"And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom; and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose and followed Him."

I

What kind of man was Matthew?

1. He was a publican. That means that he wore the livery of a foreign government. He was tax collector for Rome.

2. That means further that he was an outcast. His oath was not taken in court. His money was looked upon as tainted money and was not accepted by the Synagogue. Every door to decency was shut in his face. He was a moral leper.

3. The fact that he was a publican shows that Matthew had a certain rugged strength about him. He did not have to be a publican. He was one because he chose to be. A weak man will not deliberately be despised and hated as Matthew was. Matthew had forced himself to have a certain contempt for popular opinion. He was compelled at times to stand alone. He was a man of considerable strength of character.

4. He was a man whose master passion was money. A man in the grip of a drug habit will do anything to satisfy his appetite. The same is largely true of the man who is a slave to money. I saw a man who had been burned to death some time ago. He had run into a house that was already tottering to its ruin, in order to get seven dollars.

During the days of the gold craze in California a boat went down in the Mississippi on which was a company of miners.
When these men saw that the boat was sinking, many of them unbuckled their money belts from about their waists and threw them down in order that they might be as little encumbered as possible, and thus be the surer able to swim to shore. But there was one money shark present. He gathered up these discarded belts and fastened them to his own body. When he plunged in to swim he sank like a piece of lead. He was a rich corpse.

II

Notice Matthew's conversion. It is one of the simplest and most beautiful, told in all the Bible. This hopeless and despised man is at his desk in the office. The day bids fair to be like all other days. But such was not the case. It marked the dawning of a new era in this lonely man's life. How did it come about?

1. Jesus passed by. That has always happened. There is no place of business so hidden or obscure that He does not find His way to it.

2. Jesus saw a man named Matthew. There were scores of others that passed that same street but they did not see a man. They saw only a tax collector. They saw an outcast, a renegade, a traitor to his country. Jesus saw the man.

3. Jesus believed in him. He believed that he was dissatisfied with what he was, that he was longing for something better.

4. Jesus dared to invite him to become his friend and follower. That was a most unpopular thing to do. It was more unpopular than if one were to come into Houston and select his friends among the members of the colored race.
5. Matthew responded. He does not tell us whether he laughed or shouted or sang or wept. It does say that he did the one essential thing. He rose up and followed, and that was the beginning of a new life for Matthew.

III

What account did Matthew, the Christian, give of himself?

1. He prepared about the first church banquet given, and invited all his renegade friends to meet the honor guest, who was Jesus. Matthew does not tell us that he gave the feast himself. He merely says there was a feast. But Luke tells us that Matthew gave it. He invited the renegades of the city because he knew that none others would come. But Christ came and sat down among them.

Now in those days folks who were not invited for dinner could come and look on if they wanted. So the Pharisees came to see how the dinner was progressing. They were outraged that Jesus should be in such a crowd of riffraff. I think there must have been a gleam of laughter in the eye of Jesus, as well as a bit of scorn as he answered, "I am not come to call the righteous, but the sinners. They that are whole need not a physician. He is sick. You virtuous and perfect Pharisees do not need any help. I am for those in need."

And that is a word for today. The gospel that I am commissioned to preach is a gospel for sinners. If you are not in that class then I have no word for you. There is no gospel for the whole, for the well and strong and stainless. The only gospel about which I know anything is a gospel for sinners.

2. Then Matthew wrote a gospel. This gospel stands first in the New Testament, though it is not the oldest of the gospels.
It is a bit different from any of the others because each one looked on Christ with his own eyes. When Matthew was called he forsook all to follow Jesus. That is, all except his pen. He brought that along with him, and he brought his systematic and orderly mind. Matthew's gospel has certain definite characteristics.

(1) It is an orderly gospel. He does not arrange it according to chronological order, but he arranges it topically. The Sermon on the Mount he puts in one section, the miracles in another and the parables in another.

(2) In Matthew's gospel Jesus is spoken of as "The King." The question of the wise men is "Where is He that is born King of the Jews?" When Jesus dies He dies like a king. Luke and Mark simply say that He expired. John says that "He gave up the ghost." Matthew said that he dismissed His spirit. He is a king to the very end, and when He is ready to die He and dismisses His spirit.

(3) Matthew's gospel is the gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven. He alone uses that expression. To others it is the Kingdom of God. He strongly teaches that Jesus is to set up a kingdom on the earth. He records fifteen parables spoken by Jesus. Of those fifteen, twelve begin by saying, "The Kingdom of Heaven is like - ."

(4) Matthew's gospel is a gospel written especially for the Jews. When Matthew traces the genealogy of Jesus he starts with Abraham, while Luke goes back to Adam. The wise men asked, "Where is He that is born king of the Jews?" In order to convince the Jews he appealed to the Old Testament Scriptures. He quotes from nineteen books of the Old Testament. "That it might be fulfilled" he says over and over again. Mark and Luke never use the expression at all.
(5) But while this gospel is a gospel for the Jews, it is also for the whole world. Matthew is the only one of the evangelists that records the parable of the wedding feast that the king gave to his son. When dinner time came, you remember, the king sent his messengers to the invited guests, saying, "All things are ready, come to the feast." But they began with one consent to make excuses. Excuses always have to be made. Reasons already exist. But when these refused to come the messengers were sent into the highways and hedges and the table was furnished with guests. That is, when the Jews rejected the feast, the table was filled with Gentiles.

Then Matthew is the only evangelist that records the great commission, "Go ye therefore into all the world and disciple the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age."
"And as Jesus passed forth from thence, He saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and He saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed Him."

Matthew 9:9

This man, Matthew, is the very opposite of the man we studied last Sunday night. Nathanael, you will remember, was a good man before he ever met Jesus. Not a man in his community stood higher than he. His friends knew him as a close student of the Bible. They knew him as a man who was persistent in prayer. He belonged to that elect company who were standing on tiptoe of expectancy, looking for the consolation of Israel. Nathanael represents one of the finest and highest types of character. Matthew represents one of the lowest and most despicable.

I

Look at Matthew, as Jesus saw him.

1. He was a publican. That means he was a tax-collector. The tax collectors are never famous for their popularity in any age. Few of us take extreme pleasure in paying taxes. We shout of our patriotism, but there is no money that we pay with such wry faces as what we pay to the support of the Government. We usually work every conceivable scheme to pay as little as we can. There is no form of lying that has not been employed in order to escape the paying of taxes.

But the popularity of the tax collector in that day
was heightened by the method of taxation. The tax collector bought the privilege of collecting taxes in a certain section. He, then, proceeded to wrench from his unfortunate victims every penny possible. This he did usually without any regard to fairness, or justice, or mercy. The tax collector was, as a rule, a hard-fisted, grasping rascal. He was hated for his rascality, and generally speaking, justly so. This was true even when the tax collector was a Roman, a citizen of the conquering nation.

But Matthew attained the very climax of unpopularity by the fact that he was a Jew. He had sold himself to a foreign power. He had become the tool of Rome, engaged in the mean task of pulling her chestnuts out of the fire. He was regarded as a traitor, a traitor to His God, and to his country. Being thus regarded, he was an outcast. No respectable man would invite him to his home. No respectable man thought of accepting his invitation. His oath was not taken in a court of law. His money was not accepted in the Synagogue. He was the lowest of the low. He was classed with her who is regarded as at the bottom of the ladder - publicans and harlots.

2. Now, the fact that Matthew was a publican indicates the supreme passion of his life. Why had he become a publican? Because there was something that he loved more than he loved the respect of his fellows. There was something that he loved more than he loved his nation, more than he loved his God, - that something was money. If the tax collector was the object of every man's scorn, if he was classed as the lowest of the low, if every decent man's hand was against him, there was at least this compensation, - there was money in it. The tax collector,
if he gave close attention to business, was always sure to get rich. It was this that appealed so strongly to Matthew.

Now, the love of money is not regarded as greatly dangerous among us, but it is only because we have never taken our Lord seriously, and have never thought the matter through. Jesus warns, with desperate earnestness, against it. Paul declares that "the love of money is the root of every kind of evil." Of course that is true. There is no crime of cruelty or treachery that has not been committed under the spell of the love of money. But love of money is deadly dangerous for a number of reasons.

(1) It is dangerous because it seems to many so innocent. A man who is the bond slave of some foul and filthy habit recognizes his danger. The man who is bound by the fetters of strong drink and the one who is slowly slipping into the quicksands of the dope habit is likely to realize the fact that his need is desperate. But the victim of love of money often fancies himself free. He prides himself on his keenness and sagacity. He is really the most alert, and wide-awake, and sensible man in the community. He takes a pride in what is working his ruin. Vampire—"I was true!"

(2) It is not only dangerous because he does not recognize his need, but because he so often suspects the hand that is reached out to help him. Did you ever try to talk to a money-lover about becoming a Christian? So often he fancies that he sees behind your seeming desire to help him only an effort to get his money. He puts a dollar up between you and himself so that too often your appeal goes for nothing.

(3) Then, it is dangerous because it is deadly. The love of money hardens a man. It dries up the milk of human
kindness within his soul. It effectually shuts God out of his life. It tends to electrify and galvanize him, body, mind, and soul, so that he falls into his coffin with a chime like the ringing of a coin. It is a deadly devil fish, that wraps his tentacles about us, and enslaves us, and sucks our heart's blood, while we flatter ourselves that we are the only really keen and intelligent freemen in the community.

During the days of the gold craze in California, a boat on which many miners were returning from the gold fields sank in the Mississippi. When those miners saw that the boat was doomed, almost all of them unbuckled the money belts from about their waists, and flung them upon the deck in order that they might have the best possible chance to save their lives. But, there was one man present who loved money above all else. He seized these belts with eager, miserly hands, and fastened them quickly around his own body. Then, as the vessel went down, he plunged into the water. He sank at once as if he had been stone. When they found his body, he was as rich a corpse possibly as was ever dragged out of the river. He had allowed his love of money to drown him. This was what Matthew was on the point of doing.

II

How was Matthew saved?

1. Jesus passed by. It was Jesus, then, that came Matthew's way. It was Jesus that sought the publican, rather than the publican seeking Jesus. This is ever the case. The first movement toward our salvation is always made by our Father. Your restlessness, your weariness, your hunger of heart, your loneliness, your grim questioning of the worth of life - these are all but differing accents of the voice of the Good Shepherd.
out seeking the sheep that was lost. It means that Jesus is passing your way. He has not lost your address. He had not lost the address of Matthew. The same Christ that passed by the fig tree of Nathanael, with his holy atmosphere of prayer, passed by the toll board of Matthew, with its biting atmosphere of greed.

2. He saw a man named Matthew. Jesus is gifted with the seeing eye. When others passed, they didn't see a man, they saw a publican. They saw an outcast. They saw a renegade. Jesus saw all this, too, but He saw something that was deeper; He saw a man, one made in the image of God, though the image was pitifully marred.

And as Jesus saw this man, He saw one that was not satisfied with himself. It is likely that Matthew had seen Jesus before; he had possibly heard Him preach. This message had stirred his heart. It was haunting him even now. He was finding it hard to keep his mind upon his money bags. It may be that he could hardly see his ledger now for his tears.

And Jesus saw this man, and His heart went out to this lonely, disappointed, bewildered, and enslaved man. Jesus not only saw Matthew as he was, but as he might be. "Here is a man," He said, "that is wasting himself. Here is a man who is doing something that is little and mean, when he might do something that is big and abiding. Here is a man with vast possibilities."

And as Jesus saw him, He loved him, and believed in him, and yearned for his confidence and fellowship.

3. So, yearning, He did a most courageous thing. He said to Matthew: "Follow me." He offered Matthew a place in His kingdom, a place in His heart, a place in the inner-circle
of His friendship. "It is next to impossible for us to realize what courage it took for Jesus to do this. Were a white man to go into the blackest part of the black belt of Mississippi and take into the inner-circle of his friendship some despised colored man, it would not make him any more unpopular than this made Jesus. Such daring on the part of the Master dug a chasm between Him and the religious leaders of His day. It seemed to threaten the wrecking of his whole enterprise. Yet, He invited this outcast to become His friend.

4. And what does Matthew do about it? He did not have to follow Jesus any more than you or I. Jesus has now done His part. He has sought Him out. He has given him his invitation. The rest is up to Matthew. He can say "yes" or "no." He holds his destiny in his own hands, even as you and I. And with gladness we read this magnificent word, "He arose up and followed Him." Did he shout? We do not know. Did he sing? We do not know. Did he weep? We do not know. We do know that he did the supreme thing; he obeyed. That was his conviction. That moment, life for him took on a new departure. That moment Matthew was reborn.

III

What was the outcome?

Matthew at once began to give evidences of the change that had been wrought in his life.

1. He made a great feast at his house. He invited Jesus and his friends. This feast, I think, had two purposed.

(1) It was a feast of gratitude, a feast of joy. Matthew had been set free. He was given a day to celebrate his freedom. It is evident that Matthew looked upon disciple-
ship as a privilege. It was not something to groan over, but to sing over. It was not something to enter upon grudgingly and whiningly, but with great thanksgiving. The fittest way to celebrate was not by a fast, but a feast.

(2) But the supreme reason for this feast was to introduce Jesus to his friends. Who were the friends of Matthew? They were outcasts and renegades, as he himself had been. He had no other friends. It would have been useless for him to have invited the respectable people of the community. They would not have come. But the outcasts came, a multitude of them, the story said. And Jesus came and sat down among them. About the table in his own home, he introduced Jesus.

I heard Bud Roberson tell of meeting a chap on the streets of Boston, who bummed him for a nickel to get a bowl of soup. Instead, Bud took him to dinner with him, and while he ate, Bud said, he talked to him; he himself not being hungry. He told him how he used to be a sinner away from home, and how nobody loved him. He told him how Jesus saved him and called him to preach. When the dinner was over, he told him that he was preaching at a certain church, and invited him to come. And he came, and was converted. Bud did not see him till three years later. He was then an effective Methodist preacher, and Bud said in his quaint way, "He only cost eighty cents." He introduced him to Christ about the dinner table. Thus, Matthew did with his friends.

Now, in those days, people could look on at a feast even when they were not invited. This, the Pharisees did. And as they looked they were outraged. "Why is the Master eating with publicans and sinners?" they asked the disciples, in
indignation. Jesus overheard, and answered, himself. It was a very solemn answer. But I think there was a bit of a twinkle in his eye; as He gave it: "They that are whole," He replied, "need not a physician, but they that are sick. I am among publicans and sinners because they sick. It is the business of the doctor to be where suffering is, where disease is. Of course you pharisees being in such perfect spiritual health do not need me, therefore I gave myself to those that do."

Surely this is a word that is not of the day. Our gospel is a gospel for sinners, and sinners only. The pharisees did not belong to that class; they were already whole. Therefore, they had no need of a physician. If you belong to that class, you shut yourselves out from all that Christ can do for you. He can only give Himself to those who need Him. This is true because they are the only ones who will accept His help. "If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink." But if you have no sense of thirst, you will not come. If you are not a sinner, you can never know a Savior. Matthew introduced Jesus to sinners, and they received Him.

2. Not only did Matthew prepare a feast in his house, but he prepared another feast with his pen. It has been well said that when Jesus called Matthew, he forsook all his position, his wealth, his possibility of growing richer. Only one thing, he carried into the new life with him, and that was his pen. And with this pen, he wrote a gospel. It is a gospel of orderly arrangement. Matthew shows by his writings that he is a business man. He puts the faith of Jesus in one group, His parables in another, His miracles in another. He puts his own conversion among the miracles.
Matthew followed Jesus, not to lose his life, but to find it.

IV

And now we come to your day and mine. Jesus is passing our way. He is seeing us, seeing us just as we are. He is passing where you sit, and you, and you.

So, passing and seeing, He is giving you the same invitation that He gave Matthew: "Follow me." He is inviting you because He knows that He can do something for you that nobody else can do. He is calling you because you can do something for Him that nobody else can do. What answer will you give? You can delay. You can say, "Tomorrow." In a moment the record of this service would be written. What would be your record? God grant that it may be that of Matthew: "He arose up and followed Him," followed Him into newness of life, followed Him for the building of a better world. That is your privilege, and certainly you can make no finer investment.
PETER AND JUDAS

In our study of these two men we are dealing with two of the best known characters of the New Testament. Every Bible reader is acquainted with them. Every one of us has a more or less accurate picture of the kind of men they were. They had much in common. Much that you can say of one you can say of the other. But along with this they stand in sharp contrast. Close as they were together they are yet as far apart as the spaces between the stars. Let us look first at what they had in common.

I.

Wherein were they alike?

1. They were both Jews and were, therefore, sharers of the Jewish faith. They were alike in their expectation of the dawning of a better day. In spite of the present darkness that had settled over their land because of the oppression of Rome. They looked for a day when the Messiah should come under whose leadership they should conquer even as they had been conquered. They were, therefore, partners in their common hope. They both mounted their watchtower to look for the dawning of a better day.

2. They were both disciples. Both of them were caught under the spell of Jesus. Just how Judas became a follower of Christ we are not told. But I can imagine this keen, thoughtful man pausing one day on the fringe of a crowd to listen to a man who was preaching in the open air. At first Judas was inclined to resent such procedure. But the man interested him strangely. He found him-
self being stirred in the depths of his soul. So profoundly was Judas in-
fluenced that he turned his back on the prospects of becoming a highly suc-
cessful man of business and cast his lot in with this confessed Son of poverty
from Nazareth. Why did Judas become a disciple? He did so of his own choice.
In spite of all his selfishness there was an appeal in Jesus that he could not
resist.

Of the conversion of Peter we know more. One day Andrew, with a friend,
had been listening to that fiery prophet, John the Baptist. The sermon over,
they were on the point of going away when this prophet pointed out a certain young
man who was then passing with these strange words, "Behold the Lamb of God that
taketh away the sin of the world." Andrew and his friend at once turned from
John the Baptist and began to follow this man that John had claimed to be able
to solve the sin problem. They spent some time with him and he took captive
both their hearts. When the interview was over Andrew was all on fire to share
his experience with others. The first man of whom he thought was his brother,
Simon. At once he went after him and brought him to Jesus. When the Master
saw him you remember he greeted him in this fashion,—"Thou art Simon the son of
Jona, thou shall be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, a rock."

But the method of the conversion of these two men is not the significant
fact. The matter is that they both of their own choice became followers of our
Lord. How you and I were converted may be interesting, but the big question is
this:—have we really been converted? Have we turned from our own ways to His
ways? Have we given up our own wills to do his will? Have we learned to say
what he himself said to the Father in Gethsemane,—"Not my will but thine be done." These two men came one day to the parting of the ways. They came of their own
free will to become followers of the Prophet of Nazareth.

3. Then they were alike in that they were both apostles. That is, they not
only chose to follow Jesus but Jesus chose both of them to be his intimates, to be part of that inner circle on whose shoulders he was to place the responsibility for the building of his Church. Why, I wonder did he choose them? Why did he choose Peter? He did not choose him because he was perfect. He did not choose him because he was "icily regular, faultily faultness." He chose him because in spite of his faults he had in him the making of a useful man.

Why did he choose Judas? There are those who seem to think that he chose Judas because he saw in Judas the makings of a rascal and a traitor. He chose Judas to play the most hellish part that was ever played by any man. But, of course, this is not the case. The man who deliberately chose a rascal to form a part of his inner circle of friends would lay himself open for the accusation of being a rascal himself. He chose Judas for this high place for the same reason for which he chose Peter. Not because he was perfect, but because he had in him the possibilities of perfection. He chose both of these men as a high adventure of faith. He chose them not so much for what they were as for what he thought they were capable of becoming. Both of them he made apostles.

4. Both of these men shared the fellowship of Jesus. Both of them came in some measure to see his visions and to dream his dreams. Both of them went forth in his fellowship to build the Kingdom of God. They worked at a common task. So far as the record goes Peter was no better worker than was Judas. In the companionship of their common Lord they had worked side by side for many months, for many days at a great and worthy task.

5. Finally, they were alike in that they both had a great fall. Look first at Simon. He was a man of physical courage. But he was too sure of himself. When his Master tried faithfully and loveable to warn him he met little better than reproof. "Though all men should be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended." But when the arrest came Peter struck one futile blow, threw down his sword and ran for his life. A little later he rallied, but he followed Jesus afar
off, thus losing the inspiration of his presence.

What was the final outcome? A servant girl innocently asked if he were not a disciple to be met with a strong denial. This same question came up a second and a third time. By that time Peter was completely unmanned. His courage had gone from him. He fell back into his old habit of swearing. He declared under oath that the Christ whom he had just vowed to follow both to prison and to death was an utter stranger to him. What a terrible friend. Jesus needed a friend if a man ever did, and here was one who had pledged him his friendship. But at the time when the need was the greatest he broke down completely and swore that he had never met him. It would be hard to find a bigger failure than that.

Look at the fall of Judas. He did not deny Jesus he called him Master to the very end. "Hail Master!" he said and then kissed him. What was wrong with that? It was born of a bad motive. Had Judas been sincere in that kiss his name would have been reverenced as one of the saints of sacred story. But Judas was pretending. The kiss of Judas was a kiss of treachery. If the fall of Simon was tragic and awful, that of Judas, when we take into consideration the motives behind it, was even worse. Though both are awful beyond all words. It is evident, therefore, that these two men had much in common. But in spite of this they were further apart than the poles.

II.

Wherein did they differ?

1. They differed vastly in temperament. Judas was a cool and calculating man. He seldom lost his head. He would have thought it a weak and babyish thing to give way to his emotions. He sought always to live purely by the light of reason. For instance, he was present in a certain home when a very beautiful and gracious deed was done. Mary brought an alabaster box of ointment and anointed her Lord.
The house was sweetened and perfumed by it. In fact, the whole world has been sweetened by that generous deed. But to Judas it was silly. The perfume was wasted. Such a deed can only be seen aright through the eyes of the heart. Judas did not have any eyes in his heart. Such a work of love can only be weighed in the delicate scales of love. Judas had no such scales. His scales were good only for weighing pig iron and fertilizer.

But Peter was made of the opposite material. There was nothing cool and calculating about him. He was impulsive, emotional. He was constantly going hot and cold. He was either on the heights or in the depths. When he was stirred he threw himself with mad abandon into the matter at hand. When the Master asked a question he was the one who usually answered. Generally he was wrong, but he answered none the less.

His impulsive wholeheartedness comes out again and again. Look at this picture. Jesus is washing his disciples feet. When it comes Peter's turn he draws back. "Thou shall never wash my feet!" is the bold declaration. "If I wash thee not," Jesus answered, "thou hast no part with me." Then Peter goes to the other extreme. "Wash not only my feet," he says, "but my hands and my head." Here is another picture. It is just after the resurrection. Seven of the disciples have gone fishing. As they come home over the dawnlight sea Jesus speaks to them from the shore. "Children, have you any meat?" They answer that they have caught nothing. "Cast your net on the other side, and you shall find." They did so, and their net was full of fish. Then John with his fine intuition said, "It is the Lord." When Peter heard, "It is the Lord," he plunged out headforth and made for the shore. A wholehearted man who acted first and thought later. Yet, we love him for his impulsiveness.

2. Then though both of these men had a horrible fall, that which lead to their fall was vastly different. How did Peter come to be guilty of his shameful denial? It was born partly of his conceit. He was too sure of himself. Then he-
lost the inspiration of his Master's presence. Finally, he was frightened. The sudden turn events had taken had shaken him to the depths. He did under a certain flood of fear what he would have never have done deliberately. He was seized by panic and went to pieces. But while Peter's knees went weak, while he lied shamefully, there was never a time I am sure that he did not love his wronged and wounded Lord. He loved him even when he denied him. We can understand this by a glance into our own hearts. Sometimes under a sudden impulse of shame or fear we say things that we do not mean. We are guilty of a conduct that we are later ashamed. My father used to tell me of a certain officer that fought in the war between the States. This man told his troops how he would lead them where the bullets fell the thickest and the blood flowed the freest. But at the first volley from the enemy he turned and ran like a frightened rabbit. But he stopped some one or two hundred yards away, turned deliberately around and walked slowly back and said, "Gentlemen, I apologize, but I couldn't help it." And he was never known to run again.

But Judas, his fall was not on the impulse of the moment. It was not the result of an overwhelming temptation. It was not the defeat of a weak man who loved in spite of his failure to be loyal to the one he loved. Judas had been disappointed in the kind of kingdom that the Master was seeking to establish. He had been disappointed in his own political prospect. He had found himself blaming Jesus for this. The fact that Jesus knew him for what he was aroused his bitter antagonism. He was griped by a hot anger that changed little by little into a burning hate. The kiss of Judas was not that of a weak and frightened man. It was that of a cool and deliberate hater out for revenge upon one who had done him no wrong. The sin of Peter was a sin of weakness. The sin of Judas was the sin of selfish and calculating hate.

3. Then these men differed widely in their reaction to their own fall. They
both suffered. The suffering of Judas was possibly more terrible than that of Peter. I think of no more tragic scene in all literature than the picture of this haunted man who steals along in the wake of the mob to see what is going to become of his Master. By and by he sees that he is condemned to death. Then the pangs of hell get hold upon him. He becomes utterly desperate.

But where does he turn for help? Not to his wronged and betrayed Lord. He turns to the men who have duped him. He hurries back to the temple to fling the silver down on the hard Mosaic floor and shriek, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood." The answer that he receives has in it the very selfishness of hell. "What is that to us? see to that." From these he goes to fling himself out into the night by the backdoor of suicide. When Judas faced his most desperate hour he trusted his bitterest enemies. He trusted a hangman's noose more than he trusted Jesus.

But Peter he also fell. He was in hell every moment that he was swearing and lying. Then when the Master that he had denied turned and looked at him, when he saw the pain in that face and knew that he had caused it, when he also saw the love that looked out from his tired eyes, that not even his denial could kill, it utterly broke his heart. "He went out," the story says, "and wept bitterly." But he wept with his eyes and his heart still turned toward Jesus. He wept not in remorse as did Judas, but in repentance. And Jesus could hardly wait to get the door of his tomb open to send him this word, "Go tell my disciples and Peter."

4. Finally, differing in their reaction to their sin they differed in their destiny. What was the destiny of Judas? We do not know. We are going to confine ourselves to the simplicity of the Bible. The Book of Acts says that Judas went to his own place. Wherever a traitor will fit in, wherever a man with hate in his heart against the supreme Lover will fit, there we may expect to find Judas.
Peter on the other hand went out to a life here and hereafter in the fellowship of Jesus Christ.

III.

What has the story of these two men to say to us?

This is the heart of the message. The real difference between men is not in the fact that one sins and the other does not. "We have all sinned and come short of the glory of God." Of course, some sin far more deeply than the other. But the real difference between the finally defeated and the finally victorious is not in the differing degrees of their guilt. The real test is here:- One dares to start again and the other does not. Judas went out into the night, but he need not have done so. Had he turned back to his wounded Master he might have become one of the greatest saints of sacred story.

