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The Ministry of Tears

One Design of Trouble Is To Keep This World From Being Too Attractive.

New York report: A vast audience crowded the Academy of Music in this city to-day to hear Dr. Talmage. Discoursing on The Ministry of Tears, he put the misfortunes of life in a cheerful light, showing that if they were borne in the right spirit they might prove to be advantages. His text was Rev. vii, 17: "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

What a spectacle a few weeks ago when the nations were in tears! Queen Victoria ascended from the highest throne on earth to a throne in heaven. The prayer more often offered than any prayer for the last 64 years had been answered, and God did save the Queen. All round the world the bells were tolling, and the minute guns were booming at the obsequies of the most honored woman of many centuries. As near four years ago the English and American nations shook hands in congratulation at the Queen's jubilee so in these times two nations shook hands in mournful sympathy at the Queen's departure. No people outside Great Britain so deeply felt that mighty grief as our people. The cradles of many of our ancestors were rocked in Great Britain. Those ancestors played in childhood on the banks of the Tweed or the Thames or the Shannon. Take from our veins the English blood or the Welsh blood or the Irish blood or the Scotch blood and the stream of our life would be a mere shallow. They are over there bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. It is our Wilberforce, our Coleridge, our De Quincey, our Robert Burns, our John Wesley, our John Knox, our Thomas Chambers, our Walter Scott, our Bishop Charnock, our Latimer, our Ridley, our Robert Emmet, our Daniel O'Connell, our Havelock, our Ruskin, our Gladstone, our good and great and glorious Victoria.

The language in which we offered the English nation our condolence is the same language in which John Bunyan dreamed and Milton sang and Shakespeare dramatized and Richard Baxter prayed and George Whitefield thundered. The Prince of Wales, now King, paid reverential visit to Washington's tomb at Mount Vernon, and Longfellow's statue adorns Westminster Abbey, and Abraham Lincoln in bronze looks down upon Scotland's capital. It was natural that these two nations be in tears. But I am not going to speak of national tears, but of individual tears and Bible tears.

Riding across a western prairie, wild flowers up to the hub of the carriage wheel, and while a long distance from any shelter, there came a sudden shower, and, while the rain was falling in torrents, the sun was shining as brightly as I ever saw it shine, and I thought, What a beautiful spectacle is this! So the tears of the Bible are not midnight storm, but rain on painted prairies in God's sweet and golden sunlight.

You remember that bottle which David labeled as containing tears, and Mary's tears and Paul's tears and Christ's tears, and the harvest of joy that is to spring from the sowing of tears. God shows them; God rounds them; God mixes them where to fall; God exhales them. A census is taken of them, and there is a record as to the moment when they were born and as to the place of their grave. Tears of bad men are not kept. Alexander in his sorrow had the hair clipped from his horses and mules and made a great ado about his grief, but in all the vases of heaven there is not one of Alexander's tears. I speak of the tears of God's children. Alas, me, they are falling all the time! In summer you sometimes hear the growling thunder, and you see there is a storm miles away, but you know from the drift of the clouds that it will not come anywhere near you. So, though it may be all bright around about you, there is a shower of trouble somewhere all the time. Tears, tears!

What is the use of them anyhow? Why not substitute laughter? Why not make this a world where all the people are well and eternal strangers to pains and aches? What is the use of an eastern storm when we might have a perpetual nor'-wester? Why, when a family is put together, not have them all stay, or, if they must be transplanted to make other homes, then have them all live, the family record telling a story of marriages and births, but of no deaths? Why not have the harvests chase each other without fatiguing toil? Why the hard pillow, the hard crust, the hard struggle? It is easy enough to explain a smile or a success or a congratulation, but come now and bring all your dictionaries and all your philosophies and all your religions and help me explain a tear. A chemist will tell you that it is made up of salt and lime and other component parts, but he misses the chief ingredients—the acid of a sorrowed life, the viperine sting of a bitter memory, the fragments of a broken heart. I will tell you what a tear is. It is agony in solution. Hear, then, while I discourse of the ministry of tears or the practical uses of sorrow.

