wrongdoer; that God is not mocked; and that no human effort can prevent a harvest according to the sowing. One is sure to fall if his only restraint is the fear of being detected by others. There are too many chances for escape from the vigilance of others to make the fear of being caught a sufficient barrier to wrongdoing. No outer guardian can take the place of the inner monitor—the voice that bids the "wicked flee when no man pursueth."

Nowhere does Christ enlarge one's conception of life more than in the conduct of public affairs. Those who exercise authority have special need to give weight to the things that affect the heart. Only when one knows the heart can he judge men, and only when his heart is knit to the hearts of his fellows can he enter into the spirit of brotherhood. A condescending service is not sufficient; man is not fit to serve unless he recognizes that he is serving those who are attached to him by indissoluble ties, and only when he understands Christ's measure of greatness does his ambition become helpful to others as well as to himself. In no other walk in life is it more necessary for one to be guided by conscience than in public affairs, for nowhere else is one watched more constantly or subjected to more continuous criticism. The fear of exposure operates nowhere else more powerfully. In the bearing of great responsibilities he is strongest who has trained himself to measure up to the responsibilities imposed upon him by his Creator, for this being the greatest of responsibilities, responsibilities less weighty are more easily discharged.

Christ is not only a guide and friend in all the work that man undertakes, but his name can be invoked for the correction of every abuse, and the eradication of every evil, in private and in public life.

There is no nation in which the reviving, regenerating influence of Christ's words and life, is not sorely needed—no nation where we can not quote with propriety the lines,

"I know of a land that is sunk in shame  
Of hearts that faint and tire,  
But I know of a name, a name, a name,  
That can set that land on fire."

We spend a great deal of our time taking care of our bodies, and yet it is the body that is subject to sickness—it is the centre of disease; it is the thing that causes us most of our trouble. Not only do its pains bring us grief, but its passions and the temptations that come through them darken our lives. And, yet, how we sometimes worship the body! How we pamper it and how we try to adorn it. Christ did not object to man's making every proper use of the body, but He warned us not to spend all our time taking care of it. He pointed to the birds and beasts about us—how God cares for them. He reminded us that even the flowers are more beautiful than man arrayed in all his glory. He constantly tried to turn our thoughts from the things that engross our attention if we think only of physical life. He tried to direct our thoughts toward the higher and more exalted things. Compare, if you will, the spiritual joys with those that are either physical or intellectual. Look back over your lives and count the happy days. Are they the days when your bodily wants were satisfied or the days when your minds were exulting? No, the happy days were the days that you recall because they marked and measured some unselfish contribution to the welfare of others.