But Peter did dare to start anew. That is the call of God to you and me. It sounds upon almost every page of the Bible. "Come now and let us reason together. Though your sins be as scarlet they shall be white as snow." "Rise up," said Jesus to his faltering and failing friends, "and let us be going." Our Lord receives sinners. He walks with those who have failed. He urges upon us to forget the things that are behind and reach forth unto the things that are before. However black may be the sins of yesterday, if you will only dare to start anew you will find an infinitely eager welcome. Absolutely nothing can defeat you except your failure to start again.

"Each day is a new beginning,
Each morn in the world made new,
All you who are weary of sinning,
Here is a hope and a chance for you."
In considering the surprises of the Bible I can not pass by this man Judas, even though I have a chapter about him in another volume. What a surprise he must have been to those whom he had sought to serve. As treasurer of the group he dispensed their charities. There were doubtless those scattered throughout Galilee and Judea who had been helped by him, and who remembered this man in their prayers of thanksgiving every night.

Second, he was a surprise to his fellow disciples, When Jesus announced in the Upper Room, "One of you shall betray me". I should have expected every eye to be turned toward Judas. I should have expected rugged Simon to have pointed him out and have said "There is the man". Yet the fact is that not an eye was turned to him. With a humility that did not always characterize them, each man looked into his own heart, and each man asked the question, "Lord, is it I?" And when Jesus sent him, saying "What thou doest, do quickly", no man had the faintest idea that he was going to betray his Lord. His treachery was a surprise to his intimate friends.

But of all men that were surprised by it, none, I think, was quite so amazed as Judas. Meeting him the day after he began to follow Jesus, he declared to me with enthusiasm, "I have found a young prophet that has opened doors to me that I never dreamed existed. I have forsaken all to follow him." Suppose I should have looked at him and shaken my head and said "No, you're not going to bring Him help, you are going to bring Him hurt. It's
not going to mean the enrichment of your life. It's going to mean utter tragedy. One of these days you are going to betray Him, and then to consign your name to an immortality of shame. He would not have believed a word of it. I do not think he would have been the least dismayed by it. No man was more surprised at what he did with his big chance than was Judas himself. Not only were his friends and we Judas surprised, but the centuries have been surprised. I suppose there is not a better known name in the Bible than that of Judas. Yet it would be hard to find a man more perplexed people and about whom we agree less than we agree about Judas. One reason we have so misunderstood him is this, that we have judged him by one single act of his life, and that the worst thing that he ever did. Of course it is impossible for that to give an accurate view. We have preserved and looked at only one picture of him, one snapshot. That picture is not of his hand outstretched in help to the poor, though that happened. (We have no picture of him on his knees, though doubtless Judas prayed. We have no picture of him as a preacher, though he preached along with his fellow disciples.) The one picture we have of him is with the leer of treachery on his face. We really misunderstood because we remember him by one single act, him by one single act.

I was pastor in Washington during much of the administration of Woodrow Wilson. I think he had the most keenly intelligent face into which I have ever looked. His face fairly sparkled. But he had a stroke in making the grand circuit in behalf of the League of Nations and that stroke blew out the light. Had you seen him for the first time you would doubtless have said, "What a stupid looking man," and I would have answered, "Don't say that. You ought to have seen him before the stroke." Some months ago two beautiful girls from our
state disputed the railroad crossing with a fast train. The result was that their lovely bodies were so mangled that they had to be taken up in baskets. Suppose after the undertaken had done his artistic best I should have looked into those caskets and said "What hideous creatures". You would have answered, "Don't say that. You only saw them after the wreck". We only look at Judas "after the wreck". But suppose we look at him before the wreck. The surprise of his tragedy will be even more compelling.

PART I

What do we know about Judas.

1. We know that he was not born a traitor. I have heard people misquote the Scripture and say that the Bible says he was a devil from the beginning. The Bible says nothing of the kind. Nobody is a devil from the beginning. Not even the Devil himself. Babies are not so much born as made. That is the teaching of the Bible. It says, "Train up the child in the way it shall go, and when it is old it will not depart from it". That is also the teaching of science. It has been demonstrated that a child can be trained to fear a kitten and pet a snake just as easily as it can be made to pet a kitten and fear a snake. That is the voice of experience. A child is a product of his training. Since Judas was a traitor we know that he was not born a traitor.

(I know the answer to that. If a child is a product of his training, why is it that preachers' kids are the worst in the world. The answer to that is because they are not. Not only are they not the worst, but they have the highest batting average of the sons and daughters of any profession in the world except that of missionaries, and missionaries are preachers themselves. More preachers sons and
daughters make good than those of any other profession in the world. It does make a difference today and tomorrow and forever what you teach a child. Judas became a traitor. He was not a traitor from the beginning (anymore than you were a saint from the beginning, or that man in the penitentiary was a murderer from the beginning). He became a traitor. We know that much for certain.

A second fact that we know about Judas is that he was a disciple of our Lord. How did he become a disciple? How did you become one? How can anybody become a disciple? Nobody is ever forced to become a disciple. Our Lord stands at the door and knocks, but He never crashes the door. (Look at the way in which Matthew, for instance, became a disciple. As Jesus passed by he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the receipt of toll, and He said "Follow me". And Matthew left all and rose up and followed Him. It was a simple as that. That was how it happened with Judas. It couldn't happen any other way. No man who is not willing to forsake all he has and follow Jesus can possibly be a disciple. I know it is argued that his motives were not high, that he expected Jesus to set up an earthly kingdom. So he did. But if that disqualifies Judas, it disqualifies every other member of the twelve. For all of them to a man expected Jesus to set up an earthly kingdom. They expected it right up to the Cross, and if we can believe Luke, they expected it beyond the Cross. The first question they asked Jesus as he records at this time in the Book of Acts, is this, "Lord, wilt thou/restore again the kingdom to Israel". So Judas was a disciple?

How it came about we do not know, but one day this young Christian encountered this young man Judas, who was doubtless a man of and sought to become his disciple. Doubtless to the surprise of Judas, and his friends, he said in to him, "Come, follow me. And such was.
business and He cast a spell upon him, and He so fascinated him and so wooed the best and highest that was in him, that this man of business turned aside from the privilege of perhaps getting rich, and following this man whose conditions were so absurdly difficult that at first it almost angered Judas. "For if any man come after me and forsaketh not all that he hath, he can not be my disciple" Judas had met that condition and we know that Judas was a disciple of our Lord.

3. The third fact that we know about Judas is that he was an Apostle. How do you become an Apostle? Not as he becomes a disciple, simply by He becomes an Apostle by the choice of our Lord. A man becomes a disciple of his own choice. Jesus flings out "Whosoever will", and anybody can become a disciple that wants to. But not everybody becomes an Apostle. These Apostles were hand picked. After an all night spent in prayer, Jesus chose them as his intimate followers, to be with Him that He might send them out to conquer the world. And among the twelve that He chose was this man whose name was J—. As to why He knew about Judas, this then we know, that Judas was not born a traitor, that he Judas was a disciple, that Judas was an apostle of our Lord.

PART II

Why did Jesus choose Judas? We are not going to claim for—it see that He chose him because of ignorance, because He did not know the type of man that Jesus was. Jesus knew the present of Judas and He knew the possibilities that were locked within him. He understood him fully when He chose him. No more did He choose Judas because He needed a resc— for the working out of His plan. If a man chooses a man for a place on his official board because he knows that man to be a rascal, we are mighty apt to accuse the man who put him there of rascality too. Huey Long said of a certain...
A Surprising Collapse

appointment that he made, and did not have a straight bone in his body."

When he said that, there were those few enough to believe that Huey might have a few bones that were out of plumb.

(Jesus did not choose Judas because He wanted a rascal. Yet one of the greatest preachers that I knew a generation ago, made this amazing statement: "that Judas was not a man in the real sense of the word, but a monster—a monster that was sent in to do a special work—that is Hell's work". Now it is impossible to accept that.

If Judas was sent of God to do a certain work, and he did that work, he is just as entitled to a place in the Kingdom as was St. Paul, because the sum total of all vital religion is the doing of the will of God. And if Judas did the will of God, then that means he was not only a good man, but he was a perfect man.

Why then was he chosen? He was chosen as was his brother disciples, because of what he was and because of what he was capable of becoming. Not one of these men whom Jesus chose was perfect.

Simon was a fluxuating, blundering man capable of telling the most gross and brazen lies. Had you known him and heard Jesus say, "You'll be a rock of Christlike character one day", you would have fairly laughed out loud.

John was another who was very lacking in promise. His name today is a synonym for love, but it was far from it then. He had been to burn.

Here he is asking the privilege of burning up a little village because that village refused a night's lodging to the Master and His friends. Now that was a bit of an insult, the refusing of this night's lodging, and some were guilty of passing that insult. But there were babies and little children in the village, and John was
would have been glad to have burned them up to get vengeance for the insult they had inflicted upon his Master and himself.

On another occasion he hurried into the presence of Jesus to tell Him this great news: "I saw a man casting out demons in thy name, and I forbade him because he followed not us". Now John was no friend to demons, his business was casting out demons. He hated demons. But there was one something that he hated still more and that was a man who did not belong to his group, that wasn't a member of his Church, and he said, "If you don't follow me, you're casting out demons doesn't amount to a thing in the world." These fellows were all faulty men and Jesus chose Judas as he chose the others, as a high adventure of faith, because of what he was and because of what he was capable of becoming.

PART III

How did Judas come to make "ship wreck"? How did he come to this amazing collapse? Of course here we can only feel our way, but I think we can guess with a fair degree of accuracy as how it came about.

1. I think Judas was disappointed in his preferment and in his Master's wealth. First, Judas was the only man of the twelve who was not a Galilean. He belonged to the more cultured group. He was from Judea. He was a Bostonian. He was in a sense a Harvard man, naturally he felt superior to those from Galilea. And these others were from the outlying provinces, nice roughnecks, they were, but not in his class, and so he felt that he was their superior. And yet when Jesus chose an inner circle it was not made up of Judas, Peter, and John. It was made up of Peter, James, and John, and Judas was left out.

Then it was not long before Judas discovered that Jesus was not
A Surprising Collapse

a keen politician, as he himself was. Excitement was running high
and people were so enthusiastic that they sought to take Jesus by
force and make Him King. Judas was all for it, but Jesus, instead
of being for it, actually went and hid Himself, and His friend
saying, "I successfully
angered inwardly and said, "How can you support a man and promote it
if he is going to run away from preferment. Judas was disappointed
in the political sagacity of his Lord.

2. There came a day, I imagine, when the revenues did not come
in from his business as good as Judas thought it should, and that he
needed some ready money, and being treasurer he made himself a loan.
That has been done countless thousands of times before and since. I
think he was honest in his way. He said, "I'll pay it back when my
revenues come in". And so he was quite easy in his conscience. But
things did not go more promising, but less so, and at last he decided
that he would change the name of that loan, he'd change it to "salary".
He told himself, "I'm doing all the work. I'm handling the funds
and I deserve some remuneration." And so he changed the name to
"salary", and not to just plain ugly old "theft".

Now, nobody knew of the manipulations of Judas. None of his friends,
But Jesus knew. He didn't have to ask Jesus to be sure of that. The
heartache of it, the disappointment of it, looked out from His keen,
kindly eyes, and Judas knew himself, understood. Sometimes it angered
him, sometimes it shamed him. There were times when he wanted to come
and fall down at the Master's feet and tell the whole sordid story, but he put it off, and the rugged face of Simon came across his vision and he said "He'll crow over me". And so he waited and never
made that confession.
BECOMING OUR BEST

Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, a stone.

—John 1:42

Andrew with enthusiasm has gone for his brother. His quest has not been in vain. He is, on the point of introducing Simon to Jesus. The Master sees this fisherman for what he is. He also sees something of his amazing possibilities. Therefore, He greets him in this thrilling fashion, "Thou art Simon, the son of Jona. Thou shalt be Cephas, which is by interpretation, a stone." There is a word to make the friendly smile and to make the cynics howl with laughter, for this blundering Simon is about the last man we would expect to become a rock.

I

The first declaration that Jesus makes in this greeting is that Simon has arrived. "Thou art Simon, the son of Jona." Simon has already become a certain type of personality. By virtue of his choices of right and wrong, by virtue of his victories and his defeats, he has become a certain kind of man. He has attained a certain goal. He has become something. As a result of all the experiences of his yesterdays, he has attained a definite character. Therefore, Jesus says to him, "Thou art Simon, the son of Jona."

What kind of man has Simon become? He is a man with much in him that is good. He is destined to become a leader. The evangelists do not agree as to who has the right to second or third place among the apostles, but they speak with one voice as to who is first and who is
last. All four evangelists agree in putting Simon at the head of the list and Judas at the last. When Simon comes upon the scene, in spite of his many weaknesses, he is a man of high qualities of leadership.

Then, he is genuinely lovable. If a popularity contest were held to see who was the favorite among the apostles, Simon Peter would certainly win. This is the case not because he was perfect; he was very far from it at the beginning. He had not fully attained even at the end. But faultless folks are seldom vastly popular. Most of us like "a creature not too good for human nature's daily food". Certainly we are the furthest possible from "Faultily faultless, icily regular, splendidly null". There are some creatures the soil of whose souls is too shallow to grow even a decent fault. Simon had plenty of faults, but in spite of these he was genuinely lovable.

Among his difficulties, two were outstanding. First, he was genuinely conceited. His conceit was so open and frank and boyish, that it does not offend us quite so much as it would if it were more adult. But this is counteracted very largely by the fact that it was relieved by a sense of humor. Conceited folks who have no sense of humor can be very offensive and very ugly. As long as we can laugh at ourselves, we can get away with quite a bit of conceit without too much offense, but that flea on the ear of an elephant that said to the beast after they had crossed a bridge, "We shook it, didn't we?" offends us. We could have forgiven him had he said this with a smile, but when he said it solemnly, we felt a bit outraged.

Simon's conceit crops out again and again, even after he has met his Master. He is devoted to Jesus, but he must needs set him right again and again. This he did more than all of the other disciples together. For instance, when he had made his great confession, et...
Caesarea-Philippi when he declared that he had found values in Jesus that he could only find in God, his Master was thrilled. "Blessed art thou, Simon, the son of Jonas," he declared with hot enthusiasm. Then, thinking that the son of Jonas had got far enough to endure the sight of the cross, he told how that he must needs go to Jerusalem and suffer.

But to Simon such a position seemed utterly ridiculous. He could not bear to see his Master take a course that was so unreasonable, so utterly absurd. Therefore, he must needs set Him right. "Be it far from Thee, Lord," he replies with mingled sorrow and indignation.

"What is the use of having power, if you do not use it for your own good? What could be more stupid than for a man with your amazing abilities to fling Himself away on a cross?" Simon believed that Jesus was taking was altogether wrong, and he did not hesitate to say so.

Simon's conceit got him into trouble more than once. When the end was near, and the cross was casting its grim shadow upon Jesus, he tried to warn Peter to prepare for the terrible testing that was ahead. "All ye shall be offended because of me this night," said Jesus, but Simon refused to take warning. On the contrary, he flatly told his Master that He was wrong. "All of us going to be offended? Don't you believe it! Of course, I can't speak for my brother Andrew. I can speak still less for those sons of thunder, James and John, but there is one for whom I can speak, and that is myself. Though all men will I never be offended." Simon Peter was wonderfully sure of himself.

But even more pronounced, if possible, than his conceit was his impulsiveness. Simon was a very emotional man. He acted and then
thought. He took his position, then looked about for a few rags of reason in which to deck himself. Being thus emotional and impulsive, he was a creature of extremes, of ups and downs. One moment he was playing the hero; the next he was playing the coward. One moment he was enthusiastically for something; the next he was enthusiastically against it. Sometimes he was on one side of the fence; at once he was on the other, but he never straddled the fence. Whatever he did, he did with whole-hearted abandon. His story abounds with evidences of this.

For instance, when Jesus had met with His disciples for the Last Supper, there were no servants present to wash the feet of the guests. Not one of the disciples was willing to stoop to this menial task. Peter was perhaps least willing of all. But Jesus put aside His garment and girt Himself with a towel and began to wash the disciples' feet. When He came to Simon, the impulsive fisherman stopped Him. "Thou shalt never wash my feet," he said, emphatically. "If I wash them not," Jesus replied, "thou hast no part with Me." At once Simon goes to the other extreme. "Do not wash my feet only, but my hands and my head; i.e., wash me all over."

On another occasion, messengers have come to Peter and John, telling them of the empty tomb. They at once set out to see for themselves. John, being the younger man, outruns Simon and reaches the tomb first. Also being a reverent and finely sensitive man, he stops at the door of the tomb and looks in, refusing at first to enter. But panting Simon comes up and hesitates not a second; he dashes at once into the tomb. Possibly he sympathized with John's position later, but he did his thinking after he did his acting.
Here is another scene. Jesus has been crucified. Their whole world seemed to have gone to pieces. The bottom is out of everything for the disciples. Simon sees nothing better than to go back to his old life; therefore, he says, "I go fishing." Certain other of the disciples said, "I go with thee." They entered into a boat and toiled all night and caught nothing. As they come home in the gloom of the early morning, a Stranger stands on the shore. This Stranger asks a question, "Lads, have you caught anything?" They answer in the negative. "Cast your net on the right side and you shall find." They obey and the net is filled with fish. Then as the disciples tug at the net, John says softly to Simon, "It is the Lord." Simon at once drops the net and head-first he goes into the sea. An impulsive, lovable man is Simon but the furthest possible, it would seem, from being a rock.

II

Not only had Simon arrived, but he will continue to arrive. "Thou art Simon; thou shalt be Cephas."

1. Simon has become something. He is on the way to becoming something else. There is no stopping upon the highway of life. Out in front of Simon, there walks another man. There is the man that Simon is becoming. Out in front of you, there walks another. That other may be a far bigger and better man than you are; it may be a worse. But all of us are becoming beings different from what we are at this moment.

We are out on the open sea, and there is no casting anchor.

The road that stretches out ahead of us is an endless road. It reaches not only to the grave, but beyond. This is the case because we are mortal beings. Life for us is as endless as the life of God. This
is true whether we believe it or not. Whatever may be our attitude, we are ourselves today. We shall continue to be ourselves throughout eternity. Therefore, we are on an endless journey. We are always becoming something.

Since our journey is an endless journey, we have all but endless possibilities for good. We have all but endless possibilities of climbing toward the heights as well as descending toward the depths. Think first of the possibilities for evil that are in our lives if we take the wrong trail. Sometime ago in conversation with a man that had become a bond slave to a destroying habit, I said, "Mr. Blank, if a friend had told you ten years ago that you would become what you are today, you would not have believed him, would you?" He glared at me indignantly and answered, "If a man had told me ten years ago that I would become what I am, I would have killed him." Certainly he had no more intention of reaching the goal that he had reached than a candle-fly that is buzzing playfully about a candle has of scorching his wings and ending a charred bit of death.

When Macbeth was returning from a victorious campaign, there was little thought in his heart of disloyalty to his king, but the weird sisters dropped the seeds of an evil ambition. Even then, he was far from being right for crime. Lady Macbeth, who knew him best, was well aware of this. She was made of sterner stuff. Her one fear was that her husband lacked the baseness to wade through slaughter to a throne. "Thou wouldst be great, art not without ambition....Yet do I fear thy nature. It is too full of the milk of human kindness to take the nearest way." But Macbeth took the wrong road, and there came a time when the hand of this loyal man was so stained with blood that he felt that the seven seas could not wash it clean.
There is an Old Testament story that tells how the prophet Elisha looked once into the face of young, ambitious Hazael and burst into tears. Hazael was naturally puzzled and embarrassed. "Why do you weep?" he asked. "Because I see what you will do to Israel," came the answer.

Then he told the young man some of the bloody deeds of which he was going to be guilty. Hazael could not believe it. "Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?" But when he took the wrong road, and there came a time when the very deeds that he thought were impossible were committed with a mad abandon.

There is an oft-told tradition concerning Leonardo da Vinci's Last Supper. While contemplating the painting of this great masterpiece, he found a youth in Rome whose face was so wonderfully clean and fine and sensitive that he asked this young man to sit for him for the picture of Christ. He then painted the apostles one by one until he came to Judas. He could not find a face that he thought treacherous and sinister enough for this face. At last while searching through a prison, he found the face that he wanted. It was hard, cruel, sinister. As the owner of this face sat to be painted, he laughed cynically as he reminded the artist that he had sat for him before. "The other time," he said, with a kind of fiendish glee, "I was the Christ." Today I am Judas." An extreme case I know, but none of us perchance realize the capacity for evil that is locked away in our hearts.

But there is a bright side to the story. As there is no measuring our capacity for evil, neither is there any measuring our capacity for good. We can dip down into the very depths, but we can rise unto the superlative heights. We can become so devilish as to all but efface
the image of God that is upon every soul, but we can become so saintly as to remind those about us of the Master himself. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

There came a time when the fluctuating son of Jona was changed. He did become a rock of Christ-like character. So helpful was he that his very shadow had healing in it. His cowardice gave way to a fine high courage. The man who had quaked in the presence of a serving-maid stood before the highest court of his day defying their commands as he said, "Whether to be right in the sight of God, to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye." There came a time when this conceited fisherman became beautifully humble. "He wore a garment that he commends to you and me. "Be clothed in humility, for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." There came a time when those who came into his presence were forced "to take knowledge of him that he had been with Jesus."

III

How did this come about? No question could be of greater interest than that? We are thinking now of how we can come to our best. By this I am not considering at present how we can win the most of this world's goods. I am not even thinking of how we can come to our best in point of culture as important as that is, but how can we come to our best morally and spiritually. Perhaps this man Simon can show us the way. He reached marvelous heights. How did he do it?

1. He began by making a conscious choice of Jesus Christ as his Lord and Master. He began by facing in the right direction. What we are
tonight is of importance. How far we have climbed toward the heights and how far we have dipped toward the depths is of importance, but the matter of supreme importance is the direction of our lives. What you are is of importance, but what you are becoming is of far more importance. If you keep on the way in which you are traveling, where will you park when the sun-down comes?

A few years ago a man died out in California, named Luther Burbank. Burbank said, "Every weed is a possible flower." What a tremendous assertion! He meant by this that the only reason this rag-weed has not its hands full of blossoms instead of being a pest to hay-fever patients is because it has never had a chance. He is declaring that the only reason that this burr weed is not spilling out perfume instead of cockleburrs is because no man has ever taken the time to set it on the right road. The possibilities of beauty and sweetness are there, for every weed is a possible flower.

In proof of the truthfulness of this contention, Mr. Burbank one day met the cactus. Whether you are acquainted with the cactus or not, I do not know. If you are acquainted, to this I think you will agree—that the cactus is about the most disagreeable plant in the vegetable kingdom. It believes in preparedness. You could not slip up on the blind side of a cactus the darkest night that ever came. It has plenty of swords and spears and bayonets. Of course these are purely defensive, but it is always ready for a fight. But this man took the cactus in hand, started it to growing in the right direction, until one day it put down all its swords and spears and bayonets, and it filled its hands full of flowers. Today when we meet it, we no longer gather our garments about us
lest it should touch us, but we should like to wear its colorful beauty over our heart and rub our cheek against the soft velvet of its petals. Simon began to be his best by facing in the right direction.

2. Beginning to follow Jesus, living in His companionship, he came more and more to love Him. This is the most redeeming fact about Simon—that in spite of all his follies and failures he had a growing love for his Lord. It has been well said of him that everything went wrong with him first or last but his heart. At his cowardly worst, when he was denying Him and swearing that he had never met Him, he still loved Him with a passionate devotion.

That is a beautiful story of the meeting of Jesus with His faltering and failing disciple on the shore of the lake. "Simon, son of Jona," said Jesus, "lovest thou Me more than these?" Simon is not so sure that he is ahead of everybody else, but he is sure that he loves his Master. When the question is repeated, it almost breaks Simon's heart, but he holds that broken heart up before his Lord, sure at least of one supreme fact, and that is inspite of all his failures he has and still does love with a passionate devotion.

3. The final step that Simon took in becoming his best was to refuse to allow any failure to be a final failure. Simon blundered over and over again. He fell down so many times that I am sure he was often tempted to despair, but if he had a genius for falling he had an even greater genius for beginning again. Always he kept his face toward his Master. Constantly he was mounting on stepping-stones of his dead self to higher things. When at last he was lead out to be crucified, tradition says that he asked to be crucified head downward because he did not feel worthy to
die as his Master had died.

Sometime ago I read that the soil of England is full of tropic seeds. All that is needed the author said to make all England flame with color and sweet with perfume is for the sun to shine with the warmth of the tropics. All the seeds of the flowers of the spirit—love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, self-control—are in your heart and mine. What is needed to set these fields of the heart to flowering is that we face out in the right direction so that the sun of righteousness may rise upon us with healing in his beams. Tonight we may be very commonplace, but we have within us the capacity to be magnificent creatures among the tall sons of the morning.
"Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called
Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone."

If a popularity contest were held concerning the friends of
Jesus, Peter would be elected by a big majority. He is far and ahead
the most popular man among the apostles. There are those of us who could
not tell exactly why Peter is our favorite, yet he is. Of all those who
know Jesus personally he seems to us nearest, the most like ourselves,
and the most helpful.

And the verdict of our generation is the verdict of Peter's
own day. Certainly he held first place among the apostles. This he did
not by divine appointment on the part of Jesus. The ecclesiastic
primacy of Peter is a pure fake. He had the primacy all right, but not
by appointment. The four evangelists are not agreed as to who should
come second or third or fourth, but they all agree as to who should come
first and last. In every list Simon Peter is first. In every list
Judas is last.

PART I.

But in saying that Peter is our favorite, that does not imply
that he was the most faultless of those who gathered about Jesus. The
truth of the matter is faultless people are seldom greatly loved. If
their faultlessness is of a positive kind, they are a little too far
behind our reach for us to feel the affection for them that we do for
those less holy. If their faultlessness is negative, then they are likely
to be a bit repellant. Nobody is ever as popular as Santa Claus, "who
was faultily faultless, icyly regular, splendidly null."

Peter's faults were as plentiful as blackberries. Among the
most glaring were the following: He was fluctuating and unreliable. There was absolutely no telling what he was going to do. He was as unstable as water. He changed as persistently as the weather. He was a man of ups and downs, of courage and cowardice, of splendid victory and disastrous failure.

There is a storm at sea. Peter is thoroughly frightened. The Lord appears and cries "Be not afraid." Peter's fear at once changes into boundless confidence. "Bid me come to Thee on the water," he says. At the word of Jesus he climbs fearlessly out, but he has walked only a few steps till a wave frightens him and he is up to his neck in the water shouting for help.

Here is another scene. "Whom do you say that I am asks Jesus." Peter is, as always, the spokesman. "Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God." Jesus is greatly pleased. With a voice full of gladness he answers. "Blessed art thou Simon, son of Jona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee." But a moment later, He is having to say to this same Simon, "Get thee behind me satan." Never could a man pass from the North Pole to the Tropics and from the Tropics back to the North Pole as quickly as Peter.