First, it is the design of trouble to keep this world from being too attractive. Something must be done to make us willing to quit this existence. If it were not for trouble this world would be a good enough heaven for us. You and I would be willing to take a lease of this life for a hundred million years if there were no trouble. The earth, cushioned and upholstered and pillared

and chandeliered at such expense, no story of other worlds could enchant us. We would say: "Let well enough alone. If you want to die and have your body disintegrated in the dust and your soul go out on a celestial adventure, then you can go, but this world is good enough for me." You might as well go to a man who has just entered the Louvre at Paris and tell him to hasten off to the picture galleries of Venice or Florence. "Why," he would say, "what is the use of my going there? There are Rembrandts and Rubenses and Titians here that I have not looked at yet." No man wants to go out of this world or out of any house until he has a better house.

It is trouble, my friends, that makes us feel our dependence upon God. We do not know our own weakness or God's strength until the last plank breaks. It is contemptible in us that only when there is nothing else to take hold of we catch hold of God. Why, do you know who the Lord is? He is not an autocrat, seated far up in a palace, from which he emerges once a year, preceded by heralds swinging swords to clear the way. No. He is a father willing at our call to stand by us in every crisis and predicament of life. I tell you what some of you business men make me think of. A man is unfortunate in business. He has to raise a good deal of money, and raise it quickly. He borrows on word and note all he can borrow. After a while he puts a mortgage on his house. After awhile he puts a second mortgage on his house. Then he puts a lien on his furniture. Then he makes over his life insurance. Then he as-

signs all his property. Then he goes to his father-in-law and asks for help. Well, having failed everywhere, completely failed, he gets down on his knees and says: "Oh, Lord, I have tried everybody and everything; now help me out of this financial trouble." He makes God the last resort instead of the first resort.

A young man goes off from home to earn his fortune. He goes with his mother's consent and benediction. She has large wealth, but he wants to make his own fortune. He goes far away, falls sick, gets out of money. He sends for the hotelkeeper where he is staying, asking for lenience, and the answer he gets is: "If you do not pay up Saturday night, you'll be removed to the hospital." The young man sends to a comrade in the same building. No help. He writes to a banker who was a friend of his deceased father. No relief. Saturday night comes and he is moved to the hospital. Getting here, he is frenzied with grief, and he borrows a sheet of paper and a postage stamp, and he sits down and he writes home, saying: "Dear mother, I am sick unto death. Come." It is 20 minutes of 10 o'clock when she gets the letter. At 10 o'clock the train starts. She is five minutes from the depot. She gets there in time to have five minutes to spare. She wonders why the train that can go 40 miles an hour cannot go 30 miles an hour. She rushes into the hospital. She says: "My son, what does all this mean? Why did you not send for me? You sent to everybody but me. You knew I could and would help you. Is this the reward I get for my kindness to you always?" She bundles him up, takes him home and gets him well very soon.

Now, some of you treat God just as that young man treated his mother. When you get into a financial perplex-

ity, you call on the banker, you call on the broker, you call on your creditors, you call on your lawyer for legal counsel, you call upon everybody, and when you cannot get any help then you go to God. You say: "Oh, Lord, I come to thee. Help me now out of my perplexity." And the Lord comes, though it is in the eleventh hour. He says: "Why did you not send for me before? As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you." It is to throw us back upon God that we have this ministry of tears.

Again, it is the use of trouble to capacitate us for the office of sympathy. The priests, under the old dispensation, were set apart by having water sprinkled upon their hands, feet and head, and by the sprinkling of tears people are now set apart to the office of sympathy. When we are in prosperity, we like to have a great many young people around us, and we laugh when they laugh, and we sing when they sing, but when we have trouble we like plenty of old folks around. Why? They know how to talk. Take an aged mother, 75 years of age, and she is almost omnipotent in comfort. Why? She has been through it all. At 7 o'clock in the morning she goes over to comfort a young mother who has just lost her babe. Grandmother knows all about that trouble. Fifty years ago she felt it. At 12 o'clock of that day she goes over to comfort a widowed soul. She knows all about that. She has been walking in that dark valley 20 years. At 4 o'clock in the afternoon some one knocks at the door, wanting bread. She knows all about that. Two or three times in her life she came to her last loaf. At 10 o'clock that night she goes over to sit up with some one severely sick. She knows all about it. She knows all about fevers and pleurisies and broken bones. She has been doctoring all her life, spreading plasters and pouring out bitter drops and shaking up hot pillows and com-

break the morning, and God will wipe away all tears from their eyes.

Jesus had enough trial to make Him sympathetic with all trial. The shortest verse in the Bible tells the story, "Jesus wept." The scar on the back of His either hand, the scar on the arch of either foot, the row of scars along the line of the hair, will keep all heaven thinking. Oh, that Great Weeper is just the one to silence all earthly trouble, wipe out all stains of earthly grief! Gentle! Why His step is softer than the step of the dew. It will not be a tyrant bidding you hush your crying. It will be a Father who will take you on His left arm, His face beaming into yours, while with the soft tips of the fingers of the right hand He shall wipe away all tears from your eyes.

