

Mr. Bryan's Bible Talks

THE GOOD SAMARITAN THEN AND NOW

By WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN

BIBLE TEXT—LESSON FOR DECEMBER 10 (Luke 10:25-37)

And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou?

And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself.

And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.

But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbor?

And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.

But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him.

And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more when I come again, I will repay thee.

Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

We are indebted to "a certain lawyer" for one of the greatest of Christ's parables and for the very practical truth He brought out therein—a truth that all of us today need to ponder carefully.

The occasion of this, the parable of the Good Samaritan, was not the only time when a lawyer's question gave Christ an opportunity to launch a great truth.

Matthew tells us of a time when a lawyer, "tempting him," asked, "Which is the great commandment of the law?"

Christ, without rebuking the lawyer for "the spirit in which the question was asked, proclaimed the first and great commandment, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind," and then He announced the second, which rests upon it and is like unto it, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

This lawyer rendered a great service to the world without intending it and he did it without a fee.

AN AGE-OLD QUESTION

So, this other lawyer that Luke tells of, stood up and, tempting Christ, asked, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

"What is written in the law? how readest thou?" Christ said unto him.

The lawyer responded with an accurate quotation from the law, giving the first great commandment, and the second, which is like unto it.

"Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live," Christ said unto him.

But the lawyer was not content with this approval; he asked another question, "willing to justify himself." To this question, "And who is my neighbor?" Christ made answer, as He often did, with a parable. And then follows one of the most impressive and useful lessons in the Bible.

THE GOOD SAMARITAN

A man going from Jerusalem to Jericho—a lonely highway then as now—fell among thieves; they stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead.

To make the case as strong as possible, a priest is described as passing by without offering aid; then a Levite passed by, ignoring the sufferer. But a Samaritan—the Samaritans and the Jews cherished an inherited hatred of each other—as he journeyed, came near and was moved with compassion.

He bound up the wounds of the unfortunate traveler, set him on his own beast, took him to an inn, and spent the night with him; on the morrow he paid the host for the care already

given the sufferer and pledged his credit for any additional expense that might be incurred.

Then Christ turned to the lawyer and asked, "Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves?"

There was but one answer that the lawyer could make, "He that showed mercy on him." And Jesus said unto him, "Go and do thou likewise."

A LESSON FOR THE AGES

The lawyer "came to scoff and stayed to pray." He came to entrap the Saviour and went away with a lesson that he could not forget and, what is more, he was made the conduit through which a wholesome truth flows down through the ages.

"Go, and do thou likewise," "Go," "Do"—upon these two words the Christian life is built. They are words of a single syllable—words of two letters each. Christ was talking to all the world and to all time and He used language that all could understand.

The student is inclined to indulge in long, high-sounding words. He adds syllable to syllable from the time he enters school until he graduates. His commencement oration is likely to contain more big words than he ever used before or will ever use again. As soon as he gets out into life, especially if he takes hold of life earnestly, he descends—or rather rises—to the use of simple words.

If one uses big words, only those who are highly educated can understand him; if he uses small words, all can understand him. The greatest thoughts of our lives and the deepest feelings of our hearts are expressed in plain, strong words.

Christ's words were not only strong, but they expressed action. Those who came to Him were sent away on errands of mercy and service. They received truth, not to hold as a precious possession, but to use in helpful ways. His followers were to be the light of the world; they were to bear one another's burdens. "Do" was a favorite expression with Him. His Golden Rule was built around doing. And so here Christ gave the lawyer a picture of the neighbor.

When one's thoughts cross the line which separates self from others, he enters the boundless field of altruism. Christ taught that one's interest in others should not be limited to the people who live next door.

Of course, nearness brings certain obligations with it—because we are near we are more apt to know of a neighbor's need. But the word "neighbor" has no geographical limitations. Christ's sympathies included all and so our sympathies must include all; our services must be at the command of those who require help.