But Jesus told this man that he was going to be a rock. He never made a mere daring statement than that with regard to this man. "Peter a rock!" I can hear the laugh of his neighbors across the centuries. "He is a likeable chap" they say,"but there is no pinning him down." He is a man without constancy. A watch-dog as unreliable as Peter would be turned over to the police for killing. A man beautifully loveable and thoroughly incapable of being depended upon. Such was Peter.

2. Peter was genuinely conceited. In the language of our day, "he
Everybody's Favorite.

Certainly did not hate himself!" He believed in Jesus with all his heart. He believed that he was the Christ of God, but that did not keep him from setting Him right again and again. When Jesus faces toward the cross, Peter is very indignant. The idea is ridiculous. "This shall never be unto thee." When Jesus proposes to wash his feet, again Peter sets him right. "Thou shalt never wash my feet." When Christ asks "who touched me" here again Peter comes forward to tell Him how ridiculous He was. "Thou seest the multitude thronging thee and sayest thou, who touched me?"

This conceit is evident throughout all the three years of the earthly ministry of Jesus. It is the least likeable thing about Peter. I have an idea, however, that the offense of it was lessened somewhat by the fact that he was as ready to brag on his brother as he was himself, in case his brother did anything that he thought was worthy. But it was this conceit that led to the greatest disaster of Peter's life. "All ye shall be offended because of me this night," so spoke Jesus warningly as he neared the cross. Peter did not tremble. He never batted an eye. He was not disturbed in the least. Listen to him. "Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet I will never be. I confess" he seems to say, "that my brother Andrew and my two friends, James and John may go back on you, but you can count on me." Now self-confidence is better than despising yourself, but the self-confident man is always on his road to spiritual failure. God cannot help a man if that man does not want His help. He was perfectly willing to bless the Pharasee that went up to the temple to pray, but the Pharasee did not want a blessing. Jesus was eager to give Peter grace to pass thru the
terrible ordeal that the cross brought into his life, but Peter did not need it; hence this terrible fault.

PART II.

But if Peter had his failings, he also had beautiful and conspicuous virtues.

1. Peter was human. I am not going to try to define humanness, but it is a quality without which we do not render our best service, and without which we do not win the hearts of men. Take my own calling, for instance. If you feel justified in dividing folks into men, women and preachers, that strikes a death blow to much of the preacher's usefulness. I ought to be a preacher, but the moment I become more preacher than man, then I lose my appeal. Happy is the father, the mother, the Sunday School teacher, the preacher, who continues to be beautifully human.

2. Peter was a born leader. Leaders are always born. It is a quality that is a gift of God. Put one hundred men out on a desert island and one of them will naturally gravitate into the place of leadership. There may be others there who are better educated than himself and better equipped in many ways, but if he is a born leader he will lead. Now there are certain characteristics that every leader must possess. For instance, he must have courage. He must dare to go ahead. Peter had this courage. If anything perplexed him he was not afraid to say so. If he was ignorant about a matter he dared to confess his ignorance and ask for information. If a question was asked and Peter had the slightest idea that he knew the answer, he was always ready. He usually got it wrong, but that never seemed to disturb him. If there was only one sword to be drawn in the defense of Jesus, Peter was the man to draw it. His
Everybody's Favorite.

courage failed him more than once, but naturally he was a man of great courage.

Then Peter had initiative. He was a man capable of starting something. He was original. There are some folks who can do nothing but imitate. They can do nothing but follow. Peter was a man that could blaze a trail. When God wanted a man to preach to the Gentiles, the first Christian sermon, he chose Peter. Peter had the daring and initiative to do it.

Finally Peter had personality. I do not claim to know what that is, but it is that something that when Peter says "I go a fishing,"
the rest of the crowd said "all right, we will go along with you." One man says something that will offend you. Another says the same thing and it makes you laugh. One speaks and it sounds like a cannon ball. the other says the same thing and it sounds like a pop-gun. I do not know what personality is, but it is that with which we do not get far.

3. Peter was magnificently whole hearted. He is like David in this, and this is what we like most about him. Peter never did anything by halves. No halfhearted individual is ever popular. Even the Lord is disgusted with the individual of the group that is luke warm and neither cold or hot. Peter never sat on the fence. He was sometimes on the wrong side and sometimes on the right side, but he was always on one side.

For instance, when the tomb was found open Peter did not stand on the outside and look in; he went in. Down by the sea a Stranger said to Peter and his friends after a fruitless night of fishing, "have you any meat?" They answered, "No". "Cast the net on the right side and you shall find." They cast and found an abundance. Then John with a finer spiritual intuition than Peter said, "It is the Lord." Peter at once
Everybody's Favorite.

let go the net. All the fish might get away if they wanted to. He kicked the boat from under him and out head first he went.

Then in that awful night of denial when Peter was asked, "Are you not one of His friends," he first said "I know not what thou sayest". Then he said, "I know not the man". Then with tragic abandon he threw himself headlong into the sea of disloyalty and he said with an oath he had never seen the Lord of His life, whom he loved with passionate devotion.

4. Peter was a man of fine spiritual sensitiveness. We do not usually think of him as such. We look upon him as a rather coarse fibred blunderer. At times he did blunder. At times he seems to show a lack of fineness. But there was a delicate moral sensitiveness that was surpassed by none of the disciples. At the first miraculous draft of fish that the disciples made at the word of Jesus, it was Peter alone who was humbled and brought to his knees by a sense of the divine Christ. It was he alone who fell down before Him and said "Depart from me for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

PART III.

Thus you see Peter as a strange mixture, both weak and strong, loyal and disloyal, courageous and cowardly, fickle as the wind, and yet lovable through and through. Yet, it was to this man that Jesus said, "Thou shalt be a rock." And He made good His promise. How was he able to do it?

1. When Peter was invited to take the road to his highest possibilities, he took it. There are two trails from where you are sitting. One leads you upward, and the other downward. You may take either one.
Everybody's Favorite.

Peter took the upward. There are two men walking in front of you. One is your better self. The other is your baser self. You may become either one you will. Peter chose the better self.

2. Peter persisted in his choice. This he did by the grace and help of God. He failed and failed and failed again, but after every failure he was ready to make a new start. And how patient Christ was with him. Peter asked Jesus one day how often he must forgive his brother. Jesus said, till seventy times seven. Peter needed that much forgiveness and so do you and I.

3. Peter's greatest asset was his heart. Everything went wrong with Peter at times, but after he met Jesus there was one thing that was constant about him and that was his love to his Master. As you read Peter's story it is possible to doubt at times almost everything about him. You wonder why Jesus ever chose him. You wonder if he will ever be any account. But as you read his story there is one thing you can never doubt and that is that he is passionately devoted to his Lord.

It was this passionate love that enabled Jesus to make of Peter what he did. In that last interview by the lakeside, He asked Peter three questions. He was examining him then for license to preach and the three question that he asked were this.

(1) "Do you love me?"
(2) "Do you love me?"
(3) "Do you love me?"

By that time Peter's heart was broken and his throat had a sob in it and his eyes were bright with tears. He was thinking of that threefold denial. And what answer did Peter make. He said, "Lord thou
Everybody's Favorite.

knowest all things, thou knowest that I love Thee." Peter did not have a single other thing to cling to. He could not say that I have always been loyal for he had not. He could not say that I have always been faithful, for he had been unfaithful at times. He could not say that I have always been courageous for he had been a coward, but he was willing to hold his very heart up before the eye of God and say look and you will discover this much at least, it is the heart of love. And what was the outcome? The answer is not surprising and yet it is most beautiful and most heartening. Jesus trusted him, believed in him and in spite of all his past failures, He believed in him so much that He put His lambs in his keeping, and trusted him with the church that He had purchased with His own precious blood. And Peter did not disappoint that confidence. He became a true shepherd, with the unflagging courage and tenderness that the task demands.

He became according to promise a rock of Christlike character. But it was not a hard rock against which good ships fling themselves and become wrecked. It was such a rock as that of which the prophet spoke. "He shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." Peter had a peculiar costume after that that he always wore. He found it so satisfactory that he recommends it to you and to me. "Be clothed with humility," he says. And because Peter wore that garment, bruised, battered people came to him. John Mark turned to him after his grave and humiliating failure. Under his influence he rediscovered love. He himself came to be a wearer of this royal robe and clothed in it he became profitable for the ministry.

Clothed in he wrote a gospel that has left a track of life through
Everybody's Favorite.

the centuries. The book of Mark comes out of two broken hearts, that of Peter and that of Peter's failing friend, John Mark.
"Thou art Simon the son of Jona; thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone."

--John 1:42

It was a great day when Andrew broke in all hot enthusiasm upon his brother Simon. He did not come to rebuke Simon for his sin. He did not come to criticize him. He did not come to lecture him or argue with him. He came with an amazing and thrilling announcement. He came with a declaration of what he had found. To his brother he declared, "We have found him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write. We have found the Messiah."

Whether or not Simon was sure of the truthfulness of what his brother said we are not told, but we may be certain of this—that he realized that Andrew had made some kind of an amazing discovery. The thrill of it looked out from his eyes. It rang through the appeal of his voice. So much was this the case that busy Simon decided to go with him to see this man whom he was claiming as the Messiah.

When these two brothers reached Jesus, the Master looked Simon over. "He gazed at him," as Moffatt translates it—saw him for what he was, saw him also for what he might be. Then He said this amazing word, "Thou art Simon the son of Jona; thou shalt be Peter, a rock." Had Simon's friends heard that, they would have smiled. Had his enemies heard it, they would have howled with derisive laughter, for if there was anything that this fisherman was not it was rock.

I

"Thou art Simon the son of Jona." Jesus was seeing Simon for what he was. What kind of man was he?
1. He was a man of fine possibilities. It is true he had not realized these possibilities as yet. When he came to Jesus, he was a rough, swearing individual who was perhaps none too easy to live with. That he was given to profane swearing, I think, is evidenced by the fact that years later in spite of the changes that Jesus had wrought in him, when he got into a tight corner and was determined to convince his questioners that he had not met Jesus, he swore viciously. This would not have been the case, I am quite sure, had he not been lapsing back into an old habit. It was a man of violent and picturesque language that Jesus saw when He looked at Simon.

2. This man Simon was possessed of that something that for a better name we call personality. I am not claiming to know what personality is. It is that something that, if one has enough of it, he can almost get along without anything else. If he has none of it, he is sunk never mind what else he possesses. Simon possessed that something that, when he said, "I am going fishing," his fellows instead of yawning and saying, "Go ahead" answered, "I go with thee." One man, you know, can say a word and it will boom like a cannonade; another man can say the same word and it sounds like a pop-gun. A writer about Theodore Roosevelt remarked on this quality. "He had the capacity," said the writer, "to make the commonplace sound startling. Had he declared that a man should not go home from church on Sunday morning and kill his mother-in-law, folks would have gasped and said, 'I never heard it just like that before!'" Simon had personality.

3. Simon had an over-plus of self-confidence. In fact, he seems at times offensively conceited. The ugliness of his self-sufficiency is relieved in some measure by his boyishness. I think too that, while he was boastful about himself, he would have boasted about his fellows with nearly equal enthusiasm. We have known such. They are willing that we be the second best if we only grant them the position of best. But while Simon's conceit is relieved by his genuine boyishness, its offensiveness is heightened by Simon's lack of humor. It would seem
that this self-important fisherman did not laugh quite enough. Certainly he did not laugh at himself enough. In the early days of his friendship with Jesus, he certainly took himself too seriously.

This is evidenced by the fact that he is forever talking. If the teacher asks the whole class a question, he always answers it. He is quick to set everybody right. Naturally, talking all the time, he said some very wise things. One day, for instance, when Jesus was preaching to a great multitude, the crowd walked out on Him. It was a distressing experience for His friends, who were perhaps five to ten thousand, to begin with. But they began to leave first in tens and then in hundreds until by and by only twelve were left. These were looking over their shoulders, wondering if they had not better go too. Then Jesus startles them with this quiet question, "Will you also go away?" Simon gasps, blushes a bit I think, and then blurts out, "I would have gone long ago if there had been any place to have gone. To whom shall we go except to thee? Thou hast the words of eternal life." It would be hard to improve on that.

Here is another scene. Jesus has gone with His disciples to Caesarea Philippi. Here He asks them two questions: First, "What impression have I made on the crowd? What do the people think of me?" Then He grew personal. "Who do you say that I am?" Simon rose magnificently to the occasion, "Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God." Jesus turned upon Simon all enthusiasm and said, "Blessed art thou, Simon son of Jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven, hath illuminated your heart by the light of God Himself."

But a moment later Simon is not showing up so well. Having made this great confession, Jesus concludes that Simon is far enough along to be able to stand up even in the presence of the Cross. Therefore, the Master proceeded to tell how He must go to Jerusalem and be rejected and done to death. But Peter could tolerate no such seeming nonsense. He turned upon the Master in indignation and said, "Be
it far from thee, Lord." He is virtually telling the Master that to have power and not capitalize on it is to be silly. Then it was that Jesus had to say to him about the sharpest thing He ever said to any man, "Get thee behind me, Satan. You do not talk the language of God—you talk the language of the world."

Simon's story is full of ugly bits like this. When the woman with the issue of blood had touched the tassel of Jesus' robe and had been healed, Jesus turned about and said, "Who touched me?" But Simon answered in a fashion that meant, "Don't be silly! Thou seest the multitude thronging thee and sayest thou, Who touched me." Again in the upper room when Jesus and His disciples are meeting in secret and there are no slaves present, Jesus takes upon Himself the slave's task of washing His disciples' feet. But when He came to Peter, Peter said, "Thou shalt never wash my feet." No man of the group was so good at answering all questions and setting everybody right as Simon, son of Jona.

This conceit got him into difficulty again and again. It came very nearly proving His utter undoing. On the night of Jesus' arrest the Master tried hard to get across to these friends of His the heavy ordeal that was going to try them. "All of you shall be offended because of me this night," He said. I do not think He spoke it as an inevitable, unavoidable fact. It was a danger, a possibility. But Simon bristled. He said, "You are not talking to me. These lesser disciples like Matthew and Philip may go back on you. Even the men of the inner circle, James and John, may fail. Even my own brother Andrew may prove a coward, but you can count on me." A little later in the garden of Gethsemane while Jesus equipped Himself for the ordeal by prayer, Simon with his friends fell asleep. Meeting the ordeal prayerless, he met it powerless and came to deny his Lord with an oath. Simon was a conceited man. When years later he urged his converts to be clothed with humility as with a garment, giving as a reason, "God resisteth the proud but giveth grace to the humble," he was speaking out of his own proud and tragic experience.

4. Finally, Simon was a very impulsive man. He lived almost wholly in the
realm of the emotions. He first acted, then thought. He first took his position and then sought a few reasons to bolster it up. Hence, he was a creature of inconsistencies. He was both courageous and cowardly, loyal and disloyal, true and false. We find him on both sides of the fence, but there is one place we never do find him, and that is on the fence. He is inconsistent in almost every other way, but he is consistently wholehearted one way or the other. We find evidences of this impulsiveness in almost every chapter of his life. There was a storm at sea. It looked as if the little vessel in which the disciples were alone would go to pieces. Then Jesus came to them walking on the water. They thought at first that they were seeing a ghost, and they cried out with fear. In so far as the record goes, Simon was just as frightened as anybody. Then Jesus called, "It is I; be not afraid." Simon is at once at the opposite extreme. "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come to thee on the water." "Come," said Jesus. Out he climbed, walked a few steps, saw an extra big wave coming in his direction, took his eyes off Jesus and began to sink. Then he cried, "Lord, save me!" A creature of ups and downs was Simon.

In the scene to which I referred a moment ago, when Simon said "Thou shalt never wash my feet," Jesus answered, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." Then Simon answered, "Wash not my feet only but my hands and my head—wash me all over." When Jesus had been buried and Easter morning came, a group of women hurried to Simon and John with the news that the tomb was open and the body of Jesus gone. That was revolutionary news. These two friends hurried to the tomb to see if it were true. John, being the younger man, reached the tomb first. He was also the more reverent and sensitive. He would not rush in to where his Beloved Lord had lain, but Simon came panting up and darted in without a moment's hesitation—a man of impulse!

Here is a final scene. Simon with a few friends had gone fishing. Jesus has risen from the dead, but they do not seem sure of it yet. That night they toiled all night and caught nothing. The next morning as they came in over the
dawn-lit sea there was a dim figure standing on the shore. The Stranger asked them a question: "Children, have you any meat--Boys, have you caught anything?" They answered, "Nothing!" Then the Stranger said, "Cast your net on the right side and you shall find." They made the cast and the net was filled to the breaking point. Then John, the man of intuition, said softly, "It is the Lord!" Simon waited to hear no more. He grabbed his fisherman's coat and plunged headlong into the sea and made for the shore. A man of impulse, fickle and changeable as a weather-vane is Simon.

II

Now it was to this changeable man that Jesus said, "Thou shalt be rock." What did Jesus mean by that?

1. He meant that Simon was going to change, that he was not going to remain as he was. He saw not only the Simon that was but the Simon that was to be. As our Lord looks at you and me tonight He sees us not simply as we are; He sees what we are going to become. Out in front of you is another man--out in front of you is another woman. It is the man, the woman, that you are destined to become. We have a way of saying that human nature never changes. If we mean that there is a broad sameness about human nature from century to century, that is true. But if we mean that the individual does not change, nothing can be more false. We are all changing all the time.

2. The fact of change is inevitable, but the kind of change that takes place depends upon our own choices. From where you sit tonight two roads stretch away. One dips downward and ever downward until it loses itself in the quagmires of desolation and death. The other bends upward and ever upward to where the light lingers even when the sun is set. You can take the upward road or the downward road and there is no measuring the distance that you can go in either direction because you have a whole eternity in which to travel.

Think how far wrong we can go. I was talking sometime ago to a man who had
made a desperate mess of his life and he knew it. I said, calling him by name, "If one had told you years ago that you would ever become what you are now, you would not have believed it, would you?" He said, "If a man had told me years ago that I would become what I am now, I would have killed him." We are accustomed to think of those who go vastly wrong as made of different material from that of which we are made. But that is not the case. They simply made a wrong choice and persisted in it.

There is an oft-told story that when Leonardo da Vinci was painting his masterpiece, "The Last Supper," he found a young man with a face so clean and winsome that he asked him to pose for his Christ. Then he painted the other apostles one by one looking always for a man with a face sinister enough and treacherous enough to pose for Judas. At last he found one in a certain prison-cell and obtained permission to paint his picture. When his work was near completion, the convict laughed harshly and said, "This is not the first time I have sat for you." The artist was interested. "It must be," he said. "I never saw you until I found you here." "No," said the convict, "when you painted your Christ, I sat for you then." It is an extreme case I know, but Judas went in a few short months from being a friend of Jesus to betraying Him with a kiss. There is no telling to what depths we can go if we travel in the wrong direction.

But this tragic fact has a bright and redeeming side. As we can go vastly wrong, so we can go vastly right. If we have a great capacity to go down, we have an all but infinite capacity to climb toward the heights. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." Every one of us, the weakest and the most unsightly, have in us a capacity for Christlike-ness. If we take the right road and persist in traveling it, one day they shall look at us on life's other side and say, "How like Jesus he is!" For this reason the biggest fact about any of us is not what we are but what we are becoming. What we are, I know, is vastly important; what we are becoming is still more impor-
What is the direction of your life? If you keep facing in the direction in which you are facing now, where will you go? If you keep on traveling the road that you are now traveling, where will you park when the sun-down comes? Christ said to Simon, "If you face in the right direction, the time will come when your weakness will give place to strength, when the cartilage will change to bone, when the bit of human putty that you are will become a rock."

III

Did this promise and prophecy of Jesus come true? It did. Simon, one of the faultiest men of the twelve has become an almost universal favorite. He became the first among this distinguished group. The four evangelists are not in agreement as to who should be second or third or fourth, but they all agree on who should be last—that is Judas. They all agree on who should be first—that is Simon. He remained humanly faulty to the end of the chapter, but he became so changed that his very presence had healing in it. He became so changed that even his enemies took knowledge of him that he had been with Jesus. He did become a rock—not a rugged rock against which good ships hurled themselves to become wrecks! Rather he became as rivers of water in a dry place and like the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. How was Jesus able to make good this promise? It was made possible not by Himself alone but through the cooperation of Simon. When He said to Simon, "Follow me," Simon began then and there to follow him. He at once faced in the right direction. That is a matter of fundamental importance for everyone of us. We must fix our goal. To the ship bound for no harbor, no wind can be favorable. Simon's Lord and Master was Jesus. You and I, if we are to come to our best, must face in that same direction. Then Simon persisted in spite of many a fall and many a failure. Everything at times went wrong with Simon except one—that was his heart. Once he swore he did not know his Master. Often he failed to live up to his best, but through it all he did love Him. When Jesus met him by the lake-side and examined him in a sense for license to preach, He asked him three questions, every one the
same question: "Lovest thou me?" And Simon passed the test. Through all his fickle blunderings, his heart turned toward his Master as the needle toward the pole.

Because this was the case, though he failed, he was always ready to start again. That is the crowning secret of his victory. The real difference between the finally successful and the finally defeated is not that one sometimes failed and that the other never did. It is rather in this—that one having failed accepted his failure as the last word while the other had the courage to start again. Simon was always ready to rise from the most disastrous falls to resume his journey. Thus he traveled toward his best here; he is still traveling toward his best in the Eternal Yonder.

"Thou art," says Jesus to you and me, "thou shalt be!" There is a better man, a bigger soul ahead of every one of us than we have yet attained if we are willing to make a beginning and to persist. Life's finest privilege is to become our best. Life's worst hell is to refuse. There is a story that tells of a brilliant young man who wasted his substance with reckless living. Through his own waywardness, he had flung himself away in a miserable attic in a great city. One night returning to that attic, he found it marvelously changed. It was palatial in its roominess and beauty. The finest pictures hung on the walls, lovely books filled the shelves with a great library. A kindly man with lofty brow and clean face sat reading to his children. When the young man entered, the children slipped away; then the splendid man talked to him until he began to vanish. "Don't go," said the wreck. "I must," came the answer. "Well, tell me who you are before you go," "I am the man," he said, "that you might have been." And then, he was gone. I am inviting you now to take the road to your best possible self.
"And he brought him to Jesus.
And when Jesus beheld him, he said,
Thou art Simon the son of Jonah;
thou shalt be called Cephas,
which is by interpretation, a stone,"

After Andrew had had a conversation with Jesus and had been convinced that he was the Messiah, he went at once in search of his brother, Simon. And the story says that he brought him to Jesus. When Jesus looked upon him, he saw him for what he was. He saw his faults, his failures and his sin. He recognized him as a man with a great faculty for changing his mind. He saw a man fluctuating and unreliable. But not only did he see the man that was, he saw the man that was to be.

Out ahead of Simon he recognized the larger and stronger and braver and better man that Simon was destined to become. In His fellowship and friendship. And so He said: "Thou art Simon, the son of Jonas, thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, a stone." "And now, as you are today, you will be a rock with Christ-like character tomorrow.

Now the first certainty that I want us to face is that for every one of us, there is, the man ahead. You are tonight. You shall continue to be tomorrow. Every man faces an eternal future. Hence, every man faces the certainty of the man ahead. This is true regardless of whether you are good or bad, whether you are Christian or un-Christian, whether you are facing the right or toward the wrong. It is true regardless of what your attitude may be to that future tomorrow that is ahead of you.

It may be that you do not believe in your immortality. It is possible, the not likely, that you have persuaded yourself that you lie down at the close of the day and sleep, just as your horse or your dog. It may be that you have no higher hope for the future than that you will one day become a brother to the clod which the rural swain turns with his share and treads upon. But whether you believe it or disbelieve it, you are immortal, nevertheless.

It is well for us to bear in mind that even the we disbelievers fear, that fact does not cease to exist simply because of our failure to believe. A little child stood in front of me some time ago with eyes tightly closed and said: "You cannot see me." But I could see him none the less. But he thought that his own blindness made me blind. You may deny the reality of the law of gravitation, you may actually succeed in persuading yourself that there is not such a thing. But if you step out the tenth story window of some sky scraper, it will cut you down. It will not do so by arguing with you, it will do so by operating. So you are immortal whether you believe it or whether you disbelieve it.
Ot it may be that immortality for you, while not a myth, is only a big perhaps. You may look upon it as a possibility, - a welcome possibility maybe, or maybe a possibility that fills you with dread. Thus did Hamlet look upon it. It was the fear of something after death that made him rather bear the ills he had than fly to others that he knew not of.

Or your attitude may be one of frank and open hostility. I have only known one of this type. While I was at the university there was a young lecturer and philosopher who declared one day that it might be possible that there was such a thing as immortality, but that frankly he hoped that it was not true; that when he had finished the life that now is, he would have lived all that he cared to live. It is hard to believe that he was telling the truth. But this is what he said none the less. This, then, is the certainty that we must face - that we are immortal. And, being immortal, it is surely and inevitably the man ahead with whom we must reckon.

II.

The second certainty that we want to face is that we are on our way to the man ahead. We are travelers, everyone of us. The anchor is up and we are out at sea. We are going somewhere. We are becoming something. There is no fact more arresting than this; there is no standing still. There is no dropping anchor on the high seas of life and remaining just where we are and just what we are. We are changing moment by moment either for the better or for the worse.

"Thou art", said Jesus to Simon. That is important. "Thou shalt be." That is more important still. What you are tonight means much. What you are becoming means far more. The biggest question about you and me is not how far we have climbed toward Heaven, nor how far we have descended toward hell. But the biggest question is this: Which way are we traveling? What are we becoming?

Certain scientists are fond of telling us how like the embryonic monkey is to the embryonic man. You could not distinguish the one from the other. When we ask what they are, the answer is that they are all the same. But when we ask wherein they differ, it is in this; that they are facing in different directions. One is traveling toward beasthood and the other toward manhood. Tho their roads lie side by side in the beginning, they diverge till they become infinitely wider apart than the spaces between the stars.

III.

The third certainty that we want to face is that since the road upon which we travel stretches away into eternity, we have capacity for moral degredation and for moral worth that is so next to infinite. I do not think that the average man begins to dream of the capacity for evil or for
good that is locked in his life. He may dip down and down forever or he may climb up and up forever. First, think of our capacity for evil. There is a tradition that when Leonardo Da Vinci painted his famous picture of "The Last Supper", he first found a winsome and clean-faced young man to sit for the picture of Christ. Then one by one he painted the pictures of the Apostles, till he had painted all except that of Judas. He had been waiting to find a face that was evil enough and sin-marked enough to represent the face of the traitor. At last he found a man in a prison cell that satisfied him and he was permitted to paint his picture. One day when the work was almost complete, the prisoner said, "I have posed for you before, but the other time I played the role of Christ."

This is an extreme case I know. And yet history presents stories almost equally terrible, and tragic. For instance, there was a young man who heard Jesus one day and was caught in the spell of his winsome personality. He became a follower of His. A little later he was chosen as an apostle. A little later still that man who had been honored with the confidence of his Master and lifted into the high position of apostleship, stole out in the night and betrayed his Lord with a kiss.