I put this balm on the wounds of your heart: Rejoice at the thought of what your departed friends have got rid of and that you have a prospect of so soon making your own escape. Bear cheerfully the ministry of tears and exult at the thought that soon it is to be ended.

There we shall march up the heavenly street

And ground our arms at Jesus' feet.

Do you not this moment catch a glimpse of the towers? Do you not hear a note of the eternal harmony? Some of you may remember the old Crystal palace in this city of New York. I came in from my country home a verdant lad and heard in that Crystal palace—the first great music I had ever heard. Jullien gave a concert there, and there were 3,000 voices and 3,000 players upon instruments, and I was mightily impressed with the fact that Jullien controlled the harmony with the motion of his hand and foot, beating time with the one and emphasizing with the other. To me it was overwhelming. But all that was tame compared with the scene and the sound when the ransomed shall come from the east and the west and the north and the south and sit down in the kingdom of God, myriads above myriads, galleries above galleries, and Christ will rise, and all heaven will rise with Him, and with His wounded hand and wounded foot He will conduct that harmony. "Like the voice of many waters, like the voice of mighty thunderings, worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive riches and honor and glory and power, world without end."

SUNDAY SCHOOL

INTERNATIONAL LESSON NO. XIII
MARCH 31, 1901.

Review.—Isaiah 53: 1-12.

Summary.—Lesson I. Topic: Honoring Christ. Place: Bethany. It is six days before the Passover and Jesus is at the house of Simon the leper. While sitting at meat Mary anoints the head and feet of Christ, using a pound of very precious ointment valued at about \$300. The disciples are indignant and think it should have been sold and given to the poor. Jesus rebukes them and commends the woman very highly. Judas agrees to betray Jesus for thirty pieces of silver, or \$16.96.

II. Topic: Christ announced as King. Place: Jerusalem.

III. Topic: Christ confirming the faith of the Gentiles. Place: Jerusalem.

IV. Topic: The great commandment. Place: Jerusalem. Jesus in the temple.

V. Topic: The duty of watching. Place: Mount of Olives. The subjects of Christ's kingdom are likened to ten virgins.

VI. Topic: The duty and reward of faithfulness. Place: Mount of Olives.

VII. Topic: Christ our Passover. Place: Jerusalem.

VIII. Topic: The sufferings of Christ. Place: Gethsemane.

IX. Topic: The arrest of Christ. Place: Gethsemane.

X. Topic: The accusations against Christ. Place: The palace of Caiaphas.

XI. Topic: Pilate seeking to release Jesus. Place: Pilate's judgment hall.

XII. Topic: Closing scenes in Christ's earthly life. Place: Mount Calvary.

PRACTICAL SURVEY.

Lesson I. A noble deed rewarded. Mary poured a pound of ointment valued at \$300 to \$500, and representing fully ten times that value to-day, upon the head and feet of Jesus. The house was filled with the odor. "The sweetest perfume that the home circle ever knows rises from deeds of loving service which its members do for each other." 1. She hath wrought a good work. The act of honoring Christ will inspire an interest in, and a love for, the poor. 3. She had done for him while living what is usually done for the dead. You would not hesitate to use this costly tribute for the dead. 4. This deed shall be told wherever the Gospel is preached throughout the whole world, from now to the end of time, as a memorial of her.

Christ the King. "He came as a king, but not on a war-horse, heralded by trumpets and clad in gorgeous array; He rode in the simplest fashion on an ass, the symbol of peace. He was the Prince of Peace, and came to bring peace into all the world by righteousness. His reign will bring peace into the soul, into the community, between nations, everywhere; peace which passes understanding and which flows like a river. Christ was king in His nature. He showed royal authority."

Christ teaching the Gentiles. He must have rejoiced as He saw the Greeks seeking Him; for in this our Lord would see the beginning of those days when the Gospel should be carried to the Gentiles. How appropriate is the truth Christ preaches to them! He dwells largely upon His death and sufferings.

Through his death "the world" was to be redeemed. The Greeks as well as the Jews had an interest in the great atonement for sin which He was about to make. He therefore tells them plainly that "all men" will be drawn unto Him. Jesus shows the way to enter into life. Va. xiv, 26. Give up the things of this world. Serve the Lord faithfully and follow Him fully. These requirements might seem hard, and so Jesus gives them a glimpse of the glory beyond. God honors those who follow Christ.