This is a very large definition of duty, but it must be remembered that Christ spoke for mankind. His call was to "all who labor and are heavy laden," and the philosophy of life which He taught is the only philosophy suited to all people at all times.

CHRIST'S NATURALNESS

Philip Mauro in a recent book, speaks of the "translatability of the Bible," pointing out that it can be translated into any language and that each human being, reading it in his own language, reads it as if it were originally spoken in the language. And why? Because Christ dealt with the heart and men are more alike on the heart level than on any other level.

There is a sense of justice that is universal (Bancroft says the universal conscience is the nearest approach on earth to the voice of God), and it is to this sense of justice that Christ appeals. His reasoning is the perfection of logic and therefore it finds a response in the reason of men, unless that reason is corrupted by a selfish interest or swayed by passion of vanity.

It is because Christ was natural that He fits into every life and seems like a personal acquaintance.

He spoke "as one having authority," "as never man spake," and yet the people crowded about Him without embarrassment or thought of fear. They considered it no intrusion upon the Son of God to lay before Him their wants, and they never met with a rebuff. He drove the money changers out of the temple because they had made His Father's house a den of thieves, but He welcomed children, healed the sick, comforted the sorrowing and instructed the lawyers.

Christ was a religious teacher. He gave instruction in the synagogues and certified to the

truth of the Books of the Law, but He did not hesitate to denounce the hypocrites who devoured widow's houses and then attempted to deodorize their sins by the uttering of long prayers. And so, in the parable of the Good Samaritan, He rebuked the indifference of the priest and the Levite who were untouched by the sufferings of one who had been robbed and beaten.

Christ's religion rests upon faith, without which "it is impossible to please God," but it is a faith that expresses itself in service, which is just as indispensable.

Who is our neighbor? The one who is in need of help.

Where does he live? All about us and all over the world.

How much help shall we give? As much as is needed.

And how long? Until he ceases to require help.

A LIMITLESS FIELD

No excuse can be offered. We are not to draw lines that exclude all except the ones whom we find to be congenial companions. The field being limitless, the opportunities for service are also unlimited, and the obligations are as large as the opportunities.

Each individual must play the part of the Good Samaritan when circumstances brings others within range of his acquaintance. And so our nation must play the part of the Good Samaritan among the nations.

There is only one moral code and it is as binding upon groups as upon individuals. Every neighborhood needs the spirit of Christ and the need is just as great in the largest of our neighborhoods, the earth.

A TENDER REBUKE—AND A STINGING ONE

By WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN

BIBLE TEXT—LESSON FOR DECEMBER 17 (Luke 10:38-42; 11:42-44, 53, 54)

Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house.

And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word.

But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me.

And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things:

But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

But woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

Woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye love the uppermost seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets.

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them.

And as he said these things unto them, the scribes and the Pharisees began to urge him vehemently, and to provoke him to speak of many things:

Laying wait for him, and seeking to catch something out of his mouth, that they might accuse him.

The two brief passages from Luke that give us the text for today's Bible talk present two distinct and dissimilar incidents in the life of the Saviour.

The first tells us of a visit to a home in which Christ was a frequent and welcome guest.

It was the home of Martha and Mary—sisters, who evidently were quite unlike, as children of the same family often are.

Mary, the more spiritual one of the two, sat at the feet of Jesus, absorbed in His word.

Martha, who seemed to be more practical—in the sense in which the word "practical" is used by those who place a light estimate upon sentiment—was "cumbered about much serving." Her question would indicate a little irritation:

"Dost thou care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me."

"THE GOOD PART"

Martha was engaged in a very necessary work, that of the care of the house, and if, as Luke's account would indicate, she had less appreciation of the supernatural in Christ, it is not strange that she was vexed at Mary's seeming indifference to the extra burden thrown upon her by the entertainment of their visitor.

Biblical scholars have suggested that Martha was determined to provide a fine dinner, and that she was especially anxious on this occasion that the meal should be the best possible.

Christ, who had taken advantage of so many previous opportunities to present a truth, seized