Could any descent be more rapid than that? Could anybody have believed that of Judas? Least of all, could Judas have believed it of himself. Had you said to this young disciple during his first days of fellowship with Christ, "You will be a traitor one day. One day you will take love's sweetest caress and forge it in the hot fires of your treachery and hate and stab your Lord with it. One day you will die a suicide's death. One day your body will be shoveled up like so much earth and dumped into a grave in the potter's field; in a grave that nobody ever visits and where nobody ever brings a flower," would Judas have believed it? Certainly not. Few men have any conception of the potential evil that is within their hearts.

Do you remember the interview that the Prophet Elisha had with the ambitious young Hazael? After the prophet looked at him and into him and through him, he suddenly burst into tears. Of course Hazael is astonished. He has neither said nor done anything to provoke the prophet to tears. "What is the matter?" he asks in astonishment. "Why are you weeping?" And the prophet answers: "Because of the evil that I see that you will do to Israel." "I do not simply see the decent, respectable man you are today. I see the man ahead, and he is cruel and despicable."

Does Hazael believe the prophet? His prediction seems incredible and impossible. "What?" he answers, "Is thy servant a dog that he should do this? "Do you think I am the type of man that you have described. Frankly, he was not at the time. But he was becoming that type. He had not arrived at that evil goal, but he was on the way.

The ambitious Hazael was no more surprised when he got a glimpse of his future than Macbeth would have been had the veil been lifted from his. Had you told Macbeth at the time he was returning victorious from the battle, the kind of man that he was going to become, he would never have believed you. But he allowed the wild sisters to sow the seed of an evil
ambition in his heart. It began to grow. Lady Macbeth helped it to grow. And there was need for help, as she who knew him best recognized.

Yet there came a day when his once clean hand was so stained that he felt it was able to redden the Seven Seas.

And you will miss the point of the story if you think these that have gone greatly wrong are altogether different from ourselves. We are fond of thinking so I know. We love to believe that while they are made up of the slime and evil things, we are built of far better material. But such is not the case. There are capacities for evil in the best of us that are absolutely appalling. And if some of us who sit complacently and indifferently in God's house tonight could see ourselves ten years from now twenty years from now, we would literally weep tears of blood and faint in the pew where we sit.

2. Then there is the brighter side of the story. As appalling as are our capacities to go wrong, so marvelous and winsome are our capacities to climb upward. "Thou shalt be a rock of Christlike character" said Christ to fluctuating Simon, Who believed Him? Nobody. And yet there came a time when this unstable and faulty man had the rugged strength of the rock. There came a day when he could stand unafraid as he defied the highest court of his land. There came a time when he could die a martyr's death with no other request than that he might be crucified head downward, as he was unworthy to be crucified after the manner of his Lord.

And there was a woman named Mary. Somehow she had got into the grip of sin. She was a demoniac. Just what her sin was, we do not know. It may be that she was an outcast woman. But Jesus met her, and under the spell of His love, she faced toward the heights. And she became so transformed in a few short months that she was the last to leave the Cross of Crucifixion, and the first to come in the radiant glory of the resurrection and tell that Christ had risen.

It is said that a great artist was walking with a friend along the streets of Rome one day, and that they saw a crude, uncouth piece of marble that had been cast out into the gutter. The friend remarked upon its ugliness. But the artist answered: "There is an angel pent up within." And he had it carried to his studio, and with hammer and chisel, he set the angel free. And when his friend saw it, he looked with amazement and almost held his breath in his expectation of seeing it mount on wings and fly away.

Now the supreme artist is Jesus Christ. As He passes these pews tonight, as He does pass, He sees us as we are. He sees our ugliness, our unsightliness, our crudeness, our sin. He also sees the angel that is
pent up within. He sees the possible saint that is within you and within me. And He longs with longing unspeakable to bring that possible saint into winsome reality. You may become the worst. That is terrible. But the beautiful side is that you may become the best. You may become like Jesus Himself, as you see Him as He is.

IV.

The final certainty I want us to face is that whether you become your worst or become your best depends upon your own choice. There are two roads in life. The one dips down and ever downward till it loses itself in the black pits of night. The other one winds up and ever upward to where the light lingers forever more. You can take either road that you will. You must take either the one or the other. You are traveling one of them now. It is the road of your own choosing. You know what road it is. Are you becoming better, or are you becoming worse? Are you facing toward the heights or toward the depths? That is a question none can answer but you.

My business here tonight can be told in a sentence. I am here as God's messenger to invite you to take the road that leads into the heights. I am here to invite you to the realization of your best and highest self. I am here to save you from the deep damnation of realizing the fact one day that you have made a wreck of life when you might have made it a thing of victory. I am here to try to save you from the horror of hell, of being tortured one day by the picture of the man that you might have been.

There is a story of a brilliant young fellow who went greatly wrong. At last his sin flung him into an attic in the slums of a great city. One night as he came home he found his miserable little room strangely changed. The walls were pushed back, the ceiling was lifted. There were beautiful pictures to greet him. There were many shelves of books. A man of lofty brow and kindly face sat in an easy chair, and there seemed comfort and healing in his very presence. They greeted each other and talked for a few moments. And then the winsome stranger began to move away. And the walls became the narrow and the room to become its void, mean self once more. "Don't go" cried he, "Stay with me." I cannot" said the kind man. "Then who are you?" he asked. "I?" he answered. "I am the man you might have been.

To fail if failure were inevitable, that would be bad enough. But to fail when you might have had victory; that is hell.

--- 0 ---
"Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, a stone."

---John 1:42

As soon as Andrew found Jesus he went after his brother, Simon. He had a wonderful story to tell. He had news that was far too good to keep. So, with the sparkle of a great discovery in his eye, and the ring of solemn conviction in his voice, he said: "We have found the Messiah." And he brought Simon to Jesus.

Now, when Jesus saw him, he greeted him with these amazing words: "Thou art Simon, the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, a stone." If you and I had been there and had known Simon as his neighbors knew him, we should have doubtless laughed wisely and cynically, for if there was anything in the world that Simon was not, it was a stone. But Jesus believed in him, and others came to believe in him; until, if a popularity contest were conducted for the Apostles today, Simon would certainly be elected just as he was in the long ago. The four evangelists were not agreed on who should come second, or third, or fourth. They all agreed on who should come first, and who should come last. Judas is always last, and Simon is always first.

But Simon does not owe his supremacy to divine appointment. No more does he owe it to his faultlessness. Faultless people are seldom very popular. Those who fancy themselves faultless are usually still less so. There are a few who are less attractive than those who are faultlessly right, as minimally regular, splendidly neat. Peter's faults were as plentiful
as blackberries. But, in spite of them, Jesus greeted him hopefully, and told him that he was on the road to the attainment of his highest possibilities.

I

What kind of man was Simon when he came to Jesus?

"Thou art", said Jesus. What was it?

1. He was an impulsive man. Impulsive folks are controlled by their emotions rather than by their reason. Peter spoke and then thought. He acted and then considered. Therefore, there was never any telling what he was going to either say or do. He was governed almost solely by the impulses of the moment.

2. Being impulsive, he was fickle and unreliable. He was not dependable. He was a creature of ups and downs, of heroism and cowardice. He was at times on the "crest of the waves" and at other times in the "trough of the sea." And oftentimes he went from the heights to the depths with a suddenness that leaves us amazed.

Look at this picture: "Who do you say that I am?" asked Jesus. It is Peter that answers, and his answer is so big and wise that Jesus is thrilled by it. "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God." "You mean to me," says Peter, "all that God means." And Jesus answers, and His answer: "Blessed art thou Son of Zion, but flesh and blood hath not revealed this to me." But when Jesus displays the cross, Simon goes at once from the heights to the depths. And Jesus has to turn on him and say about the sharpest word that ever fell from His lips: "Get thee behind me, Satan, you are a hindrance to me."

Here is another scene: The disciples are on the sea of Galilee in the grip of a storm. They are full of terror. Their
terror changes into positive panic as they see Jesus coming
toward them, walking on the waves. They cry out for fear. But
Jesus answers: "Be not afraid, it is I." At once Peter's cowardice
is changed to courage. "Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come to Thee
on the water." What a change! "Come," answers Jesus. And
Peter climbs down out of the boat and begins to walk on the water.
Once more, he is in the heights.

But here again he descends into the depths. He saw
the wind boisterous. He took his eyes off Jesus, and began to
look at his difficulties. Then and there he began to sink.
Down, he goes. And the waves close over him. Then, once more,
he rises to the heights. He does not claim to be swimming.
He blurts out his predicament in his straight-forward honest
fashion, and cries: "Lord, save me!"

Then, when Jesus preached to the multitude, and the
multitude melted away till only the twelve were left, Simon
showed himself at his best. "Will you, also, go away?" asks
Jesus. And Simon plants himself at his side. "With whom shall
we go, but unto Thee. Thou hast the words of eternal life."
But this same gracious man, a few minutes later, swore with
vicious oaths that he had never met Jesus in all his life.
An impulsive and fickle man was Peter.

(2) Then, Peter was genuinely conceited. He was very
far from hating himself. His conceit was not even relieved by
a sense of humor. That makes his plight terrible indeed.
If a man has a sense of humor, he may laugh at himself at
times, but blundering, tactless Simon had no sense of humor
at all. Therefore, his unrelieved conceit led him into doing
and saying a good many ridiculous things. He corrected Jesus,
and set him right more than all the other Apostles together.
When Jesus told him of his coming denial, he virtually told him to his face that he didn't know what he was talking about.

Now, conceit is not a very popular characteristic. We do not love to magnify folks who take too much time magnifying themselves. Yet Simon is so frank and boyish about his that we do not hold it against him as much as we would against others who are less child-like. But one of the worst things about conceit is that it makes it impossible oftentimes for God to help us. He gives to those who have a sense of need. Of course if we do not need anything we make it impossible for Him to give it to us.

2. But along with his faults, Peter had some excellent qualities.

(1) He was a born leader. Leaders are always born. Put a dozen men on an equal footing, and one man will gravitate into a place of leadership. Peter led the Apostles, not because he was elected by the group, but because of what he was. He had the qualities that go to make for leadership, such as initiative, courage, and personality. When Peter said, "I go a fishing," the rest said, "I go with thee."

(2) Peter was frank, and open, and honest. There is about him no tinge of hypocrisy. He never claimed knowledge, when he was ignorant. He never claimed courage, when he was a coward. When he did not know, he asked questions. When he did not like the way things were going, he said so. He was always frank and honest and in the open.

(3) He was whole-hearted. That is the quality that more than all others endeared him to us. He did nothing by halves. The type of character that God seems to dread more than all others is the luke-warm, half-hearted type. *I hate
those that are half and half," the author of the 119th Psalm has Him saying. And we are that much like God. We are never gripped and fascinated by the half-hearted. Now, Peter was sometimes on the right side of the fence, and sometimes on the wrong side, but he was never on it.

When Jesus proposed to wash his feet, Simon said: "Thou shalt never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." Then Simon came over whole-hearted, and said: "Thou shalt not wash my feet only, but my hands and head." When he and John ran to the open tomb, John was swifter of foot, but having arrived, he stopped at the door and looked in. Not so, Simon. He dashed by John right into the sepulchre. Again, down by the lake-side, when Jesus had told him how to cast the net, and it was now so full of fish that they could hardly drag it to the shore, John said: "It is the Lord!" At once Simon plunged into the sea and made his way to Jesus. A whole-hearted man, desperately earnest, sinning with abandon at times, but giving himself to the one he loved with a whole-heartedness that grips our admiration to this day.

II

What did Jesus do with this impulsive, conceited, and lovable man? He made him over. He did what he claimed he would do when he first met him. He made him into a rock. "Now, when they saw the boldness of Peter and John — they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus." And when they commanded them not to speak at all in the name of Jesus, Peter answered and said: "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than to God, Judge ye?" No denial here! The cartridge has changed into bone, and the putty has become rock.

2. Jesus made this swaggering and conceited man beautifully humble. "Learn of me," said Jesus, "for I am meek and
lowly in heart. And Simon learned of Him, and he himself became meek and lowly. Writing to some of his converts one day, he told them how to dress. He recommended a costume that he believed would be becoming for the life that now is, as well as for that which is to come. "Be clothed with humility," he said. It is a garment that Simon had learned to wear, and self-sufficiency had died under the shadow of the cross, and he had come to the place where he knew that self-sufficiency was of God.

3. Then, Peter became beautifully helpful. That is a very conspicuous story in the Acts that said: "They brought forth the sick that the shadow of Peter might fall upon them." He carried an atmosphere of healing with him. That is true of the best in men and women in all the centuries. There are some that bless us and steady us. There are those that make it easy for us to do right, and hard for us to do wrong. They make it easy for us to love, and hard for us to hate, easy for us to play the hero, and hard for us to play the coward.

Peter's best friend and private secretary was John Mark. John Mark had had a great downfall. He had set out with Paul and Barnabas upon their first missionary journey. But the task was too hard and exacting. He took cold feet, turned coward, and went home. When Paul set out again, he wanted to go, but this rugged old soldier wouldn't take him. But Peter, who himself had failed, took him under his wing, told him no doubt how God had forgiven him, and taken him back, and thus, the one-time coward became a hero, and the useless became useful.

III

Now, how was it that Jesus was able to do this for Peter? There is no magic about it. He was able to do this for Peter because Peter cooperated with him. How?
1. Peter dared to make a beginning. When Jesus told him there was a better and bigger man out ahead of him, Simon faced out in that direction. That was an absolute necessity for Simon. It is an absolute necessity for you and me. Our Lord has left us free. We can travel in any direction that we desire, out toward our better self, or out toward our baser self. Peter faced out toward his best possibilities.

2. Then, Peter fell desperately in love with Jesus personally. It has been well said that everything is out of place at one time or another about Simon, but his heart. Through all his blunderings and falterings, and failures he remained passionately devoted to his Lord. After the resurrection, when Jesus met him and asked him: "Lovest thou me?", Peter could say with deepest sincerity: "Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love you."

3. Then, Peter did not allow one failure to defeat him. Having fallen, he did not lie there and whine. He dared to get up and start again. That was his salvation. The main difference between the finally defeated and the finally victorious is, in one failing and the other never. And it is rather in this that one had the courage to begin again, and the other never did. Though he struck out a thousand times, he still went heroically to the bat. Though he fumbled, again and again, he was still eager to try to carry the ball. Thus Jesus was able to make out of this blundering, tactless, fluctuating man, one of the most useful characters of all history.

And now our Lord confronts us: "Thou art," he says to you, "what thou shalt be." Two roads stretch away from where you sit. One leads upward, and ever upward to where the light lingers even when the sun is set. The other leads downward, to
where it loses itself in the quagmires of desolation and despair. You can take the one that leads to the realization of your highest possibilities, if you will. One road you must take. Which will it be?
"One of the two -- was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother."

PART I.

Who is that man who has just been engaged in conversation with John the Baptist? There he goes. He is walking away, arm in arm with another man. They are following in the wake of Jesus. Who is he? You would expect an answer to this question a bit different to the one that you received. Your informant should have answered eagerly, "his name is Andrew." He is one of the first disciples that Jesus ever won. He is possibly the senior in point of service among the apostles."

But such is not the answer. Instead, you are told that his name is Andrew. They do not mention the fact that he is an apostle. They do not tell you that he was one of the first to believe in Jesus. After informing you that his name is Andrew, they hasten to explain further, because they do not expect his mere name to be enough. They add this significant fact that he is the brother of Simon. You know Simon, of course. He is that bold, dashing, brilliant leader among the disciples of Jesus. Everybody knows him. Well, this man is his brother. Of course, you would never think so. They are as opposite as can be. But he has the honor to be Simon's brother.

Now had you seen Simon Peter instead of Andrew, and had asked about him, the answer would have been entirely different. They would never have thought of mentioning the name of Andrew. They would simply have said, "That was Simon, he is the leader among the Apostles of Jesus." He had a reputation of his own. But what reputation Andrew had was largely in his brother's name. It is a hard place to fill, if you
Ordinary Folks.

Any pride. To be known only as the husband of some prominent woman, or the kinsman of some prominent man, is to many natures more painful than the tooth-ache.

Now the trouble with Andrew is that he is like the vast majority of us. He is simply ordinary. He is not greatly gifted in any direction. He is not a great scholar. He is not a great orator. He is not a great writer. He is just a plain every-day plodder. He is average and nothing more. Therefore, he represents the vast majority and belongs to that crowd that Lincoln said the Lord especially loved, because he made so many of them.

It is possible that Andrew looks a bit smaller than he really is, because of the distinguished company in which he moves. There were others among the apostles who were quite as un conspicuous as he, but such was not the case with all. Some of them were big men. Peter was a born leader. John and James were both men of far more than ordinary gifts. If you were to take one of the great hills that stand about my old home and set it down just outside of Memphis, everybody would call it a mountain. We would go by the thousands to see it. But if you were to put it down at Pike's Peak, it would attract no more attention than an ant's hill. Andrew was a bit warped by his company.

PART VI.

His conversion.

But even ordinary folks are capable of becoming extraordinary by the grace of God. The world owes to this plain man a debt that it can never pay. He rendered an immeasurable service, because one day he met Jesus and gave himself to Him, body and soul.
The steps in Andrew's conversion are easily traced.

1. He was the disciple of John the Baptist. This indicates that he was a man of moral earnestness. He was a man of deep religious nature. He came to know the great prophet of the wilderness rather intimately. In fact, it was through personal work of this prophet that he was led to Christ. Andrew seems to have had a keen appreciation of that fact throughout his entire ministry, for he himself is the most tireless personal worker among the apostles.

John's method with Andrew was very simple. The prophet had been speaking to a great congregation. The sermon was over and the crowd was scattered. As John and Andrew are talking together, Jesus passes. There is nothing about Him to indicate who He is. He wears no halo. There is no retinue of angels. But John points Him out to Andrew and his friend. "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world."

Andrew looked in amazement. Is that the man who the prophet saw? Is he the one who is to be wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities. Is He the one who is able to deal adequately and conqueringly with sin in the individual and in the life of the world. It was an amazing declaration, but it was a gospel for which the heart of Andrew was intensely hungry. Therefore, though he did not fully understand, though he found it hard to believe, he resolved to put the matter to the test.

As the crowd grew thinner, he slipped away from John the Baptist and began following with his friend in the wake of Jesus. Jesus turned and saw them following Him and asked them the question, "What seek ye?" Answer, "Master where are you stopping?" He said, "Come and see."
Ordinary Folks.

They eagerly accepted His invitation and spent the remainder of the afternoon and evening with Him. 'And that was for them the beginning of days.'

PART III.

What kind of man did this experience make of Andrew?

He was genuinely and truly converted, but his conversion did not make him into a man of extraordinary ability. He was not a great leader before his conversion, nor was he after his conversion. He was not a great preacher before. Neither did he ever become one. He was not brilliant, nor was he brilliant after. He remained himself. But he was a transformed and a transfigured self.

1. Andrew was a man who dared to be himself. He was not cut out on a large pattern. God had not made him that way. It is well for us to remember that it is not the will of God that all of us should be great, as the world terms greatness. Our earth is beautiful in its springtime greenness, this morning. But if there were nothing growing but giant red-wood trees, the world would be a monotonous world. We need some poplars, some pines, some peach trees and apple trees. We need some purple flags, and pansies and violets. We need birds besides the American eagle. We need cardinals and cat birds and mocking birds, and just as much, we need ordinary folks who are glad to live their lives within the will of God.

There are many things that Andrew could not do. He recognized that fact. Peter and James and John could excel him in many ways, but there were some things that he could do that they could not. Their tasks were the more showy, but his was as greatly needed.
Ordinary Folks.

Now there are some unhappy souls that finding they cannot do the conspicuous tasks, refuse to do anything at all. That was the trouble with the man of one talent. He felt himself dwarfed in the presence of those more highly gifted. Therefore, he did nothing. Andrew had only one talent but he did not allow that fact to make him either fretful or idle. Zestfully he toiled with an enthusiasm equal to that of the most gifted.

2. He was a man of fine generosity. He had a great loving heart. He was a brother in the finest sense of the word. There was not another man among the apostles who occupied so difficult a situation as did Andrew. If he had not been a man of extraordinary Christlikeness, he would have been genuinely miserable. He would have become a hindrance rather than a help. Indeed if he had not been a truly good man he would have written out his resignation long before Christ went to His death.

Look at his situation. He was one of a company of four that had been intimately associated for years. The other three were Peter, James and John. These had fished together. They had faced dangers together. They had battled with the tempest in wild nights of storm. Now they were together in the companionship of Jesus. But Peter, James and John belonged to the inner circle. Andrew was the only one of the four who was not included. That was hard. The fact that he had known them and had been so closely to them in other days served to increase his difficulty.

One day a death call came to Jesus. He selected three to go with him into the house of sorrow. Who were the three? Peter, James and John. Andrew was not invited. On another occasion Christ is going
Ordinary Folks.

into the mountain for a season of prayer. There were strange stories that the voice of God was heard in the mountain and that Jesus was transfigured. All three of Andrew's friends were there to see and hear, but Andrew was not invited.

Then there was that last wild night near the end of the journey. Jesus is in Gethsemane. He selects three to be with Him in His hours of agony. It seems as if He might have said, "Andrew is a loyal soul. He was the first to follow me. He has been with me thru all the days of my ministry. I will take him with me." But he was not chosen. He was left behind and Jesus took Peter, James and John. And if you know anything about human nature at all, you must believe that Andrew had had many a fight on this question. There had been times when he felt like accusing these three friends of his, of having misrepresented him. There were times when he felt like giving up the whole proposition and going back to his fishing. But he was not out for himself. He was out for his Lord. He was willing to do His will.

"Love took up the harp of life,
And smote on all the cords with might.
Smote the cord of self.
Thine trembling passed in music out of sight."

Andrew was a man with passioned loyalty to Jesus. Truly he had been reborn. Therefore, he was willing to be anything and to do anything as God should will, in order to bring in His Kingdom. "Why do you always put somebody Forward?" Gypsy Smith once asked his pastor, Dr. Collier, of Birmingham, England. "Because, he asked, I am out for the Kingdom."

"Therefore, if I can find a man a quarter of an inch larger than I am, I will give him a crowd and hold his coat and cheer him on while he does the work." Such a man was Andrew. Passionately devoted to Christ, he was willing to do the big thing if it were within his power. Unable to do
Ordinary folks.

that he was willing to do the seemingly small and inconspicuous thing.

PART IV.

What was the outcome?

Andrew, in spite of his ordinary ability became one of the most useful men among the apostles. He only appears upon the scene three times in the gospel. A human drama of three years was played and he comes on the stage but three times. But every time he plays his part nobly. Every time he is doing the work for which he is fitted. He is, as stated before, the outstanding personal worker among the apostles.

1. No sooner had he found Jesus than he set about the task of seeing others. He began his personal ministry at once, and he began it in the most difficult place in the world. He began it at home. If you can preach effectively at home, it is likely that you can do so anywhere. But if you are an utter failure at home, then you are likely to fail anywhere. I think it a great mistake to ever allow a young man or a young woman to go as a missionary to a foreign country who has shown no passion or no success in the winning of souls at home.

The particular individual that Andrew sought to win is one that everybody confesses was well worth the saving. It was his own brother, Simon Peter. I have an idea that preaching to Simon was not altogether easy. He was rough and rugged. His history leads us to believe that he was given to profane swearing. The fact that he lapsed back into it after three years with Jesus indicates that the habit had got a strong grip on him. But Andrew believed his gospel so intensely that he dared to preach even to his own gruff and sturdy brother.

And his method is one that commends itself to everyone who would succeed in this delicate and most important work. He did not
Ordinary Folks.

proceed to rebuke Peter, he does not lecture him, he does not plunge into a theological discourse. He tells them his own experience. He tells them what he has found. That is always gripping. That is the most fascinating story ever told. "We have found the Messiah."

Stanley Jones tells of a man who began to lecture in one of his round-table conferences. An earnest Hindu asked him with this question. "Never mind about the story, we are more or less familiar with that. Tell us what you have found." That is what the world wants to hear. That was what Peter wanted to hear. That was what Andrew told. "I have found one who has saved me." He seems to say, "I have found one who has changed my night into day and my sobbing into song." And the outcome of his testimony was that he brought Peter to Jesus.

2. Then, days later Jesus has gone out by the lakeside for a bit of rest. But no sooner has he reached the place of retirement than the crowds gather. Soon there are thousands of people present. Jesus preaches and heals, but the day wears on and the crowd still lingers. At last it is almost night. The people must be sent away. But they are desperately in need of food. Christ is reluctant to send them away fasting.

But there was no food at hand. Jesus puts the matter up to Phillip. He has no suggestion to make. He declares that two hundred dollars worth of bread would not be enough, and, of course, they have no money. Then it is that Andrew comes upon the scene. "There is a lad here," he says, "This lad has five loaves and two fishes."

What a flood of light this throws on the fine face of Andrew. Peter and James and John had doubtless been assisting the Master in ways beyond Andrew, but Andrew had not been idle. He had found a bright eyed, hungry hearted lad and had preached to him. He had got in his
Ordinary Folks.

confidence. By and by the boy told him that he had a lunch in his pocket and the two would slip away and eat it later on. But he was willing for Andrew to do anything that he desired with it.

When Andrew brought this news to Jesus, he did not rebuke him. He appreciated it. He said, "Bring it to me." And here we see he Andrew introducing this lad to Jesus. We do not know what/ became in the after days, but whatever he did, Andrew had a part in it. And Andrew has shown himself very like to Christ in that he appreciates the value of the child.

3. The last appearance of Andrew is near the end of the journey. Christ with His disciples is in Jerusalem. The shadow of the cross is upon them, but some Greeks come in search of Him. They approach Phillip, I suppose because Phillip had a Greek name. They express this age old longing. "Sir, we would see Jesus." And strange to say, Phillip did not know exactly what to do with them. He is not sure that the Master will welcome their visit. Therefore, he is perplexed.

What does he do in his perplexity. To which one of the apostles does he turn. Remember that he knew every one of them intimately and well, but he does not turn to Peter the natural leader, he does not turn to James or John, he turns to Andrew. Why? Because he believes that Andrew of all others will be the most interested. He believes that Andrew will be able to give the case the most tactful handling.

In this he was altogether correct. Andrew did not hesitate a moment as to whether he should disturb his Master or not. He leads them forward with radiant face and eager step and presents them to Jesus. It is his old familiar role of personal worker. And Christ welcomed them with a joy that must have made all beholders marvel.
Ordinary Folks.

He sees in them a prophesy of that ennumerable company that no man can number that was to come from the Gentile world. It was then that He shouted, "And I, if I be lifted up will draw all men unto me."

PART V.