IV. The law of love. Christ is able to satisfactorily answer all of our questions. Those who came to entangle Him has questions that to them were unanswerable; yet how easily Jesus handled them! There is nothing hard for the Lord. The young lawyer was near the kingdom (Mark xii, 34), yet he did not enter in. Christ loved him, and so he loves all mankind; but that is not enough. What we need to know is whether we love Christ. If we do it is because we have renounced our love for this world; for it is impossible to serve God and mammon. And then we can love God only as He puts His love in our hearts.

V. Ready, waiting and watching. Christ is coming again. Nothing is surer than this. The church is his bride, and the true church will be ready when He comes. Christ's bride is to "array herself in fine linen, bright and pure."

VI. Faithfulness and its reward.—God has committed much to everyone. Great responsibilities are resting upon us. We are in charge of vast interests. Our personal conduct in this world and our soul's eternal welfare are under our own direction. Our relations in life, and the many talents with which God has endowed us, all tend to increase our responsibilities. This is a time of testing and trial. Satan will present all sorts of temptations. We will be tempted to discouragement, to commit sin, to idleness, to bury our talents. By God's help it is possible to be faithful and discharge our duty as we ought. Those who take this course and heroically meet every demand of God will receive a rich and eternal reward.

VII. Jesus in his last hours clearly proved that He came not to destroy the law or the prophets, but to fulfill. Every sacred ordinance which the Jews regarded He observed. Though he was among his foes, in the head city where the Passover must be kept, he had a secret friend who would open his house for the King of glory to come in.

VIII. Jesus retired to pray.—Jesus was to taste death for every creature, and this hour the bitter cup of death was pressed to His lips. "That He must as Himself forsake by His young church, that He must grieve because of the apostasy in the midst of this church therein lies the bitter gall of the passion cup." Jesus fully felt the malignity of the sins for which He was to suffer, and having the highest degrees of love to God, who was offended, and of love to man, who was endangered by them, now that those were before Him, no wonder that His soul was exceeding sorrowful.

IX. Christ betrayed and arrested. What a picture is Judas of a fallen human being! For years he had listened to the teachings of his divine Master. He had seen the multitudes fed, the sea calmed, and the dead raised. He could not help but know that Jesus was the Son of God; and yet, for a few paltry pieces of silver, he enters the quiet retreat of the Saviour and covers his face with kisses as a sign to the officers that He is the one they are seeking. What hypocrisy! To what depths can a fallen man descend!

X. Jesus is thought worthy of death, yet there is not one witness prepared to make the charge. False judges make a search for witnesses to convict their prisoner. False witnesses contradict and disagree. They call up a statement made many months before, and falsely pretend to quote it. But time has not made this circumstance a foundation for their crime.

XI. The magistrates deliver Jesus to the Roman governor to meet the death to which they had adjudged Him. The deeper He went down in suffering the less He pleased them. Said is the scene which here meets our eyes. Testimony acquitted Him rather than condemned Him. Disorderly proceedings, preference for a murderer, and the unqualified demand for crucifixion convinced Pilate of the real motive of the Jews. He seeks to release Jesus: 1. By the yearly custom for prisoners. 2. By reminding them of His Messiahship. 3. By requiring a statement of His offences. The Jews then clamor for His death. Vehement expression of their desire the only hope of winning the case. Finally Pilate decided in their favor and against Christ.

XII. Jesus tasted death for every man. "By becoming the derision of His creatures He atoned for the crimes of His creatures, who mocked God and religion. Jesus was so thoroughly helpless upon the cross, put there by human hands, that the crowd easily persuaded themselves to believe that all they had seen and heard of Him was but a deception. But Jesus was King through the whole crucifixion."

Edward as a Golfer.

A good story is being told in England of King Edward's appearance as a golfer forty-two years ago, when he was a student at Edinburgh High School and University. Tom Browne was the professional, and he was certainly frank in his comments on His Majesty's play. At first he burst out into a more than usually fervent expostulation. "Don't you know," exclaimed Sir James Baird, "whom you are addressing? You are speaking to his royal highness the Prince of Wales." "Ah, well," said the imperturbable Tom, "his royal highness must learn. If he had done that in a match he would have lost." His Majesty laughed heartily at the frank comment.



REV. DE WITT TALMAGE.