Now what is heartening about the story of Andrew, is that he had such ordinary resources, and made so much out of them. He was not a great man as men count greatness. Yet all that Peter did and all that those others did whom he touched, is partly his. It is my opinion that some of the richest crowns in the life to come is to be given to obscure toilers. Who won D. L. Moody to Christ? Who won Martin Luther? You forget the names of those obscure folks, but God never forgets. One Sunday morning over in London, a fifteen year old boy set out to attend church. But the snow was falling so hard that he found it impossible to reach the church that he had purposed to attend. Instead he turned in to a little Methodist Chapel. Only a few folks were there. The preacher did not even come. At last an uncultured layman decided to lead the service. He was not a greatly gifted man in any direction, but he singled out that fifteen year old boy and so spoke that he then and there gave his heart to God, and that boy was Charles H. Spurgeon.

"Common as the way-side grasses,
Ordinary as the soil,
By the score he daily passes,
Going to and from his toil.
Stranger he to wealth or fame,
He is only, what's his name?

Not for him the glittering glory,
Not for him the places high.
Week by week the same old story,
Try and fail and fail and try.
All his days seem dull and tame,
Poor old plodding, what's his name.
"One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother."  
-- John 1:40

This brief sentence is the record of the first disciple that Jesus ever won. Here is where Christianity, in a sense, had its beginning. Here is the spring of which the great stream has flowed that has brought light and healing to the nations. We think, as we read the story, of how many millions since then have been brought under the spell of Jesus. These heroic souls have helped to remake the world. Their influence has burned on all the continents. It has brought to them a new spiritual springtime. But at the front of this great army walks Andrew, the first, or one of the first men that dared to become a follower of our Lord.

I

The story of Andrew's conversion is very simple. John the Baptist was a stern and rugged personality. He had the courage of a lion, and the fire of Elijah. People flocked to hear him by the thousands. His compelling message had won this young man, Andrew, away from his fishing nets. John had, with his conviction, gripped him and had fired him with something of his hopes.

Then, one day, John stood watching a young man who passed by. This young man was then unknown. He was fresh from the carpenter's shop. But as John looked, he said to those about him: "Behold, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world." "Here is one," he declared, "who claims to be able to solve the sin problem in the life of the individual and of the world. Here is one bent on no less a quest than the bringing in of the Kingdom of God. Andrew heard the message, was thrilled by it, and then and there followed this amazing
young man.

Jesus gave him an interview. Just what transpired, we do not know. But life for Andrew that day took on a new departure. When that interview closed, he was still uncertain about many things, but he was sure of this: that he had found his Lord and Master. How beautifully simple is this story! One of the two that heard John speak was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. Andrew was won through the personal work of John the Baptist. It is not to be wondered at that he became the best personal worker in the New Testament.

II

What did this experience do for Andrew?

1. It did not make him the leader of the Apostles, nor the greatest man in the early church. When Charles Lindbergh flew across the Atlantic, he received such acclaim as was possibly never given to any other man before or since. Inside of thirty days, he had received more than a hundred telegrams, more than 3,500,000 letters. His presents more than filled huge trucks. He received offers that would have made him worth millions. A little later, another man flew across that same ocean, landed further East than Lindbergh, dared all the dangers that Lindbergh had dared, and yet I dare say not one in a thousand today knows his name. Chamberlain created no excitement at all. He found difficulty in inducing the Government to bear even a part of his expenses.

Now, Andrew was first, just as Lindbergh was. Naturally he had a right to expect some recognition of that fact. But no such was given. John mentions him three times. Two of the three, he finds it necessary to explain who he is. He is Simon Peter's brother. I dare say Andrew was introduced that way so many times that he
began to look on that introduction as a part of his name; he
heard himself described as Simon Peter's brother so often. But
for the grace of God in his heart, he would have turned bitter, sent
in his resignation, and gone home.

I have witnessed this introduction more than once. "Mr.
Black, let me introduce Bro. Andrew." And Mr. Brown shakes hands
with Mr. Andrew in a perfunctory sort of way. He is not looking at
him; he is looking over the top of his head. "Glad to meet you", he
says indifferently. The introducer cannot fail to see that Andrew
hasn't registered. Mr. Brown doesn't know who he is. Therefore,
the introducer adds this word of explanation: "Andrew, you know,
Simon Peter's brother." "Oh," said Mr. Brown, "as his face lights up,
"Simon Peter's brother, I know. Simon is a great man. I know Simon.
He preached a great sermon up at Jericho. And so, you are Simon
Peter's brother. Why, I didn't know he had a brother."

Why, now, I wonder, is he introduced in this fashion? it
would have been more simple it seems, and more fitting to have said:
"This is Andrew, the first disciple that Jesus ever won. Here, from
a human standpoint is the beginning of the Christian movement. But
that seems never to have been mentioned. I am confident, therefore,
that the position of Andrew was about the most difficult in the
Apostolic college. Before he became a disciple. He was associated
with Peter and James and John. They had doubtless played together
as boys. They were partners in the fishing business. They had
entered into the ministry at the same time. The other three
forged ahead, and got into the inner circle. But Andrew remained
behind. He was compelled to play second fiddle.

This was the case because Andrew was not so gifted and not
so capable as his three friends. He was like the vast majority; he
was just ordinary. But he never allowed this fact to make him dis-
contented or silent. We knew that the first are often last, and the last, first. We knew that the second fiddle was just as important as the first. We knew that you could not measure the worth of any creature or thing simply by its size. We all suffer more or less from what one wise man has called "Pamphlet." Had we been making the world, doubtless all our trees would have been redwoods, all our flowers, century plants, and all our birds, ostriches. We are only impressed by bigness.

Andrew had sense enough to believe in the ordinary, and had grace enough to be content with the gifts that God had given. Oftentimes we may realize the smaller of our own particular garden-spot, but we are only going to be held responsible for what we do with what is ours, and not with what is another's. And, there is no surer road to restlessness than despising your gifts because they are not conspicuous, and breaking your heart, trying to be what you are not.

When our boys were small, we bought for them a little victrola with a load of records of Mother Goose rhymes, and songs of sentimental merit. One of those songs so impressed me that I have never been able to forget it. Its merit is not in its poetry, but in its good common sense. It runs like this:

"A jolly old sow once lived in a sty, and three little piggies had she, and she waddled about saying, umph, umph, umph, while the little ones said, wee, wee.

"My dear little brothers, said one of the brats, my dear little sisters, said he, let us all start saying umph, umph, umph, it's so childish to say, wee, wee."

These three little piggies grew skinny and lean, and lean they might very well be, but somehow they couldn't say, umph, umph umph, and they wouldn't say, wee, wee.

Over
And after a while these little piggies died,
They all died of felo-de-se,
From trying so hard to say, umph, umph, umph,
When they only could say, wee, wee.

But, Andrew was content to be himself. This was the case because through the grace of God he had become generous. He could rejoice not only in his own gifts, but in the greater gifts of his brother.

"Love took up the harp of life,
And smote on all its chords with might,
Smote the chord of self,
That trembling, passed in music out of sight."

III

What did Andrew accomplish? After his conversion, he comes on the scene only three times. Of course these three scenes do not record all that Andrew did. They were typical of his life.

1. Andrew led his brother, Simon, to Christ. After finding Jesus himself, he went at once to find his brother. He was the first Home Missionary. He went to work where work was most difficult, and most essential, and that is, in his own home. He went after that vigorous, and blustering, and swearing brother of his, a man who was far abler and far more impressive than himself.

Then, Andrew's method with Simon is full of tact and good sense. How did he seek to win him? He did not begin by telling him what a vicious swearer he was. He began with the perfect gospel. "We have found the Messiah," he declares boldly. He came with the warmth of a great discovery in his heart, and the light of a great discovery in his eye. He was able to speak out of his own experience: "We have found." It was that type of preaching that remade the world of yesterday. It is that type of preaching that is the supreme hope of the world today.

Now, Peter, for all his blustering, had a hungry heart. That is true of every man. You can always count on that. So, when
he heard the note of conviction in Andrew's voice, when he caught the light of certainty that looked out from Andrew's eyes, he could not rest; he came to Jesus. Thus Andrew won a greater man than himself. Later on Simon was to see 3,000 converted in one of his services. But that service was made possible by ordinary Andrew.

2. The second scene in which Andrew appears is at a picnic. Jesus is gone for a day's rest on the river shores of Galilee, but the multitudes found him out, and the keel of his boat had not more than touched the shore till they began to gather. Soon, there were thousands of them. Jesus, as always, forgot himself, and began to minister to their wants. All day he taught and healed. For long hours, he taught and healed, till now it is toward evening. He is concerned for the physical wants of the multitude. Therefore, he asks Philip a question: "Whence may we buy bread, that these may eat?" "Impossible," Philip declares, "two hundred and fifty dollars worth of bread wouldn't be enough for these." Then it was that Andrew came forward. "There is a lad here," he suggests timidly, "that has two biscuits and five sardines."

What an insight this gives us into the character of Andrew! He couldn't preach like Peter, James, and John. They could do some things that he could not do, but he could do some things that they couldn't do. Therefore, he was not idle. He looked about him and saw a boy that had possibly slipped away for a day of fishing on the lake. He got into that lad's confidence and won his fellowship. And the boy took his lunch out of his big pocket, and told him what was in it, and how he would be glad to share it with him.

"There is a lad here." That is a tremendous declaration itself. That ought to lead us to tasks that we would not otherwise do. It ought to hold back our hands from wrongs that we might otherwise commit. "There is a lad here." Then, we need not fear
for the future. We can change the moral outlook of a people in a single generation by getting hold of the youth of that generation. Andrew could see the greater in that which looked small, the infinite significance in that which did not seem significant.

Now, what said Jesus, when Andrew made his timid suggestion? He met it with hearty appreciation. When Andrew brought the timid lad forward, Jesus gave him welcome, and when the boy put his lunch into His hands, He blessed it, and fed the multitude upon it. Just as Andrew made possible the conversion of the 3,000 at Pentacost, so he also made possible the feeding of the 5,000 in the wilderness.

3. We catch our final glimpse of him during the last days of the ministry of Jesus. Certain Greeks have come up to the feast. They seek out Philip, for his Greek name, and ask for an interview with Philip's Master. "Sir," they said, "we would see Jesus." Thus, they voiced the supreme longing of mankind.

But Philip did not know what to do with them. That is a bit surprising, but the same embarrassment would be felt by vast numbers of modern Christians. If some one, eager to know Jesus, were to come to you, what would you say, and how would you go about leading him into the light? Philip was at a loss. To whom would he turn in his dilemma? Not to John, or James, or Peter. He turned to Andrew. He believed Andrew would be the most sympathetic and most understanding.

The conclusion of the story shows that he made a wise decision. Andrew knew exactly what to do; he brought these Greeks, the once strangers and outlaws they were, and introduced them to his Master. It was that introduction that seemed to have
brought to the Master the most joyful experiences of His ministry. He saw in these strangers a prophecy of the coming of an innumerable company through the years that no man could number.

Who was the most useful of all the Apostles? It is impossible to say. But I am by no means sure that the place was not won by this man of ordinary ability, who was joyously contented to be himself, who played second fiddle so charmingly that it came to make music sweeter than a harp of a thousand strings. God needs great leaders, but if the world is ever to be won, it must be won by ordinary folks like ourselves. And it is to such ordinary folks that the world today owes its superemest debt.

"Common as the wayside grass,
Ordinary as the soil,
With a score, he daily passes,
Going to and from his toil,
Stranger he, to wealth or fame,-
He is only "What's his name?"

Not for him the glittering glory,
Not for him the places high,
Week by week, the same old story,
Try and fail, and fail and try,
All his days seem dull and tame,-
Poor old patient "What's his name."

Though to someone else the garland,
Lo, but few his worth may know,
On his shoulders rests the burden,
Of our progress won so slow.
Red the road by which he came,
With the blood of "What's his name."

That was a great moment in Andrew's life when the preacher said to him: "Jesus is here, behold the lamb of God!"
But that bright day might have faded into utter darkness, but for one fact: Andrew heard, and followed. This may be the beginning of days for you, or it may be the fading of day, but to you I bring this same message: "Behold the Lamb of God." He is out on His same great mission. He is still bent on conquering the world. If you follow, you will be able to say with His assurance: "We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write."
"Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus." "Then Philip opened his mouth." That is fine. That is exceedingly hopeful. One of the tragedies of many who are in the Church today is that of the closed mouth. So many seem possessed with the demon of dumbness. We open our mouths to eat. We open our mouths to buy and sell. We open our mouths to gossip. We sometimes open our mouths to criticize. But too few of us open our mouths to preach Jesus.

"Then Philip opened his mouth." That indicates courage. It is only a few days since Philip has seen a very ugly murder that was committed because a certain friend of his insisted upon opening his mouth. If young Stephen, the clear head and shining face and Spirit-filled heart had only kept silent, he would not have been mobbed. If he had only known how to hold his tongue, he would not have been the victim of those cruel stones. If he had not insisted upon opening his mouth, his mangled body would now be lying in its untimely grave up Jerusalem way. But Stephen insisted upon giving his testimony. He was bent on preaching. He was determined to open his mouth and proclaim the good tidings of great joy. Hence he died a martyr.

Philip was well aware of all these facts. Therefore, as he fled from Jerusalem, Prudence walked at his side with her wise counsel, and said: "Now Philip, it is all right to be a Christian; it is well enough to be a follower of Jesus Christ, but do not be so outspoken. Do not insist on telling your story to others. Learn to keep silent." But in spite of all these very same admonitions, it stands written in the text that "Philip opened his mouth." It was a courageous thing to do. It is a thing that many of us are afraid to do to this day. We are not afraid to talk on many themes, but to open our mouth to preach Jesus is something the very thought of which fills us with a kind of terror.

"Then Philip opened his mouth." That speaks also of spontaneity. Philip was not simply driving himself to preach. He felt that he could not help speaking. His testimony would have been that of some of his fellow disciples: "We cannot but speak the things that we have seen and heard." There was good news in his heart that was clamoring for utterance. There were Niagaras of Gospel truth beating against the gateway of his lips and demanding an outlet. So full was this man of his joyous theme that preaching Jesus was not so much a duty as a privilege. "Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus."

Who was Philip? He was not one of the Apostles. He was not an ordained minister. Philip was a layman. He was a member of the Official Board of the First Church of Jerusalem. When the Apostles decided that it was necessary that seven men be elected to look after the temporal affairs of this infant church, Philip was one of the men chosen. He was not chosen for the work of the ministry primarily. He was chosen for the lowly task of serving tables. Yet, we remember this man today not so much because he was a competent man of business as because he was a Spirit-filled and effective evangelist.
Philip held a successful revival in Samaria. He was used of God in preaching to the multitudes, but doubtless if you had talked with him near the end of his pilgrimage, he would have told you that the most useful part of his ministry had been his work with the individual. He would have said:—"I have been able to render my largest service to my Master thru my dealing with men face to face and heart to heart." If Philip had not so said, he would be an exception to the rule. For the most successful evangelists thru all the years have won their greatest victories for the kingdom thru dealing with man one by one.

And this type of preaching is possible for everyone of us. All of us cannot proclaim God's message from the pulpit. But there is not one but can preach Jesus to the individual. This is a high and holy privilege that is within reach of the least as well as of the greatest. There is absolutely no doubt but that Jesus Christ expects every follower of His to be a soul winner. It may be that we do not expect so much of ourselves. But to say, a large part of the Church today leaves this supremely important task to the pastor and to a few faithful workers. But it is all wrong. Preaching Jesus to the individual is the privilege of every Christian.

Not only is this the privilege of everyone who is a follower of Christ, it is also his solemn responsibility. Because we can preach Christ, therefore we ought to preach Him. And because we ought to preach, we are by no means guiltless if we refuse to do so. "Who is unto me if I preach not the Gospel." That word bespeaks the life of every saint just as much as it bespeaks the life of Saint Paul. "Because we can preach, we must preach." "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, He taketh away." Even a fruitless fig tree met the curse of eternal barrenness. This was the case in spite of the fact that Christ had not invested His blood in the redemption of that fig tree. But He has so invested it in the redemption of ourselves. We cannot, therefore, be fruitless and guiltless at the same time. Because we can preach we must preach.

Such was the conviction of Philip. He took the command of his master to preach the Gospel to every creature seriously. But how was it that the Lord was able to use him for this particular preaching mission? He could do so, first, because Philip was obedient. He was open to Divine guidance. He had faith enough to obey God even when obedience looked foolish and ridiculous. Philip was engaged in a great revival in Samaria when the message came to him to leave this city with its populous streets and rejoicing multitudes. While the shouts of those being won to Christ were yet in his ears, he was ordered to set out for a desert country miles away. It looked like a very foolish thing to do. But Philip obeyed.

There are very few of us who are willing with Paul and with this Evangelist, to be fools for Christ's sake. We are woefully afraid of making ourselves ridiculous. Joshua was a man of the type of Philip. How the wise must have laughed at him when they saw the absurd tactics that he was using for the capturing of Jericho. He was employing no battering ram. He was not shooting an arrow. He was not hurling a single spear. He was just marching round the city blowing a ram's horn. It certainly was a foolish and ridiculous thing to do, at least in the eyes of men. But the significant part of the story is that he captured the city. I have known many a campaign conducted in a far more sane and dignified fashion to fail of its objective altogether. Blasphemy the man who has learned to obey God, for "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice."
So Philip set out from Samaria and journeyed toward the South. He did not know exactly the purpose of his journey, but he was sure that his Lord was not sending him upon a fool's errand. Therefore, he travelled with open eye and attentive ear. He was looking for some way to be of service. He was in search of an opportunity to help. There are those that tell us how willing they are to be useful, but they never find anything to do. But to those who are really willing no day passes without its opportunity. Again and again friends cross our path whom we might help if we are only eager and watchful as was Philip.

After quite a long journey Philip reached the forks of the road. He came into the highway that leads down from Jerusalem to Gaza. It was a barren and unsightly country and seemed a most unlikely place for God to send a man to preach. Philip wonders what it all means, but he is not left in doubt. Just up the road yonder he sees a chariot coming surrounded by a retinue of soldiers and servants. A great man is approaching. Of that much he is sure. And then the Spirit spoke within his heart. "Go near and lay thyself to this charioteer."

Philip was doubtless astonished. It seemed a strange command. There were dozens of good reasons for his refusing to obey. Had we been by, we would possibly have warned Philip after this fashion: "That man coming there is a perfect stranger to you. You never saw him before and will doubtless never see him again. Besides, he is a very prominent man. He is Secretary of the Treasury for the Kingdom of Ethiopia. He is a man of ability. He is a man of wealth and political power. Your gospel is well enough for the poor. It is altogether a fit message for the down-and-out. But do not make yourself ridiculous by trying to preach to a man like this Ethiopian Statesman. His cup is already full. He will therefore not hear you. In trying to make him hear, you will only injure your cause and make yourself a laughing stock."

Now, it is good to remember that this blessed Gospel of ours is for the poor and for the unfortunate and for the outcast. But it is not for these only. It is also for the rich and for the powerful and for those who in the eyes of the world seem most favored of fortune. It is for the down-and-out. It is also for the up-and-out. It is for all in between. Society has no greater tendency to become rotten at the bottom than it does at the top. I do not know but that we are in more danger of moral decay in America at the top than at the bottom. Our Gospel is therefore needed by all. "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God."

That was true of this Ethiopian Statesman. In spite of his position, in spite of all that wealth had flung into his lap, he has more heart-hunger than he knows how to manage. His soul is thirsting for God, for the living God. His maker has so fashioned him that it is utterly impossible for him to find rest and peace and abiding satisfaction apart from Himself. He cannot be content with things. An Unseen Presence is with him as he rides that will not let him be content. The Spirit of God is there striving with him, wooing him, making him to loathe the thing that he is and to long for the better man that he may be. And that same blessed Spirit is speaking to our hearts today. We may stop our ears to His appeal, but He lovingly pursues us. He is present with us in our infancy before our mother's lips have kissed us. Thru all our wandering ways He journeys with us, convicting
us of sin, seeking patiently to lure us to those heights of holy fellowship that are within reach even of the weakest and of the worst.

What response did Philip make to the command of the Spirit? He obeyed. He refused to be frightened by the position of this Ethiopian. It is easier to preach to one who is at the rear of the procession than to one near the front. But our message is for all. So Philip listened only to the voice of his Lord. And we read of him this fine word: "Philip ran." Notice the eagerness of his, the earnestness, the wholehearted enthusiasm. He ran. O, for more fleet-footed saints. We need them in the pulpit. We need them on the Official Board. We need them as Sunday School teachers. We need them throughout the entire membership of the Church. We are so slow. We go with such leaden feet about our tasks. O, that this sentence might be written about a growing number of us. "He ran."

Philip, then, was not only obedient, but he was enthusiastic. He was wholehearted in his obedience. He ran fleet-footed on the errands of his Lord. And as he thus goes running toward the chariot, I dare say he was praying earnestly that the Lord would give him an opening. He was planning how he might tactfully begin the conversation. And nothing requires greater tact than soul winning. Soon he is close enough to see that the great man is reading. That seems to make his task more difficult. Possibly he is reading some document of state and will refuse to be disturbed. But Philip does not hesitate. He presses bravely on.

Now, the Evangelist is within hearing distance. This Ethiopian is reading aloud. And when Philip heard what he was reading, he had to hug his heart to keep it from leaping from his bosom. The words were entirely familiar to him. He knew them by heart. He had learned them in the Synagogue when he was a child. He had had them flooded with an infinite abundance of light by the events of recent days. There was not another passage in all the Word of God that Philip would have been quite so glad to have found this Ethiopian Statesman reading as the one he was reading, which was none other than the fifty-third Chapter of Isaiah.

The stately words came to him on the desert air: "We all like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed." "He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before his shearer is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth." And Philip looked to see the light break upon the face of the Ethiopian, but there was no light there. There was only a frown of perplexity.

"Pardon me, but do you understand what you are reading?" And Philip's face was so radiant and so eager that the great statesman felt at once that here was one who knew. "No, I do not understand," he answered, "How can I except some man teach me." Christ uses men for the salvation of other men. He seems shut up to that method. If there is not "some man" to teach, then the seeking soul will not be won. A message must have a messenger. An evangelist is of no avail without an evangelist. "How can they hear without a preacher."

Then this statesman who did not understand invited Philip into his chariot. And I can imagine that few men ever mounted a chariot more rapidly or more eagerly than did this evangelist. And they re-read this.
marvelous passage together. "He was wounded for our transgressions, He
was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him;
and with His stripes we are healed." And the Ethiopian is asking Philip a
question. "Of whom is the Prophet speaking? Of himself or of some other?"
In other words: "Who is this that was wounded for our transgressions. Who
is this lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world? Who is it that
is able to deal adequately and conqueringly with sin in your life and mine?"

Who indeed? Preacher, do you know? Sunday School Teacher, do you
know? Member of the Official Board, do you know? Who is it that saves?
Parents: with your responsibility of training young lives for God, do you
know? When the bleary-eyed outcast asks this question, have you an answer?
When the bright-eyed, questioning child in your home asks it, can you answer?
Who is it that saves? Do you know? Not as a theory; not as a tradition,
but as a personal experience?

Philip knew. "And he began at the same scripture and preached unto
him Jesus." Would you not have liked to have heard the sermon? We can
imagine how it ran. "Of whom is the prophet speaking?" asked the Ethiopian.
"He is not speaking of himself!", the Evangelist replies. "He is speaking
of Jesus!" He is speaking of the One who was crucified in Jerusalem a few
months ago. He is speaking of Him who conquered death and hell and the
grave. He is speaking of One who is able to save unto the uttermost them
that come unto God by Him. He is our sin bearer. "With His stripes we are
healed." All you have to do is just to accept the healing that He brings
to you; receive the salvation that He offers to you.

And while Philip is yet speaking, a light breaks upon the darkened
face of the African Statesman. He enters upon the blessed experience that
thank God, is for all men in all times and in all climes. This man who was
on his way from church with his heart yet hungry, then and there got hold
upon the bread of Life. This man who, in spite of the magnificent ritual of
the Temple, was yet burning with thirst, then and there "drank of the water
of life freely." And we read this happy ending of the story, that he went
on his way rejoicing. And not only did he rejoice, but it is safe to say
that many another weary soul came to share his joy with him in the dark
continent of Africa.

Now, let me remind you, my brethren, that it is not simply by acci-
dent that this needy statesman and this Spirit-guided Evangelist met that
day at the forks of the road. God's hand was in it. This Ethiopian had been
to Jerusalem. There were quite a few Christians there. But they had missed
him in some way. He had not been won by them. And now he is on his way home
Unless somebody leads him off; unless somebody hurries and gets between him
and his destination, the chances are that he will never be reached. He
will go home to die without ever coming into possession of the Life that
is life indeed. He will go home with lips forever dumb that might have
spoken a marvelous story to the glory of God and to the gladdening of many
saddened lives.

And I dare to believe that it is not by mere chance that you and I
have met at the forks of the road this morning in God's house. You have
come a long and tedious journey. The preacher has also come a long way to
meet you. He did not dream years ago when he entered the service of his
Lord that his road would thus cross yours. But here we are this morning, you and I, at the fork of the road. I dare to believe that God has put me in the path of some of you to keep you from going away and missing the thrill of the knowledge of Jesus Christ. I dare to believe that He has thrown this message this Sabbath morning across your path to keep you from the tragedy of a wasted life.

And will you not also dare to believe, my brethren, that it is not merely by accident that your path has crossed that of your friend. Will you not believe that God has a blessed and holy purpose in bringing you into intimate fellowship with the members of your own household, with the pupils of your own class? You are travelling as Christ's evangelist. Your road has run into the road of a friend who is travelling away from God. The one big chance of that friend may be at your hands. If you let him escape, he will never be reached. If you let your child slip by you unsaved, the chance are that he will spend his life in sin.

This scene brings to my mind a football game that I witnessed years ago. A husky fellow carrying the ball for the opposing team broke thru our line. He dodged every antagonist. There is only one man now between him and the goal. If he makes this goal, the game is lost. And there is only one man to stop him, our wiry little quarterback. How small he looks! He seems not more than half the size of the man that is carrying the ball. Can the quarterback stop him? That was the question that made our hearts almost stand still. If he can not, then the game is lost.

The big husky bore down upon him. He made no effort to dodge. He knew that his seemingly insignificant antagonist would be too quick for him. He rushed into him head-on with the purpose of knocking him out. Would the quarterback stand up to him? We know that if there was the least bit of yellow in him he would flinch and lose. But he never gave an inch. And tho I do not know how it happened to this day, I do know this—that even yet I can hear the terrific impact of the big man's body against the ground, where the little fellow threw him. And the day was saved because this one man's last chance stood in his place and held true.

And this, I am persuaded, was the last chance of the Ethiopian. There was no man in Africa that knew Jesus. He was leaving the saints of the early Church long distances behind him. His one chance centers in the evangelist, Philip, and the Evangelist did not fail. The battle was won and heaven was made glad, and the heart of the saved and the heart of the preacher were also made glad. And now the scene changes from that far-off day to this, and from that bit of desert country to this populous city. And your road is running into that of your friend, into that of your husband, into that of your child. It is your opportunity to preach. It is his opportunity to be saved. What are you going to do about it? May God be able to write this about you: "He preached unto him Jesus."
THE EVANGELIST
 Acts 8:26-40

Among the seven chosen to serve tables was a young man named Philip. But though he was chosen to administer the temporal affairs of the Church his chief fame does not rest upon his work in this important field. He is rather known as Philip, the evangelist. And his story as told in the eighth chapter of Acts is one that is full of deepest interest and instruction. You who desire to be genuinely useful, you who aspire to win others to Christ, you who long to help in the coming revival, read the eighth chapter of Acts. Read it with open heart and praying lips. Read it upon your knees. Read it till you get in the full grip of his mighty passion.

Philip, the evangelist, challenges our highest admiration. The persecution that broke out in Jerusalem upon the death of his friend Stephen compelled him to leave the city. And with the picture of his murdered comrade before his eyes he took his way into Samaria. At every step that he took prudence and cowardice and self-interest talked to him. They dinned this message into his ear: "Stephen was too outspoken. Therefore Stephen is dead. The best thing that you can do is to keep silent."

But this Philip could not do. To all these voices he replied: "I cannot but speak the things that I have seen and heard." And so he made for Samaria. And he preached and preached so mightily that a great revival broke out. Multitudes waited on his ministry. And the city streets echoed with the shouts of the redeemed.

So you see that Philip was a successful preacher of the Word. But it is not of his public ministry that I wish to speak especially this morning, but rather of his ministry to the individual. Had you questioned Philip in the last years of his life I am confident that the events of which he would have spoken with greatest joy would have been those occasions where he was privileged to speak to the one whom he was seeking to win to eye and face to face. His greatest fruitfulness had come from his personal work. Such was the case with many another evangelist. Such was even the case with D. L. Moody, great as were the crowds that waited upon his ministry.

Many were saved during the revival in Samaria. But the identity of not a single one of them is preserved. We know that Simon Magus made a pretense of conversion, but he turned out to be nothing more than an imposter. In spite of his baptism he continued "in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity." But everybody knows the Ethiopian statesman. His memory continues with us to this day.

How was this Secretary of the Treasury of Ethiopia won to Christ? His story is one of the most perfect illustrations of the outworking of God's plan that I know. If you want to see how God's program works when it has a chance just look at this story. Here first is the man that Christ is seeking. Here is the individual that He would fain win to Himself.

Who is this man? He is a statesman from Ethiopia. He has been up to Jerusalem to worship and is doubtless, therefore, a proselyte. He is now on his way back to his native land. He is a man of wealth and ability and power. He travels as becomes his rank. A considerable retinue is about him. The most casual spectator could easily see that he was no ordinary man.
There is one way, however, in which he is just like the rest of our needy race. He is restless and dissatisfied and hungry of heart. Though he has been to Jerusalem to worship he has not found peace. You search his face in vain for the restfulness that comes from a great discovery. He looks into his own heart with bitterness and sorrow. He looks to the height with sighs of intensest longing.

How prone we are to forget that in every human bosom is a heart hungry for God. Who but Jesus would have ever dreamed that the miserable slattern that came to the well that day was tormented by eternal hungers and by immortal thirsts? Yet He said to her: "If thou knewest the gift of God and who it is that talketh unto thee thou wouldst have asked him and he would have given thee living water. If you only knew you would turn this well-surf into an altar and this noontide glare into the soft light of a holy place. The only reason you are not asking me for the water of life is not because you do not desire it. It is because you do not believe that I have it."

And isn't that lesson that we need to learn today? Isn't that a lesson for the Church of Jesus Christ in all ages? Why is it that our Churches are not thronged to the doors with eager worshippers? Why is it that our altars are not crowded with earnest seekers after God? It is not because that man are satisfied with what they have. The world is not passing us by because the leeks and the garlic and the onions of Egypt have fully satisfied them. They are not ignoring us because they have discovered springs that meet their needs and bread upon which they can feed to their complete satisfaction. Why then do they not come? It is for the reason that Jesus assigned. They are not convinced that we know the secret. Believe me, when they see the marks of the crucified Christ in our hands they will not be faithless but believing.

This statesman, then, with all his pomp and splendor and power is thirsty of soul. This able Secretary of the Treasury is hungering for something, even for the Bread of Life. He is hating the thing that he is and longing for the larger man and the better man that he might be. And the reason he is so hating and so longing is not because of the great goodness of his own heart. It is because that he does not ride alone. There is another beside him in the chariot. There is another traveling with him closer than breathing and nearer than hands and feet. Jesus Christ in the person of the Holy Spirit is present with this Ethiopian statesman. That is the secret of his yearning for a better life.

And that too is the secret of the longings after goodness that are in your heart and mine. If you are here this morning with a secret prayer for victory over sin, for fellowship with God, that is true because Christ in the person of the Spirit is here. Let us never forget that our Lord has not forsaken His world. "It is expedient for you." He said to His disciples "that I go away. If I go not away the Comforter will not come. But if I depart I will send him unto you." And what does He for the world when He comes? When He is come? He will convict the world of sin.

What means then your restlessness? What means then your inability to be satisfied with anything less than the Living God? Why can not you lie down among the swine and be content? Our Lord will not let you. He is here this morning arousing you, awakening you, striving with you. And all
Then angeliat and wistful lookings toward the hills come of His presence. You want to be good; You want to conquer sin. You want to be useful. Remember that these desires are God-given. They are Holy Spirit-brought. They are the result of the light that flashes from beyond the cliff tops of glory.

So we see two of the agents in this wonderful drama of conversion. There is the sinner and there is the seeking Savior. But this Savior does not only strive with the sinner immediately and personally. He strives with him also and seeks to win him through human agency. The Spirit of God is here not only to convict the world of sin. He is here also to empower and to enlighten and to guide the believer. He is here to give us who believe in Him "a mouth and a wisdom that the world can not gainsay nor resist."

So though we have here the sinner and the Spirit of God brought together there is needed another agency for the salvation of this man. God has so ordained it that men must be won by other men. The message must have a messenger. An evangel must have an evangelist. "For how can they hear without a preacher?" God works through men and women like ourselves and if we fail Him He has no other way of reaching this world.

What kind of men, then, does God use for the saving of other men? He seems to use every kind. He uses men of all ages and of all nations and of all tongues and of all degrees of culture. Some of those who have been most mightily used have been men of great learning. Others have had very little learning. In fact, no requirements along this line are laid down in the Word of God.

But there are requirements that must be met. We learned something of these requirements in a glance at the character of Philip, the evangelist. This man who was used in the conversion of the Ethiopian was, first of all, a man who had a vital and genuine Christian experience. He knew for himself that Jesus Christ was able to save. He knew in his own experience the fascinating reality of personal salvation.

Then he was a man genuinely obedient to the will of God. He was a man sensitive and attentive to God's voice. He was such a man as God could lead. Not that God always guides us all in the same way. He did not always guide Philip in the same way. For instance, when Philip left Jerusalem we do not read that he was especially led to preach to the Samaritans. He knew that it was his duty to do so because God had commanded him to "preach the Gospel to every creature." He already knew the will of God in that case as you and I may know it, for the same command is laid on us. And as we have opportunity we are to do good unto all men.

In the case before us, however, he was especially led. The command laid upon him was to go toward the south and strike into the road that leads from Jerusalem to Gaza. He needed guidance here or he never would have gone. He was engaged in a joyful revival where he was. He would have been very foolish to have left the great work he was doing and strike out across the country with no very sure destination on his own responsibility.

But be it said to his credit that when God spoke to him he obeyed Him. He obeyed though he did not know the purpose for which he was going. He obeyed though he could not see the end that God had in view. He had that
fine faith that made him willing to accept God's guidance when it was given for only one step at a time. You and I want a map of the whole journey. But that is not God's way.

"Keep thou my feet, I do not ask to see
The distant scene, one step enough for me."

And so Philip followed at the divine call and went out as Abraham of old, not knowing fully whither he went.

But that was a very open-eyed and open-hearted man that, weary and travel stained, came a few days later into the road that leads to Gaza. He is sure that God has led him thus far for some purpose. He believes that that purpose is service. "So he looks eagerly about him for an opportunity. But it all seems very strange. The desert stretches in weary miles about him. How bewildering that he has been called upon to leave the streets of a populous city to come to this weird and lonely spot.

...But the place is not so lonely as he thought. A chariot is approaching, surrounded by a retinue of servants and soldiers. A very important personage is seen passing by. Then the voice spoke within and said: "Go and join thyself to the chariot." That was startling. Had such a word come to me I am afraid I would have said: "Join myself to a prominent man like that? Why the guard would never allow me to come near him. I would only make myself ridiculous. I would only be a laughing stock among the servants, I would only bungle the job and make matters worse than they are now." But Philip was made of different material. "Go near" said the voice. And we read that Philip ran. He was prompt and eager in his obedience. That is magnificent. There are times when we tell our children to do something and they go eagerly. And there are other times when they go angrily and unwillingly. Such obedience no pleasure. How many of God's children go stupidly and with leaden feet to the tasks to which He calls them.

He ran. How I wish we had more runners in the pulpit. How I wish we had more fleet-footed saints among the Sunday school teachers. How I wish we had more of these nimble Philips on the official board. We are so slow in the doing of our duty. There is so little of eagerness about our work. We do not go joyously as those ought to go whose feet are shod with the preparation of the Gospel of Peace. Has God put the salvation of a soul upon your heart and conscience? Then don't delay. Go at once. Hurry. Let it be written upon the books of heaven: "He ran."

Now, while Philip was running I dare say he was thinking hard and praying hard. And he was saying: "Lord, how am I going to begin the conversation? How am I going to break in on this busy statesman? Give me an opening. Give me tact. Give me wisdom and courage. I can do nothing with him alone." And by that time the evangelist was close enough to see that he was reading. That made his task harder than ever. Possibly he is reading some state document. But he must speak to him non the less.

So Philip ran right on. Soon he was close enough to hear the reader's voice. This Secretary of the Treasury was reading aloud. And when Philip heard what he was reading he had to hug his heart to keep it from pounding out of his bosom. He knew every word from memory. He had learned them in the synagogue when he was a boy. He had had them flooded with new and infinite light only recently. The Ethiopian was reading the fifty-third
chapter of Isaiah. He was even then at about the finest oasis in the Old Testament, an oasis where millions since then have found rest and refreshment.

When the chapter was finished the Ethiopian looks up from his scroll. But there is no light in his face. There should have been. But instead there was only a frown of perplexity. Then was Philip's opportunity. "Pardon me, my lord, but do you understand what you are reading?" And the big man looks down at the young preacher, weary and travel stained. But he does not rebuke him. He is too deeply in earnest for that. God's spirit is working on his heart. So he said: "How can I understand except someone teach me? Would you be so kind as to get up in my chariot with me and explain this matter to me?"

If ever a man made speed getting into a chariot Philip was that man. And don't you almost find it in your heart to envy him? He is in the chariot of this famous statesman and he is there at his own invitation. No sooner is he seated than this statesman who knows a great many things that Philip does not know, turns to him with the simplicity and humility of a child, and asks him this infinitely big question: "Who is the prophet talking about in this fifty-third chapter of Isaiah? Who is this man that has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows? Who is this man who has suffered to the point of death for others? In other words, who is it that takes away the sin of the world?"

Who is it indeed? Member of the official board, you occupy the same position that Philip did — do you know? Sunday-school teacher with bright questioning eyes looking into yours, do you know? Who is it that saves? Do you know, who stand in the pulpit to proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ? Who is it that saves? Who is it that is able to deal adequately and victoriously with sin in the life of the individual and of the world?

That is the question that this sin-sick world is asking us articulately or inarticulately every day. Do you know the answer? Do you know it not as a theory, not as a tradition, but as a personal experience? "Is thy God, whom thou servest continually able to deliver thee?" Philip knew. And with that passage as a text he preached unto him Jesus. Of course. Even I do not see how he could have helped it.

Here then we have the seeking sinner and the convicting and converting Spirit and the spirit filled evangelist. And we have also the Word of God; that word that is still the hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces; that word that is sharper than any two-edged sword; that word that is God's instrument for the regeneration of men. "All we like sheep have gone astray, but the Lord hath made to light on Him the iniquity of us all."

"Now, this suffering Savior", said the winsome evangelist, "is Jesus Christ. He bore our sins in His own body upon the tree. And all you have to do is to depend upon Him. Roll your guilt upon Him. Take Him not as a Savior, but as your Savior." And the Ethiopian's dark face grew alight. And he said, "I understand. I see. Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Here is water. Let me be baptised in token of the fact that I have been baptized with the Holy Spirit."

This then is one chapter in the life of a saint. It is one leaf out of his biography. It is one entry in his diary. I wonder if you have such
an entry in yours. If you have not then you have missed one of the finest joys that can come to a living soul. If you have such an entry, though it be only one, you have not lived in vain. You have added to the joys of earth. You have sweetened and enriched the joys of heaven. And somebody will thank God for you after this old world shall have been a wreck for a billion years.
THE PLODDER

"The next day Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me."

--John 1:43

We are indebted to the writer of the Fourth Gospel for all we know about Philip. What this author has to say is exceedingly little. But while the quantity is small, the quality is of such a nature as to be very informing. In fact, we feel that through these brief hints we know Philip quite as well as if far more had been written about him. His face is almost as familiar as that of James or John or even Simon.

I

What kind of man was Philip? There is every indication that he was not brilliant nor sparkling in any particular. He had none of the bold dashing leadership of Simon Peter. He had none of the fire and passion or keen intellectuality of John. He was lacking in the tact and insight of Andrew. In fact, there every indication that Philip was a plodder. He was a plain, practical, prosaic man, not greatly distinguished in any fashion unless it be for his commonplacesness. That Jesus should have had a place for such a man among his intimates is at once heartening and surprising.

Isaiah pictures to us three types of character. Of course, it is altogether possible that the same man plays in each of these three roles, but they do represent three different types. First, there is the brilliant and dashing personality with vision and power. "They shall mount up with wings as eagles." These choice souls have vast spread of wing and
vast sweep of vision. There are not many of us in that class.

Second, are those who, while not quite so gifted as the first, yet have great abilities. "They shall run and not be weary." They have vast capacity to dash off spectacular and brilliant tasks. They seem to do big things easily. They finish in an hour what would require days at our fumbling hands. These superb souls dash down the track of life with buoyancy and without weariness. Not many of us feel ourselves one of these. But with the third class we feel a bit more at home. "They shall walk and not faint." They are the plodders. They belong to the tortoise tribe. They have one characteristic that saves them from defeat. That is not brilliant ability, but the power to keep on. The hare can run, though he soon gets tired. It is the tortoise that can walk and not faint. It is to this plodder group that our friend Philip belongs.

II

We are told little of his conversion. Yet the whole story is quite plain as we read between the lines. The author tells us that Philip lived in Bethsaida. Why does he give this little touch? As a rule, he uses words as sparingly as if he were sending a telegram; yet he tells us where Philip lived. This town that he mentions was the home of at least six of the apostles. He tells us where Philip lived in order to let us know that, living in this town of Bethsaida, he had an opportunity to know Andrew and Simon.

By this information this writer is telling us that Philip is fortunate in his friends. It was his privilege to know some of the choicest souls of that day, among them Andrew and Simon Peter. How much we owe of
good or ill to the friends we choose! Often these friends help either
to make us or to break us.

"The companion of fools," said a wise man, "shall be destroyed."
Certainly he had seen that happen again and again; so have we. Even
seemingly hard and hopeless Herod had much good in him. The preaching
of John the Baptist stirred him greatly. The writer of his story tells
us that he did many things, but at last he murdered John. This he did,
not because of any personal anger or grudge he had against him. He did
it because of those that sat with him. He had surrounded himself with
the companionship that made it hard for him to do right and easy for
him to do wrong. How is it with you? Some of us have come to the city
from country homes. Some have come from villages. Once about all the
crowd you knew was the church crowd. But since you have come to the
city, you have formed your friendships outside the church. These are
not necessarily dissolute or depraved, but they do not value your
values. They neither see your visions nor dream your dreams. Little
by little, they teach you to forget. You may even come to laugh at
what you once adored. You may even come to approve of what once
horrified you and filled you with shame.

But if the friends we choose can do much to hurt us, they can also
do much to help us. When one asked Charles Kingsley for the secret of
his radiant life, he answered in a single sentence, "I had a friend."
How many are in the Kingdom and in the church today, giving a good
account of themselves in terms of clean and useful lives, who owe all this
don God and to a friend. I can never sufficiently pay my debt to such
a friend that it was my privilege to know when I first went away from
home.
Then, there is another question quite as important as the one that asks what kind of friends you are choosing. That is this question: What kind of friend are you proving to those who have come to love and trust you? Are they going to be the richer for such a friendship or the poorer? Sometime ago I asked a young chap who was thoughtlessly wasting his life, "Gifford, is there a man in all the world who could hold your hand as I am holding it and look you in the eye as I am doing now, and say, 'I am a better man for having known you?' You have steadied me and strengthened me." That young chap had fine stuff in him. I saw his eyes fill with tears as he answered in simple honesty, "There is not one. I have never known the luxury of helping anybody." We sing with fervor at times "What a Friend We Have in Jesus". It ought to lead us to ask what sort of friend He has in us.

It is evident that Andrew and Simon were the right kind of friends to Philip. Reading between the lines, we are quite sure that they spoke to their friend about their discovery of the Master and His discovery of them. That was such a natural and sane and fair thing to do! If you have really discovered something in Jesus that has braced you and helped you, what is more sane than that you share that experience with your friend? Believe me, that friend has a hungry heart. His needs are your needs. No man can manage life as it ought to be managed without Jesus.

Not only did Philip's friends speak to him about their Master, but they did something that is equally important. They spoke to their Master about him. What a privilege that is, and what a help! How much we all owe to those dear friends who have persistently called over our names when they have gone into the audience chamber of the King. Andrew and
Simon told Jesus about Philip. They told him that he was an honest, earnest plodder who was a seeker after truth. The Master replied that he needed just such a man and so He went in search of Philip. He "found" Philip, the writer tells us; that means He was out seeking him. Having found him, He invited him to become His follower. And Philip gave eager assent because he had been prepared by his friends.

III

What did this experience do for Philip? Let it be understood at once that it never made him into a genius. He never became a bold, dashing Simon. He never became a St. Paul. The new birth does not mean the winning of new personalities. It rather means the bringing of the personalities we possess to their best. Philip remained a bit of a plodder to the end of the chapter, but he was a vastly useful plodder. In fact, he seems to help us quite as much through his blundering as through what he did with distinguished success.

1. Look at him as a personal worker. There is certainly nothing showy about his achievement in this respect. But in spite of this, he was effective. It was Philip, you remember, who first approached Nathanael. He did not tell Nathanael that he had found the Messiah. He rather said, "We have found Him of Whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth. That proved to be the wrong way of stating his case. Nathanael was deeply prejudiced against Nazareth. The mere mention of that city arouses his resentment. Therefore, he answered, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?"

Had Philip been vastly clever, he would have launched into an argument, then and there. He would have told Nathanael how bat-eyed he was
because of his prejudice. He would have shown, further, how the town from which a man comes has nothing of necessity to say about his character. But Philip is not brilliant. He is just a plodder. Therefore, he said the only word that he could think of, "Come and see." It turned out to be the wisest possible word. "Test the matter out for yourself," Nathanael came and was convinced, not by Philip, but by Jesus Himself. But he owed his conversion unto God to Philip.

2. The next effort of this plodder seems more blundering still. Certain Greeks have come to Jerusalem in search of Jesus with this age-old longing upon their lips and in their hearts, "Sir, we would see Jesus." They approach Philip. They thought he would be more interested because he had a Greek name, "philipos", which means a lover of horses. But this plodding disciple is at a loss. He knows not what to do. What is the matter with him? Maybe he has lost his early enthusiasm. We so often do that as we grow old in discipleship. But it is my opinion that he stumbled over the fact that these Greeks were outsiders. He had not come yet to realize that Jesus had come to save the whole world. But if he did not know what to do, he turned to the best man in the group for advice. He went to Andrew, and the joy that thrilled the Master's heart at the introduction of those Greeks was born of the work not of Andrew only, but by plain, prosaic Philip.

3. The third time that Philip comes upon the stage in this drama, he seems more dull than ever. Jesus has gone with His disciples for a little picnic on the shores of Galilee. He and His friends are in need of a day of rest. But rest was denied them. The keel of their boat had hardly touched the shore before the crowds began to gather. All day long the Master gives Himself to teaching and healing the needy multitudes. Toward nightfall, realizing that the people are now hungry,
He asks Philip a question: "Where shall we get bread that these may eat?"

This question was the mind that made Philip feel at home. He was sure of himself in the realm of figures. He did not even have to have a pad to tell the Master that it would take more than two hundred dollars worth of bread to give that crowd even a taste. I daresay Philip felt quite pleased with himself. He was no dreamer. He had his feet on the ground. Lightning calculations were his specialty.

But there is one factor that Philip has left out of consideration altogether—that factor was Jesus Himself. He made his plans just as he would have made them if God were all a lie. So many of us do that! We never undertake anything that we cannot accomplish in the energy of the flesh. We walk strictly by sight, never by faith. With the blindness of Elisha's servant, we have a keen eye for the visible, and no eye for the invisible at all. Philip was a plodder in the realm of faith.

4. In the final scene in which he appears, he is the same prosaic plodder. But he brings us more into debt by his blundering than some do by their successes. The Master is talking with His friends about the pass-over table. The Master has boldly dared to put aside the paschal lamb and put Himself in His place. "This is My body," He says to these men, quietly, "which is given for you. This is my very self, I am offering myself to each of you individually, and to all of you as a group." Then, He went on to tell them that the separation they were soon to experience was not to be final. "In My Father's house," He said, "are many mansions. If it were not so, I would have told you."

Then, Philip broke in with a rather disappointing request: "Lord," he said, "show us the Father and it is enough." This request is, of
course, not as materialistic as it sounds. Philip did not mean for
Jesus to show God in a physical form. I rather think that he meant,
"Make us sure of God as we are sure of Thee." And Jesus answered,
"Have I been so long time with you, yet hast thou not known Me, Philip.
He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father."

It was a rather dull question, but how greatly Philip has brought
us into his debt by asking it. What light Jesus throws upon His own
face by His answer: "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father."
Jesus is here claiming to be like God. But what is more heartening
still, He is claiming that God is like Himself. When we see Jesus
gathering little children in His arms, bending to all outcasts, seeing
to give every man a chance, he represents the best that we can hope for
in man and the best that we can dream of in God. As another has said,
"If the heart back of the universe is like the gentle heart that broke
on the cross for us men, then we have nothing to fear."

IV

What, then, does this story mean to us? It means that our Lord
has a place in His kingdom, not only for the brilliant and for the
gifted, but for the ordinary, for such prosaic plodders as Philip.
Not only does He accept such as His friends, but He uses them. He
sometimes uses them in a fashion of which even the brilliant and the
gifted know nothing.

Some years ago, in a little Southern town, there was a brilliant
lawyer who posed as an atheist. He was a man of influence. The Christian
people of the community felt that he was a great liability as he was;
that he might be a great asset if he were only won. A certain unlettered
blacksmith took him upon his heart in a peculiar way. He made up his
mind to pay him a personal call. For a long time he rehearsed his speech. When he had every "i" dotted and "t" crossed, he made his way to the man's office with fear and trembling, but when he had arrived and had taken the lawyer by the hand, his speech went from him. All he did was to burst into tears. But those tears did more than all the brilliant arguments had done. They won him when all else had failed.

So when Jesus comes seeking you as He sought Philip, when He invites you as He invited Philip, may you follow as Philip followed.
"And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, He said: Thou art Simon, the son of Jonas: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone. The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto Him, Follow me."

-- John 1:42-43

We are indebted to the Fourth Gospel for what insight we have into the character of Philip. But for him, Philip would have been no more than a name. He wrote a long time after the others. He was a man of keen spiritual insight. And though he writes exceedingly sparingly of Philip, the few deep teachings that he gives us enable us to see this little-known apostle quite clearly. Somehow I feel that I know the kind of man that he was almost as well as if he had lived next door neighbor to him.

What kind of man was Philip? He was the furthest possible from being an exciting and thrilling personality. He had nothing of the passionate intensity of John. He had nothing of the bold and gripping magnetism of Simon. He was by no means his equal of Andrew, the most skilled personal worker among the apostles. He was a plain, practical, prosaic man, not greatly gifted in any direction. He was a thorough-going plodder. It may seem surprising that Jesus chose this man for his Official Board. If it is surprising, it is no less heartening. This means that Jesus has a place for all of us, regardless of greatness or smallness of our gifts.

The Prophet, Isaiah, speaks of three types of character. There are the men of wide vision, the men of swift and mighty wing. They shall mount up as wings of eagles. There are a few like that. The Apostle John was such a man. Then, there are those
that are swift-footed. They dash by at spectacular swiftness. They raise the hair when it comes to fleetness of foot. Then, there are those who walk and do not faint. They are the plodders. They are the same tortoise souls who never win very much applause, but who are doing a vast amount of the world's work.

Had you attended a service where Philip was giving testimony, he would not have greatly thrilled you. Philip never shouted. He never got excited. He never got his feet off the ground. While others ran songfully on their way to the celestial city, he plodded as prosaically along as if he had been going to an ordinary village.

"Now, we are glad that both the shouters and the plodders have a place in the kingdom. There are some you know that get so busy with their shouting that they do nothing else. Their feet hardly touch the ground; for life's plain tasks they are unfit. Some years ago I attended a holiness meeting. Before the preaching began there was such wild and enthusiastic shouting as I have seldom heard. Bud Roberson was the preacher. He walked forward in the midst of the rejoicing and said: "Brethren, it seems to me it would be good for us to raise the money to pay for our tabernacle." And some of the folks who had been mounting on wings as eagles found themselves unable to walk a step. Philip would have been a bit embarrassed during the first part of this service, but he would have felt quite at home when it came time for the collection.

II

How did Philip come to be a Christian? The story is not often told, but we can easily read it between the lines. The author tells us that he was at Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Why does he start in that path? John uses words sparingly. Sometimes he seems to use them as sparingly as if he were sending a
Yet he takes his space to tell us where Philip lived. Why does he do this? It is his way of informing us that Philip was fortunate in his friends. He had good neighbors. It was his to thank God in time and in eternity that he lived in the same city where lived Andrew and Simon.

How much of weal or woe we owe to our friends! Many a man is wrecked by his friends. A young fellow sentenced to death the other day was asked what he had to say why sentence should not be passed on him, and he answered: "Bad companions have been my ruin." He had found true the words of the wise men, "The companion of fools shall be destroyed." Though I think about the most cowardly alibi that we ever offer for our wrong conduct is to lay it upon our crowd. If your companionship is leading you in the wrong direction, you ought to quit it. If they are doing that which you disapprove, of you are going to do one of two things; you are going to begin doing these things, yourself, or you are going to give up their companionship. Herod might have become a saint instead of the contemptible wreck that he did become if he had not surrounded himself with such worthless friends.

But if our friends are of the right kind, what a blessing they can be! When one asked Chas. Kingsley for the secret of his rare and radiant life, he answered in one sentence, "I have a friend." That, I can say, is one of the secrets of my conversion. That, also, you can say for yourself. Whatever of good there is in the best of us is due, in large measure, to our friends. That was true of Philip also.

What kind of friends are you choosing? You have come into the city possibly from a Christian home, but you have not found your friends within the Church, but without. Beware, lest you fling away from the faith of your fathers. But there is another
question quite as important as the kind of friends you choose, and that is this: what kind of friend are you to the ones with whom you associate? Do you gird them with strength and power? Do you make life a bit easier for them spiritually? Do you carry with you an atmosphere in which it is hard for a guilty thought or a guilty deed to live? What contribution are you making to the lives of those who call you "friend?"

Some years ago I asked a young chap in an intimate conversation, "Is there a single friend of yours you can honestly thank God that they have known you?" And his eyes filled with tears, as he said, "No, not one." And that was something to weep over. Maybe they will not only be unable to thank God for your friendship. Maybe they will even have to lament the fact as a curse, that they have known you. "Where is your friend, Jess?" I asked an old schoolmate some years ago. "He died," was the answer. And as I expressed my surprise, he continued, "He died trying to keep up with me." Jim had tried the life of a dissipated rake, and Jess had tried to follow. And Jim's friendship had put a blight and a curse upon him. What are you doing for those that trust you?

Now, it was to Philip's eternal enrichment that he had two such friends as Andrew and Simon. He was enriched in their friendship, not because they were perfect and faultless men; he was enriched in them because they knew Jesus. And knowing Jesus, they did two perfectly natural things for their friend, Philip. They told Philip about Jesus. What could be more sane than that? What was more to be expected? Not only so, they told Jesus about Philip. I think they told Him what a plain, prosaic fellow he was. But that with all, he was an honest and earnest seeker after God. How much we owe to those friends who talk to God about us! Personally,
I owe an unpayable debt to those who have cared enough for me to remember me at the throne of grace. It is evident that what Andrew and Simon told Jesus about Philip interested Him very much. He said, "I need a man like that as my friend. I need him as an apostle." The text says that He found Philip. That is, He set out deliberately in search of him. Now wonderful that is; that Jesus, God's Son would go deliberately in search of one individual! But that is what He is always doing. That is what He is doing tonight. He is interested in the whole world, but not simply as a world, but as individuals. "He calleth his own sheep by name." The devoted father does not love his boys and girls simply as a family; he loves them individually. The love of Jesus is an individual love. Seeking for Philip, He found him and invited him to become his follower. And Philip accepted upon his invitation. Thus, he entered that fellowship with His Lord, that stretches away into the infinite eternity.

III

What did this meeting with Jesus do for Philip? The answer may seem to some disappointing. It did not change him from a plain, practical man into a genius. It did not change him from a prosaic soul into a poet. Conversion does not give us any personalities; it simply brings the personalities we have to their highest possible development. Philip did not become a Simon or a John. He remained Philip, a plodder. But he helped us, not only in spite of the fact that he was near the start of his class, but even because of it.

1. Look at him as a personal worker. We find in the record two instances of this. The first occurs immediately after his conversion. Having found Jesus himself, he went at once after this friend, Nathanael. Nathanael, you remember, was the good man who was waiting for the consolation of Israel. One day he broke in upon him with the declaration that his quest was at an end. "You have heard
of him of whom Moses in the Law and the Prophets did write."

But Nathanael was prejudiced, when he heard that Jesus came from Nazareth. He would have none of Him. "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? He asked in blank Unbelief.

Now, if Philip had been vastly clever, I imagine he would have entered upon a heated argument to prove that something good could come out of Nazareth. He might have even seen through Nathanael and told him how bat-eyed his prejudice had made him. But he could not think of anything vastly easier to say. His answer was in reality the best possible. But I doubt if he himself so considered it. He seems to say, "Well, I can't argue with you. I can't prove it to you, but come and see." If the Prophet I have found doesn't measure up, then you can reject Him. I have a thousand fine things in my heart that I would like to say to you, but I simply can't say them. He may have felt that his speech was a bit of a failure, but it was a means of winning his friend to Christ.

And in doing the work of our Lord, we often succeed through our blunders. Stanley Jones tells of his first effort to preach after his conversion. He arose behind the pulpit in his old home church. He took his text and could think of no first word to say. He stood for a while in helpless and hopeless embarrassment, and then he stumbled in silence down the pulpit stairs to hurry home in shame. But as he went down, a voice seemed to speak within him, and say, "Have I done nothing for you?" And he answered, "Oh, yes." And then he stopped at the foot of the stairs and said, "Boys, you know what I used to be, and you know what I am now. It is Jesus that has made the difference." And a hush was upon the audience. And at least one was born to God in that service that seemed such an utter failure.
There was an old blacksmith in our Southland some years ago, who was a great saint. In this village there was an atheist who was much on his heart. The atheist was educated and the blacksmith was ignorant. But after much thought and prayer, the blacksmith picked up courage to speak to this atheist about becoming a Christian. He studied his speech carefully. He mapped out in his own mind exactly what he was going to say. And when, as he thought, he had it well in hand, he made his visit with fear and trembling. But when he met the atheist, his speech went from him. All he could do was to put his hand on the shoulder of his friend and burst into tears. But it was those tears that broke the man's heart. They did for him what the most logical of arguments and the choicest of epigrams could never have done.

Philip's second effort at personal work was even more thrilling, for the Greeks had come to Jerusalem with a great hunger in their hearts. They were the representatives of intellectual leaders of the world, but they wanted to see Jesus. Therefore, they sought somebody to introduce them. The man they chose for this high task was Philip. Just why they chose him, we do not know. I think it was because he had a Greek name. They thought, therefore, that he would be less bound by the hard Jewish prejudices that characterized the Jews as a nation at that time. "Sir," they said to Philip, "we would see Jesus." And when Philip heard it, instead of joyfully introducing them, he was perplexed. He knew no more what to do than the average church member today would know.

Why was Philip so bewildered? It might have been that he had lost his early enthusiasm in some measure, as we so often do. It is more likely that he was perplexed by the fact that they were foreigners. He had not yet come to realize that Christ's kingdom was
for the whole world. Therefore, instead of going to Jesus, he went to Andrew. But Andrew did not hesitate. And Philip, with somebody else to lead, went along and he and Andrew introduced them to Jesus. And so broke over the face of their Lord a radiant light of joy that they never forgot. Philip did his part as a personal worker, but he did it ploddingly.

3 2. Our next glimpse of him is on the shores of Galilee. Jesus has gone out on a picnic, but the crowds have broken in upon Him, and changed his play day into a day of strenuous toil. Now, the night is coming on, and the people seem destined to be sent away hungry. Then, Jesus turns to Philip, as a father would turn to a child that he was seeking to teach, and asks him this question, "Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?" What is Philip's answer?

It is as prosaic and as flat on the ground as Philip himself. "$200.00 worth of bread," he answers, "is not enough for this crowd." And what he means is, "There is no bread to be had out here at the lake side. We are miles from a market. And there is no money to buy bread with, even if there were a market here. We are facing an absolutely impossible situation, one with which we cannot cope. And there is nothing to do but to send the multitude away.

What is wrong with this view of things? It just shows that Philip is spiritually stupid, as so many of us are. He has an eye for the seen, and the seen only. He doesn't take into consideration the fact of Christ at all. When he maps out his campaign of church work, he reckons only on what can be done in the energy of the flesh. Therefore, his undertakings are very meagre.

The reason that the servant of Elisha got frightened out of his wits when he saw the city of Dothan surrounded by enemies was because he had an eye only for the visible. When he had his eyes opened and saw
the real facts in the case, he realized what is ever true. "They that be for us are stronger than they that be against us." But plodding Philip had an eye only for the seen.

"If I. In the final view we get of him, he seems, if possible, duller than ever. Yet his blundering brings us enrichment. We are indebted to him more for his spiritual stupidity than we are to many others for their genius. Jesus is in the upper room. The shadow of the cross is upon Him and His disciples. He is telling them about the Heavenly home that he is going to prepare for them, and into which the Father is going to give them welcome. Then, Philip broke in with this question and said: "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough."

Jesus is obviously disappointed, but His disappointment is not in the language that Philip expresses. The desire to see God is the supreme desire of the human soul. It is as old as man, and as new as your last heart's beat. It is the mother of all religion. Every man is possessed of an insatiable hunger for God. It was not the recognition of that hunger in Philip that grieved our Lord.

Jesus was grieved because Philip had not recognized God in Him. Therefore, to this dull man He said, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?" "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." To my mind, this is one of the most clear and comforting sentences that ever fell from the lips of Jesus. It is an assertion of His own deity. I have never had any trouble in believing that. The last faith, it seems to me that I would be tempted to doubt would be the unique deity of Jesus Christ.

But that which is most comforting is the light that this declaration throws upon the character of God. Jesus is saying that "God is like Me." If you want to know what kind of being the Father in Heaven is, look at Me." Then when we turn our eyes upon Jesus
And see Him as he takes little children into His arms, when we see Him as he sits upon the well curb to talk to an outcast woman, when we see Him among the publicans, when at last we see Him upon the cross, we realize that if God is like that, there is nothing more to be desired. For all that we can long for in manhood or in God, we find in Jesus.

"If Jesus Christ is a man, and only a man, I say
That as all mankind that I will cling to Him,
And to Him, I will cling always.
If Jesus Christ be God, and only God, I swear
I will follow Him through heaven and hell,
And earth and sea and the air."

So, we thank God tonight for plodding, prosaic Philip. He was not as keen-eyed as John. He fumbled at the gate of life. But by his very blundering, he opened it wider that we ourselves who are often dull and slow of understanding might enter in and be saved. It is said that Paganini went on the stage for a concert one night to find a cheap and cracked violin instead of a choice Stradivarius on which he was accustomed to play. At first he was dismayed, and then he said, "I will show them that the music is not in the violin, but it is in Paganini." And so it is with our cracked and faulty lives. The music does not depend on ourselves; it depends on the great Master. So I found it. So may you.
We are indebted to the Fourth Gospel for practically all we know about Philip. But for this writer Philip would have been no more than a name. He would have been a mere fleshless skeleton. It is John who makes him a living personality. It is John who enables us to walk at his side, to hear him speak. That does not mean that this author tells us all that we said. He tells us very little. But we do not need a ton of sea-water to tell us what the ocean is like. No more do we have to know every word and deed of a man in order to know the man himself.

What impression does Philip make upon us? As we come to know him, we realize speedily that he is not one of the conspicuous members of the apostolic group. He has none of the gripping personality of Simon Peter. He has little fiery zeal of The Son Of Thunder of the mysticism and keen intellectuality of John. He lacks the insight of Andrew. (As we shall see later,) he is rather a plain, practical, prosaic man, such as we meet every day. There is a great document that makes the bold assertion that all men are created equal. Of course this is not in the strictest sense true. Men are very unequal both in ability and in opportunity. Our God is a God of variety. We never find two roses exactly alike. Nor do we ever find two personalities alike. Jesus told a story once in which He declared that there were some gifted men who possessed five talents while there were others who possessed two, and some who had only
one. As I study the record of Philip, I am sure that he was not possessed of more than two talents. I am of the opinion that he had only one.

Here is a word to the same purpose from Isaiah. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." Naturally, I am aware that the same individual may play all these three roles. But these words are also a description of three different types of character. There are some men who are eagle-like. They have a great spread of wing. They are men of vision. They see things clearly and see them whole. Then there is a second type that can run and not be weary. They dash by us in the race of life as if we were not moving. They can fling off a task from their swift hands in an hour that would take some of us a day or a week or even a year. But there is a third class that is equally needed. "They can walk and not be weary." The swift runners have the joy of getting on. The plodders have the sturdy grit to keep going even when they are making very slow progress. Philip was one of the plodders.

The story of Philip's conversion is a bit different from that of any of the other disciples whom we have met so far in this Gospel. The author tells us that Jesus found Philip. Then he adds this seemingly useless word: "Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the town of Andrew and Peter." Why put that in? The writer of this Gospel is not lavish in his use of words. In fact, he seems to use them as sparingly as if he were sending cablegrams to a distant country. Yet he takes up space to tell us where Philip lived. What does he mean? That is his way of telling us how fortunate Philip was in his friends. It was Philip's happy privilege to live in the same town with Andrew, one of the first to find Jesus, and with Simon, whom Andrew so soon introduced to Jesus. I have no doubt that Philip was grateful for these friends through all the days of his pilgrimage. I have no doubt that it was those two who prepared for him the way of the Lord, therefore when Jesus called he was ready for a hearty response.
he has never ceased to thank God for them as he has gone on in their fellowship in the life eternal.

How vastly important to us are our friends! How far they go toward either making or breaking us! Sometimes they are a heavy handicap. "A companion of fools," says a wise proverb, "shall be destroyed." The truth of that has been demonstrated time without number. That is a significant story in the book of Genesis. The same angelic guests came to call on Lot who had called on Abraham. So far as we know, Lot was just as eager to entertain them as was his saintly uncle. But he had surrounded himself by the wrong kind of friends. These made it impossible for him to entertain his heavenly guests.

Herod was a bad man, but he was not wholly bad. When he heard John preach, he was deeply stirred. The story says that he heard him gladly and did many things. But one night when he was giving a birthday party, Salome so excited him by her salacious dance that he promised to give her whatsoever she would ask to the half of his kingdom. Under her mother's influence, she asked for the head of the prophet John. "The king was sorry," says the story. "Nevertheless for the oath's sake, and them which sat with him at meat, he commanded it to be given her." I think his oath weighed little. He allowed himself to be victimized by his friends.

(I am speaking to some who have but recently moved to the city. Perhaps you have come from an old-fashioned country home as I did. Perhaps you have come from a sedate and quiet village. Yesterday your friends were made up almost wholly of those who belonged to your church. But how about it since you have come to the city? Some of you are meeting your friends outside the church. These friends are not vicious. They are not bad people—they are very decent and respectable people. But they do not value supremely your values. They do not love the things you have been taught to love. Beware lest their companionship becomes a kind of vanity fair where your soul will forget its high quest and where you will be wooed from the faith of your childhood. A wrong friendship can do much to unmake us.)
But if a wrong friendship can hurt, a right friendship can be an unspeakable blessing. When one asked Charles Kingsley for the secret of his beautiful life, he answered in a single sentence, "I have a friend." There are friendships that undergird us. There are friendships that make it hard for us to be our worst and easy for us to be our best. I owe an unspeakable debt to a friend that I found soon after going away to school. His influence has been upon me for good through all the subsequent years. Philip had the good fortune to have two friends, Andrew and Simon. Andrew's name is here put first. I am sure that both these friends spoke to Philip about Jesus, but I believe that here for once Andrew was the leader.

Not only did Andrew and Simon speak to their friend about Jesus; they did something else that was equally important. They spoke to Jesus about their friend. How much we owe to those consecrated friends who love us well enough to mention our names when they are having audience with the King! There is no measuring the help that we can give our friends not only by speaking to them about our Lord, but by speaking to our Lord about them. This is true because

"More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of........
For what are men better than sheep or goats
That nourish a blind life within the brain,
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
Both for themselves and those who call them friend!"

Philip's friends spoke to him about Jesus, and they spoke to Jesus about him. How fortunate he was in having such friends!

Jesus heard their prayer. The story says that he sought Philip. When John the Baptist pointed to Jesus and said, "Behold the Lamb of God," Andrew and John at once became seekers. They went in quest of Jesus. But here the order is reversed. Jesus went in search of Philip. What does this mean? Our Lord is always the first mover in our salvation. The fact that we ever seek Him means that He has first sought us. Yet there are times when the seeking seems to be mainly on our part. There are other times when we seem to be found while we are not seeking at all.

Jesus told a story that illustrates this fact. One day a farmer set out to work
in his field. He was not in search of treasure save such treasure as he could find through the making of a good crop. But as he worked he came unexpectedly upon buried treasure. The pearl merchant, on the other hand, was in quest of goodly pearls. Of course, the pearl he found was beautiful beyond his expectations, but he found because he was an earnest seeker.

This same truth is illustrated more than once in those with whom Jesus dealt personally. One day he said to a certain leper, "Be thou clean." Why did He say that? He said it because this leper, goaded by the dark tragedy that was wrecking his life, sought out Jesus and threw himself at His feet and prayed, "Lord, if thou wilt thou canst make me clean." But the paralyzed man who had lain for more than half a lifetime by the pool of Bethesda did not go in quest of Jesus. Instead Jesus came seeking him. Having found him, he startled him with this question, "Wilt thou be made whole?" Always our Lord is seeking us. Always consciously or unconsciously by our heart-hunger, we are seeking Him. But with some the search is more conscious and intense than with others. Philip was seeking for Jesus in his half-blind way, but Jesus went definitely in search of him. Having found him, He said, "Come with me." And Philip followed.

III

We have called this man a plodder. A plodder he was before he met Jesus and a plodder he remained in some measure after he met Him. I am sure he developed marvelously. But to be convinced of the fact that he was, when Jesus found him and for quite awhile thereafter, a thoroughly prosaic soul, it is only necessary to glance at his record. After his meeting with Jesus, Philip comes upon the stage four times. In every appearance he produces the same impression. He is always the plain man of prose.

1. The first of these appearances is in his dealing with his friend Nathaniel. Without any hot enthusiasm, so far as we can see, Philip went to Nathaniel with this word, "We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." He does not say, as did Andrew,
"We have found the Messiah." He merely catalogues to his friend the little that he knows about Jesus. Then, too, in spite of the fact that he knows that his friend has a deep prejudice against Nazareth, he puts in the name of that despised city. All in all, his approach seems to have been rather unfortunate.

"Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" is the quick reply of highly prejudiced Nathaniel. Now had Philip been keen and quick, he might have pushed his friend to the wall. He might have told him how unfair it was to condemn a man just because of the city from which he came. He might have informed him what a bat-eyed something prejudice is. Had he been more brilliant, he might have tried to plead the cause of Jesus in a convincing fashion. By taking this course he might, have won an argument and lost a friend. But being a plodder, he had no rebuke to administer. He had no telling argument to offer with regard to his new-found Master. Instead he seems to have said to himself, "I can't convince this prejudiced man, but I know one who can—that is Jesus Himself." Therefore, his very backwardness became an asset, and he said the wisest thing he could have said—"Come and see."

2. In the second scene, he makes a still shabbier impression. One day Jesus, seeing the weariness in the faces of his disciples, invited them to a sequestered spot on the shore of the lake for a little picnic. But the people found out about his plan. Therefore, the boat in which they were sailing had no more than touched the shore before the troublesome crowds began to gather. Hour by hour they came with the result that the Master and His disciples did not have a single moment for rest. Instead the day was full of toil. Then when the sun was nearing the western horizon, Jesus asks Philip this question: "Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?"

Why did the Master single out Philip for this question? The author gives the answer. He said it was to prove or test him. In other words, Jesus was trying to teach him. He knew him for what he was—a plodder, a man largely devoid of vision. He knew, too, that Philip had been worrying over just this question—how the people
were to be fed. Therefore, when the Master put the question, Philip had the answer at once. He had figured it all out in his head. "Two hundred dollars worth of bread," he answered quickly, "would not be enough for every one of these to have just a small slice."

What did Philip mean? He meant that to feed this crowd in the wilderness was simply impossible. It was impossible for two good reasons: First, they had not sufficient money with which to buy so much bread. Second, even if they had this sufficient sum, there was no bread in this solitary place to be bought. Therefore, any suggestion of feeding them was just silly. What was wrong with Philip's answer? So far as his mathematics was concerned, nothing. He knew the multiplication table. But he left out the supreme factor—that was his Master. So often in our calculations we leave out God. Every official board, has one or more Philip's. They are the men who never want to undertake anything unless they can see the end with their natural eyes. They would never think of beginning a huge enterprise before every dollar was in the bank. Such men are sometimes quite useful, but they are not the most useful.

3. In the third scene Philip is still his prosaic self. Jesus has come close to the end of the journey. Certain Greeks who have come up to Jerusalem hear about the Master and ask for an interview. Since they are Greeks, and since Philip has a good name, these naturally seek to secure this desired interview through him. Therefore, they come voicing this age-old longing, "Sir, we would see Jesus." That was a great hour. To a man of vision, it would have brought a thrill beyond words. The coming of these Greeks was a prophecy of the coming through the centuries of an innumerable company that no man could number.

But Philip was not thrilled. He was merely perplexed and annoyed. What was he to do with these troublesome folks? Jesus was the Messiah, of course, but He was a Jewish Messiah. Philip had not understood Jesus when He said in the parable of the sower, "The field is the world." Not knowing what to do, Philip turned to
Andrew. He turned to him, I daresay, because Andrew had an understanding heart. He turned to him also because he was probably closer to Andrew than to any other. It was Andrew, no doubt who was chiefly responsible for his being a follower of Christ. To Andrew, therefore, he told his story. Having heard, Andrew, all enthusiasm, led these Greeks to Jesus. This he did to his own joy and to the far greater joy of his Lord. Philip had a part in this introduction, but it was a prosaic part.

4. The final scene is in the Upper Room. Jesus is having His last conversation with His disciples on our side of death. He is telling them that his going is not to mean eternal separation. "In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself."

Then gloomy Thomas broke in and said, "Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?" And Jesus said unto him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

This gave Philip his cue. He broke in with a prayer. It is about the most universal and comprehensive of all prayers. It is a prayer that is the very mother of religion. "Lord, show us the Father, and it is all we want." The longing to see God is as old as man. It is as new as your own heart-hunger. Just as this voices a universal longing, its answer satisfies a universal need. To see God is in a profound sense enough. To see God is to find life abundant both in the here and the eternal yonder. We are, therefore, indebted to Philip for the praying of this eternally beautiful and comprehensive prayer.

But in spite of the fact that this was one of the most perfect prayers ever uttered, Jesus was disappointed in Philip when he prayed it. The Master felt that Philip was asking for a blessing that he had already received. He was seeking for a treasure that he already held in his hand. "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how seuest thou then, Shew us the Father." "I am like God," He is
saying. "To see Me is to see God." What is, if possible, more thrilling still—"God is like Me." If God is like Jesus, then our maddest hopes may be realized both for time and eternity.

IV

To me the story of Philip is especially encouraging.

1. I am encouraged because Jesus sought him. He knew what kind of man Philip was. He knew how prosaic was this man, how lacking in vision. He knew that he had nothing of the fleetness of the hare, but only the plodding power of the tortoise. Yet he sought him, not only because Philip needed Him, but because He needed Philip. Our Lord has a place for the man of five talents, but He seeks with equal eagerness for the man of one talent. He has a place for him of such importance that he cannot adequately run the world without him.

2. Not only did He seek for Philip and invite him into His friendship, but, having won him, He used him. Not only did He use what brightness he had; He made use even of his dullness. How great is our debt to this prayer we just mentioned! How often the most brilliant pupils in the class are indebted to some duller pupil for asking the question that they were too proud to ask. Our use to Jesus does not depend upon our brilliancy, upon our vast ability, so much as upon our faithfulness. Our Lord can use our skills. Not only so, but He can even use our blundering failures.

I am told that in one of our Southern towns there was a brilliant lawyer who was a skeptic. He was a man of many friends and vast influence. Therefore, every earnest Christian was interested in him. But none was able to reach him. At last an unlettered blacksmith felt that he must undertake the task. He painfully worked him out a little speech that he was to make to this gifted man. He memorized it and rehearsed it with care. But when he found himself in the great man's presence, his speech went from him. All he could do was to seize the man by the arm and burst into tears. But those tears did more than all the arguments of the past had done. When a few days later the brilliant lawyer stood up to give his testimony,
he declared that he was won by no argument. He was won by the consecration of a man who had little to offer except his earnestness and his love. Personally, I am glad that the apostolic company had a Philip in it. When I think of those who have helped me most, some of them have been brilliant men like John and James, but most of them have been plodders like Philip. Thank God for the plodders!
THE FIRST TO GO

Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. And he killed James the brother of John with the sword.

---Acts 12:1,2

This is the obituary notice of James, the brother of John, the first of the apostles to pay for his faith with his life. How brutally brief it is! The immediate events that led up to the arrest and trial and death of James are not noticed. How James faced this grim ordeal we are not told. The sorrow his untimely home-going brought to his fellow Christians is not mentioned. The lonesome place that was left against the sky by his quick departure is also left unmentioned. All we know is this—Herod killed James the brother of John with the sword. It is as brief and emotionless narrative as if Herod had clipped off the head of a daisy with his walking-cane.

What do we know about James? We know surprisingly little. It is the writer of the Fourth Gospel who gives personality to certain of the friends of Jesus who otherwise would have been merely names. I take it that if John, the brother of James, was not the author, at least he was the master-mind behind this Gospel. This man John wrote his Gospel after he had lived much and thought much and suffered much. He wrote it after his selfishness had largely died under the stroke of the Cross. He could never forget that selfish ambition of his and of his brother that had so wounded Christ in the springtime of their meeting. He was so humbled by the thought of this and by his growing intimacy with his Lord that he writes his whole Gospel without ever once mentioning his own name or that of his brother James. Had he spoken of James as frankly as he spoke of some of the other friends of Jesus, we should have known James much better.
James seems to have been a very silent man. Neither of the evangelists record a single word that James ever said except what he spoke in connection with his brother John. Just who was the spokesman in this case it is impossible to say. As James was perhaps the elder of the two, it is most likely that he was the spokesman. But he seems to have said little. One author calls him "James the silent". He was one of those strong, quiet men whose presence must have been a genuine help to his Master. Simon talked almost all of the time. John spoke occasionally. James seems to have said nothing at all. There is healing in words; there is also healing in silence. When Job was overtaken with his great affliction three friends came to see him. Humbled and grieved by his sorrow, they sat in silence with him upon the ash-heap for seven days. Had they continued this silence, they would have been immortal, but they broke into speech by and by and thus spoiled their reputations forever. James was a man of few words.

We also know something of the character of James. Jesus named these two brothers "Sons of thunder". The name was applied as much to James as it was to John. That means that James was a child of the tempest—he was a son of the storm. He had thunderbolts in his make up. He was human dynamite. He was a man conspicuous for his passion among a group of men not one of whom was limp or lukewarm. There was fertile soil in the soul of James, soil that was capable of growing the rankest weeds as well as the rarest flowers.

This passionate nature gave expression to itself in the early days of his association with Jesus. It is necessary to repeat some of the things that I said about John because they apply equally to James. It was John who broke in upon Jesus with the good news, "We saw one casting out demons in thy name." It was as if he said, "We have found an ally. We have found one who is playing on our team. We have found one who is fighting on our side. But we forbade him because he followed not us." Whether that "we" refers to John and all of his fellow disciples we cannot say. I rather take it that it refers to John and to his brother James. They were
men who were ardent and narrow.

Here is another scene that tells the same story. Jesus with His friends has stopped for the night in a little Samaritan village. These villages were willing enough to receive them until they found that their faces were turned toward Jerusalem. But when they discovered that they were not going to worship in Caravane, their holy mountain, but were going on to Jerusalem, they were filled with resentment. They were so resentful that they denied them their hospitality. James and John were so enraged that they wanted to call down fire from heaven and destroy them utterly, the guilty with the guiltless. But Jesus merely rebuked them, saying, "You know not what spirit you are of." I came not to destroy men's lives but to save them." Then he inflicted the real punishment—He went to another village.

Then James shared the selfish ambition of John. It was these two, you remember, that came hiding behind the skirts of their mother to ask for first place in Christ's Kingdom. They did not base their plea upon the will of their Lord but upon their own selfish desires. They thought their fitness for the place was beyond question. Why they were so sure of themselves we are not told. Perhaps they were naturally conceited. There are some folks that seem born that way. There was a rooster once, you remember, who thought that the sun rose every morning just to hear him crow.

Perhaps this sense of superiority had some foundation. It would seem that James and John were better fixed financially than Peter and Andrew, their partners in the fishing business. When these latter became followers of Jesus, they simply left their boat and nets, but when James and John set out on the same mission they not only left boats and nets, but they left their father Zebedee with the hired servants. They were able to hire men to work for them. Then on the night that Jesus was arrested, John went into the palace of the high priest. He was personally acquainted with him. It was John who had to sponsor Peter and get him on the inside. It would seem that Peter did not move in such high society. Those who are better fixed financially and move in higher social circles often feel that they have correspondingly greater rights than their fellows. So it may have been with
James and John.

Finally, we know with a reasonable degree of certainty how James first became acquainted with Jesus. It was John the Baptist who introduced two of his friends to the Master one day on the bank of the Jordan. Jesus was passing by and the prophet said, "Behold the Lamb of God." One of those who heard him speak was Andrew. The other was doubtless John. We read further that the next day Andrew sought out his brother Simon and brought him to Jesus. Had not John been too humbled and shamed by the memory of his early ambition, he would have doubtless said also, "On the next day I sought out my brother James and brought him to Jesus." There is little doubt that the older brothers, Simon and James, were first introduced by their younger brother Andrew and John.

Then we know of a certainty how Jesus called them into the intimacy of discipleship. He passed along the shore of Galilee one day and said, "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men." When Jesus gave this invitation, he was not appealing to anything soft or cowardly in these fishermen. "Follow me"—that means "Walk My road. Take My yoke. Yield your all to Me." That invited a life of conflict. That involved for every one of them with one exception a martyr's death at the end of the trail. Yet Jesus dared give that same command to you and me. We claim to have answered it—"Follow me."

Having laid His command upon them with engrossing frankness He gives them a reason. "Follow me," He says, "and I will make you." I know that is not the end of the sentence, but we can put a period here for the present and do no violence to what Jesus said. This series of sermons is on the subject, "The Men that Jesus Made". He always remakes those who put themselves into His hands. Whatever He touches He transforms. When Paul, the greatest menace of the Early Church, followed Him, Jesus made him into a missionary. He made him anew. He enabled him to sing, "Old things have passed away. All things have become new." "Must this happen to me?" you ask. No, you do not have to let Him remake you, but it may happen. If you will
put yourself in His hands, it is sure to happen.

Not only does Jesus propose to make them, but to make them into something better than they were. He proposes to give them a finer position than they had. He gives them a better work to do. "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." "Follow me," and another evangelist puts it, "and you shall catch men. You shall cease to deal in secondary wares. You shall come to deal with those imperishable values—human personalities. Follow me and others shall see what you have become and what you are becoming. Follow me and others shall see the ascending road that you climb and join you in your high quest.

This does not mean, of course, that in becoming Christians we all have to change our work. For some who become followers of our Lord, there do come special calls to this field or that, to minister here or in the far away places of the earth. But generally speaking God our Lord calls us to do the same work that we have been doing but to do it under roomier skies, to do it with transfigured motives, to do it in a more powerful and effective way. "Follow me and I will not leave you empty-handed. I will give you greater values for the lesser." For there is no real sacrifice in following Jesus in the sense that you give up something to receive nothing back. However much we give He always gives infinitely more. Here is a girl in love with a young man who desires to marry her. For her to give herself to him means the giving up of much. But she makes the surrender with unmixed gladness because she believes that the relationship into which she is entering is far richer than the one she leaves behind. Under the spell of this appeal James with his partners left all to follow Jesus.

II

What was the outcome? Jesus made good His word. He did remake James. He made Him into a fisher of men. He caught men in his own brief lifetime. He has been wooing them toward His Savior through all these long centuries. He invested
his life for his Master. That life has been out at compound interest for more than nineteen centuries. There is no telling how much both James and his Master have realized on that investment. Then we need to bear in mind that Jesus did not remake him by clipping his wings, by quenching the hot fires of his enthusiasm. He did not make him less passionate. He heightened all those powers. Instead of becoming less fiery, he became more fiery. Instead of becoming less strong, he became far more strong. Instead of becoming less passionate he blazed with a greater zeal. I have recently been through large cities and towns made brilliant through the hours of the night by the roaring waters of Niagara. This does not mean that Niagara has lost its power and has ceased its thunder. It means that powers that were going to waste have been turned into channels of human service.

So fiery and powerful did James become that for a brief period, I am sure, he was the most daring and able leader of the Christian movement. With the death of Jesus, the bottom fell out of everything. Then came the resurrection followed by Pentecost. The frightened friends of Jesus rallied. There came to them a new unity. There came to them a new passion for telling their story. There came to them a new awareness of their Risen Lord. By their testimony the city of Jerusalem was being shaken to its foundation. The authorities realized that something must be done or this new movement would spread over the world like a forest fire. When they looked about for the most conspicuous mark at which to shoot they chose James. Having arrested him, they gave him a speedy trial and he was executed. The next to be arrested was Simon. But I have an idea that James was the first to go because he was regarded at that time as first in importance to the Christian movement, as first as a threat to the enemies of the Church.

How then did he die? Frankly, we do not know. When Peter was arrested, the Church was stirred itself. The news passed from lips to lips and from home to home. James has already been executed and Simon Peter has been arrested. Then what? "Prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him." This Church had
no political influence. They had no pull. Therefore, they did not appoint a committee. They did not raise an offering for a drive. They took themselves to their one source of power. But if anybody prayed for James, we are not told.

Listen again to his story: "He killed James the brother of John with the sword." How brutally brief! When this same author, Luke, tells of the martyrdom of Stephen, he goes into detail. He tells the steps that led to his stoning. He tells how Stephen looked as he passed through that dread ordeal—"They saw his face as it had been the face of an angel." He tells of his last words. They were words worth remembering. They had in them the very spirit of his crucified Master. He cried, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." Luke tells us something of his funeral. He tells us how devout men buried him and made great lamentation over him, but if James had a funeral we do not know it. If anybody wept, we do not know that.

III

Why I wonder is this the case? Certainly it was not because James had no standing in the Church. He was at the top. How strange it seems that there was so little ado about this apostle who was the first to go. He and his brother John had entered the ministry together. John was the last to go. He lived longer than any of the others and was the only one perhaps who did not die a martyr's death. James' life was the most brief, yet there is no wail over it, no one to say, "What an untimely death!" I wonder why.

I think we find the answer here. Luke, writing under the inspiration of the Spirit, is bearing in mind what a trifling episode is death to one whose life is hid with Christ in God. I am quite sure that the ordinary Christian has an idea of life almost totally different from that of Jesus. To Him death was nothing more than an exodus. It was no more than going from one village to another. It was no more than passing out of one room in God's House into a larger and a brighter room. What abiding difference did it make that James went early into the Divine Presence?
Certainly he was not cheated by such an early translation. We leave many of our tasks only half finished, but there are no unfinished lives in God's hands. He knows nothing of untimely deaths. He has as much plan for life's other side as for this side. Luke is telling us that to them that love God everything, whether of joy or sorrow, that can happen to us will turn to our enrichment. When, therefore, James lost his head, he really suffered no loss at all.

Not only did he lose nothing, but he became far richer. The fact that James was willing to pay the last full measure of devotion shows the tremendous change that Jesus had worked in his life. A few years ago he said, "Me first! Let me be first at any cost!" Jesus asked him with pained disappointment, "Are you able to drink of the cup of which I drink and to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" Flippantly he answered in the affirmative. Then when danger came he fled like a frightened sheep. But now he has come so to share in the nature of Jesus that he does drink of His cup and is baptized with His baptism. I shall not pity him.

Somewhere I read this story: Two seniors in a certain college were in love with the same girl. This girl was as beautiful in character as in face and figure. One of the young men was in every way a fine animal. He was vigorous, athletic, charming. The other was quite ordinary as far as appearances went, but his friends knew him as a man to be trusted.

By and by ugly rumors began to blow about the campus that the magnificent athlete was short in his accounts. The funds of a large fraternity had been entrusted to him, and he was accused of embezzling those funds. It became the unwelcome task of his rival to audit his books. Reluctantly he had to weigh him and find him wanting. As a result, this rival was sent to prison. A little later the other young man was graduated. Then he married the girl and became an instructor in his college. One rainy night months later the instructor was sitting late reading in his library. He felt a breath of cold air come in from the French doors that he thought were closed. When he rose to shut the doors, he came face to face
with a man in prison garb. He recognized him at once as his old rival. The prisoner held an angry looking automatic in his hand. He looked hard at the little instructor and chuckled in a sinister fashion and said, "At last! At last! I am going to make you suffer as you have made me suffer." But the instructor had courage. He looked the criminal quietly in the face and said, "No, you are not going to make me suffer as you have suffered. You can't. Yours has been the suffering of a guilty conscience. You can kill me. That I expect you to do, but you can't make me suffer as you have suffered." "I have dreamed of this a thousand times," the criminal continued. "You have ruined my life and I am going to ruin yours." Again his rival answered quietly, "No, I did not ruin your life. It became my unpleasant duty to expose the ruin that you had made. No man can ruin the life of another. You can't ruin mine. Of course, you can kill me, but it is my faith that you will thus only open the door into a fuller life. So go ahead with what you came to do!" No wonder the criminal slipped away into the dark!

How did James die? We do not know. Tradition tells us that he went to his death with such radiance and with such beautiful courage that the executioner looked into his face and refused to perform the bloody task. Instead he dropped upon his knees and asked to be introduced to James' Savior and James introduced him then and there, and the two entered into life eternal together. Whether this is factual or not, James has thus been catching men through the years. The same privilege is ours if we follow the Master as James followed Him.
"Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. And he killed James the brother of John with the sword."

---Acts 12:1-2

This little death notice seems almost brutally brief. Just a few years ago a brilliant and strong young man with soul a fire with enthusiasm set out to follow Jesus. He shared the Master's mad dream of building the Kingdom of God. He put all he had into the enterprise, but in what an anti-climax the venture ended! In spite of his mad dreams, all he seems to have accomplished was getting himself killed.

The man who was back of this legal murder was Herod. Herod was a dissipated rascal. In his veins flowed the tainted blood of royal murderers. He was a nephew of the Herod that killed John the Baptist. He was a grandson of the Herod who had slain the babies at the birth of Jesus. Here he is living up to his family tradition. With no high purpose, simply for political reasons, because he thought it would make him popular with the Jews, he killed James, the brother of John with the sword.

In spite of the fact that James was one of the leaders among the apostles, in spite of the fact that he belonged to the inner circle of the three—Peter, James, and John—surprisingly little is known about him. We know much more about Simon. He was constantly broadcasting. Sometimes he spoke foolishly, sometimes wisely. But
we at least know what he said. John wrote a gospel. We, therefore, have an insight into a fine mind and heart. But James, who was for a time perhaps the greatest of the group, so far as the record goes, never said a word that was worth preserving. We do not know a single sentence that he spoke. He was one of those silent men, given more to deeds than to words.

For this reason, I can imagine that Jesus found him especially helpful. There are times when people can hearten us intensely by their words. There are also times when they can do even more by their silence. When Job had come upon evil days, when one fell calamity after another had robbed him of his wealth and of his health and of his loved ones, three friends came to see him. These friends did a remarkable feat. They sat a whole week without saying a word. It has been suggested that if they had kept up this brilliant record they would have been immortal. But at last they broke into talk and thereby left themselves with soiled reputations.

But in spite of the fact that we do not know anything that James said, we know something of his character. His name is constantly coupled with that of John. They were brothers, James doubtless being the older. They seem also to have been not only brothers by blood but brothers by character. In many respects they were exceedingly alike.

1. They were both fanatically devoted to Jesus and thoroughly intolerant of all who were not. In our message on John, we reminded you of his desire to call down fire from heaven to burn up the inhabitants of a little misguided Samaritan village because these villagers would not receive their Master. Whether it was John who suggested this heartless procedure or James we do not know, but the narrative
would indicate that they were of one mind. James, therefore, as John, was fanatically intolerant.

2. James was like John in being selfishly ambitious. He, with his brother, came hiding behind the skirts of their mother to ask for the most important place in the kingdom. They seemed to feel that this position was theirs by right. Simon Peter was a natural leader, but they were bent on seeing to it that they were first instead of Simon.

Just why they felt that they had a right to this position we do not know. Perhaps it was due to the fact that they had more of this world's goods than Simon and his brother. Their father, Zebedee, seems to have been a man of some substance. At least the fact is mentioned regarding him that he had hired servants. He was a bit of a money magnate. Simon and Andrew were too poor for this. Being superior in means, John and James thought they ought to be superior in position.

Then, the record would indicate that James and John belonged to a higher social circle. At least, John was personally acquainted with the high priest. He was of sufficient importance to know people of position. It was John who brought Simon into the high priest's house. He knew his way around among important folks. The same is likely true of James. Simon, the Galilean peasant, did not. Therefore, these two ambitious young men felt that they had a right to a higher position than any of their fellows.

3. Then, James along with John was a man of tremendous earnestness. It was to both of them that Jesus gave a new name, the Sons of Thunder. That does not mean that they were loud. It does mean that they were fiery, passionate. They were made of inflammable material. James was
a bit of human dynamite, incarnate T.N.T. He was conspicuously passionate among a group not one of whom was lukewarm.

Jesus was especially drawn to people full of enthusiasm and moral earnestness. The only example of divine disgust we have in the New Testament is for those who have lost their zeal. It is easy to see why this is the case. The power of the church in any generation can be measured very largely by its passion. No amount of learning, no amount of numbers, no amount of wealth, can bring any marked progress. One man on fire is worth a thousand whose fire has gone out. One fiery James will do more to bring in the Kingdom of God than one hundred tepid souls like Nicodemus who has not the courage to be quite in earnest.

II

How did James come to be a disciple? Of his conversion we know little. John, who is the best character artist among the evangelists, and who has given us our best insight into the conversion of most of the disciples, has nothing to say about James. Remembering the ambition of himself and his brother, he is too much humbled to mention his own name or that of James. Yet, as we read between the lines, I think we can make a fair guess.

One day rugged John the Baptist pointed out Jesus to two of his own disciples, saying, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." These two disciples at once began to follow Jesus. John tells us that the name of one of these followers was Andrew. The other, in all probability, was John himself. This same John says further that the next day Andrew "foundeth his own brother Simon and saith unto him, 'We have found the Messiah.' And he brought him to Jesus."
If John had not been too modest, he would doubtless have written, "The next day, I found my own brother James and brought him to Jesus." I am confident that James first became acquainted with Jesus through his brother John and through his two friends, Simon and Andrew. But while we can only guess how James first met Jesus, we are told how he became a disciple.

One day Jesus said to him, along with his brother and his two friends, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." There is that in this invitation that is fresh and up-to-date. It has as much meaning as it had when it was uttered these centuries ago. Here is an example of successful personal work. No kind of work can possibly be quite so important in the building of the Kingdom of God. Look at how Jesus did it. Jesus went to the man that he sought to win. That has been the way of victory in all the centuries. Whenever the church begins to wait for those in need to come to her, she always ceases to live at her best. Not many un-churched people attend our services. Far more would attend if they were invited. The few who do attend usually do so because some friend has taken it upon himself to seek them out and give them an invitation. When we go fishing, we go where the fish are. We do not wait for them to come to us. That is what Jesus did when He went fishing for men.

Second, Not only did Jesus go in search of James, but having found him He made the only kind of appeal that would have struck a responsive chord in the heart of this strong and vigorous man. His appeal was positive. He did not tell James to quit something. He told him to do something. So often we are trying to get folks to quit something. If they take us seriously and quit, they are likely to begin again. If they
do not, they still have not arrived. I have reminded you before that no amount of "don't's" can make a saint. The appeal of Jesus was positive.
He gave James an invitation that was at the same time a command, "Follow Me."

That same command comes even more forcefully to you and me tonight. What does it mean? Jesus is calling for our obedience or allegiance.
He is asking us to dedicate our lives to the same high purpose to which He dedicated His own. "For their sakes," He prayed, "I dedicate Myself that they also may be dedicated." Our whole business in the world is summed up in this—the dedicating of our lives to God. That is Christianity in its beginning. We do not begin to be Christian except at the price of surrender. That is Christianity in its course. We are to keep surrendering day by day. That is Christianity in its consummation. Through eternity we are to go on following Jesus.

3. Then, Jesus hinted at something of the rewards that He had to offer. He did not simply lay a command upon James and give no reason for obedience. He gave a reason that is twofold.

First, He said, "Follow Me, and I will make you." That is not the whole of the sentence I know. But we can put a period there and do no violence to what Jesus meant. He claimed that if James would follow Him He could remake James. That He proposes to do for every man who will obey Him. That such should be the case is plain common-sense. It is also a fact of experience. This series of sermons is on the men that Jesus made; that is, we can only account for what they became in terms of Jesus Christ. How was Simon Peter made into a rock of Christlike character? Jesus remade him. How was John changed from an apostle of hate into an apostle of love? How was it that Mary Magdalene, the outcast woman, became
the last to leave the cross of crucifixion, and the first to come in the
radiant glory of Easter to see that Christ is risen. How was Paul, the
great menace of the early church, changed into its greatest missionary?
How was a little Gypsy boy, kneeling timidly at an altar in an English
church, changed into one of our greatest evangelists? Jesus did it.
"Follow Me," He says still, "and I will make you."

Second, not only does He promise to remake us, but to give us a
better job. James had a job when Jesus found him. That is true so far as
I know of all the people that Jesus called. Sometimes in looking about for
somebody to do some particular bit of church work, we say, "Let's appoint
Brother A. He has nothing else to do." But to appoint a loafer is to fail
to get the job done. All the work of the Kingdom is carried on by busy folks.
About the best worker I ever knew in the church was president of twenty-seven
different organizations.

When our Lord calls us, therefore, He does not call us to idleness,
but to a new and better job. That does not mean necessarily that by
become Christians we change our work. Most of us remain in the same places
that we were before. But even then, we have a new task. Though we work
at that same job, we work at it under wider horizons and with larger
motives. Here is a cobbler, pegging away at a pair of old worn shoes.
It is a prosaic task because all he sees is the few pennies he is to get
when his job is done. But here is a new man, Carey. He has a map of
the world on the wall and a map of the world in his heart. His task is
no longer prosaic, but full of poetry.

Here are two nurses, working at the same hospital. They are, perchance,
about equally skillful. They both give themselves with diligence to their
difficult task. But one sees nothing in her work except the pay-check
at the end of the week. But with the other it is different. As she works,
she sings softly:

"Oh, how could I serve in the wards
If the hope of the world were a lie?
How could I endure the sights
And the loathsome smear of disease
But He said, "You do it for Me,
When you do it for these."

Her task has been made into something new and wonderful with wide horizons around it, because of her faith in God.

III

What was the outcome of the invitation?

1. James had the good sense to obey. I dare say that it was not easy. Difficult tasks seem so much easier when looked at in the distance than they do for ourselves. We look at those in the long ago who made the decisions from which we shrink and say, "Of course." Moses went out one day to identify himself with a horde of slaves when he might have been a king. Again we say, "Of course." Then, we shrink from the smallest sacrifice. James did that fine and heroic thing of obeying Jesus. He began at once to follow him.

As a result of this following, Jesus at once began to remake James. So rapidly did this work go on that I think James became the strongest and most powerful leader among the apostles. When the state interfered they naturally laid hold on those that were outstanding. The two men arrested were Simon and James. But James was arrested first. James was also the first of the apostles to pay for his faith with his life. About that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. And he killed James the brother of John with the sword." They killed him because he was the most feared man among this vigorous Christian group.
This simple story is striking in its brevity. How little is made of the death of James. When Luke tells us of the murder of Stephen, he makes much of it. He goes into detail. He tells us what Stephen said. He tells us how he looked. He tells us something of the funeral, of the devout men who wept over him when he was gone. But of the death of James, he does not give a single detail. How he looked, what he said, whether anybody wept over him, we are not told.

Then, what a contrast there is between his life and that of his brother John. These two brothers were so close together. They had both ignorantly vowed that they were able to drink of the cup that Jesus drank of. But after a terrible failure, they did come to that fine ability. But how different was their drinking! James slipped out by one swift stroke of the sword, the first of the apostles to go. John, on the other hand, was the last. We can drink of the cup of Jesus, therefore, as much by living as we can by dying.

Why is this record of James so brutally brief? I think it is meant to teach us what a small thing death is when looked at through the eyes of our Lord. What does it matter how that James went when he did or a few years later? To the mind of Jesus, I am sure death was a very small episode. It was no more than passing from one village to another. It was no more than going out of one room in God's house into another and a larger room. How futile the fidelity of James seems as the grave ends it all! How little the method of his death matters as the gleaming sword only unlocked for him the doorway of a fuller life where he is still going on in the fellowship of his Lord.
Sometime ago I read a story of two young men in a college who were in love with the same girl. One of these was a stalwart young athlete. He was attractive, magnetic, in every way a fine animal. The other was a rather under-sized young man with little in his physical make-up to attract attention. Both of these loved the same girl, and she seemed to find it hard to choose between them.

But in the character of the young athlete, there was a fatal defect. As the treasurer of his fraternity, he was entrusted with funds that he misappropriated. It fell to the lot of his rival to audit his books. Much to the regret of this rival, he had not only to audit the books, but to expose his dishonesty. The young athlete was sent to the penitentiary. A few months later the man who exposed his dishonesty married the girl and became a professor in his alma mater.

One bleak, rainy night, while the little professor was reading in his study, he felt a chilling breath of air. Looking around to see the source, he was confronted by a man in the stripes of a convict, with a gun in his hand. He at once recognized his old rival. "I have got you where I want you," said the intruder. "Ah, I have thought of this a thousand times in my prison cell. You ruined my life. Now I am going to ruin yours."

"No," answered the little professor, quietly. "I did not ruin your life. No man can ruin the life of another. It only became my painful duty to expose the ruin that you had made. I did not ruin your life, and you can not ruin mine."

"Shut up!" came the answer. You have made me suffer. I am going to make you suffer as you have made me."
"No," came the tantalizing answer, "you can't do that. You can kill me. That I expect you to do. But you cannot make me suffer as you have suffered. Your suffering has been born of a guilty conscience. Mine is clean. All you can do for me is to fire that gun. After a brief instant of agony, I will enter into a fuller life. You cannot make me suffer because I have a quality of life over which death has no power."

That is what Jesus does for all who follow Him. He remakes us. He gives us a new task. He gives us a quality of life that is as endless as eternity. Therefore, I am inviting you on His behalf again with these words, "Follow Me, and I will make you to become fishers of men."
As in the case of Jesus, the artists have done the Apostle John great injustice. His picture shows him to be a Little Lord Fauntleroy. All the other apostles were able to grow beards. So far as we can tell from his pictures, John never needed a shave in his life.

Now this is just the opposite of what John was. He was the son of thunder. There was dynamite in his makeup. He was a strong man with a great capacity for good and great capacity for evil.

I

Look at him as he was when Jesus found him:

1. He was a man capable of extreme and cruel fanaticism. When the little Samaritan village refused hospitality to his Master, he was eager to burn them all up; not only the guilty, but the guiltless, the women and children.

2. He was very narrow and partisan. He is the man who brought in this report, "We saw one casting out demons in Thy name and we forbade it." Understand, John did not forbid it because he thought his work was counterfeit. He forbade him because he did not do it in John's way. "Because he followed not us!"

3. He was a man of great selfish ambitions. He and James were afraid that Peter was going to get first place. They were all expecting a temporal kingdom. Therefore they came, hiding behind their mothers' skirts, saying that they wished to have a seat, the one on the right and the other on the left in the kingdom.
II

What did John become?

1. He became a man of deep insight, of great spiritual certainty. He is the apostle who says over and over again, "We know."
   (1) He knew that the new birth was a fact.
   (2) He knew that victory was a possibility.
   (3) He knew that likeness to Christ was ahead of every true Christian.

2. He became the apostle of love. He believed in God's love for the whole world. He it is that tells us that "God is love." He tells us that the mark of discipleship is love. "We know that we are passed out of death into life because we love." That is the mark by which we are to distinguish ourselves. Love is also the mark by which the world is to distinguish us.

   "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples if ye have love one to another."

III

How was Jesus able to take this narrow vindictive man and make him into the mighty saint that he became? John gives us the secret in one sentence. "Of His fullness have we all received." John gave himself completely to Christ. Christ gave Himself completely to John. John received of the fullness of His tenderness, of the fullness of His power, of the fullness of His love.
"One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother." —John 1:40

When John the Baptist pointed Jesus out to two of his disciples, they were deeply interested. They followed Jesus and spent at least two hours with him. That interview changed their whole lives. These two first disciples were Andrew and John.

Now though this though this latter has a gospel ascribed to him, I think he is about as little understood as any of the prominent members of the twelve. As in the case of his Master, he has in my opinion, been greatly misrepresented by the artists. The usual picture of Jesus indicates a man who was kindly and patient, and who could suffer, but he is seldom pictured as one who could greatly dare and who could lead an aggressive campaign. In effort to bring out his tenderness, they have obscured his strength.

These same artists have given a similar false impression of John. His picture reminds one of Little Lord Fauntleroy. All the other disciples wore beards. The Master himself has a beard. But not so with John. It would seem that he never needed a shave in his life. He has a fine delicate face that is more effeminate than masculine. That such a picture does not portray the real John is evident to anyone who will turn to the Gospels. Here John is pictured as a vigorous rugged fisherman. Following the sea, he doubtless had rough hands and gnarled muscles. He, with his brother James, was given a nickname, "Sons of Thunder."

What does this mean: It means that John was a strong and passionate man. He had dynamite in his makeup. He had thunder and lightning in his soul. He was a child of the storm, a son of the tempest. He was a volcanic character with inflammable written all over him.
Being thus the "Son of Thunder" he was capable of going greatly wrong, as he was capable of going grandly right.

- I -

John, as Jesus found him, was a very faulty man. These faults are glarring and ugly.

1. He was exceedingly narrow. One day, for instance, he hurried into the presence of Jesus to make this announcement: "We saw one casting out devils in Thy name." That was a heartening declaration. Here was a nameless man, who in the name of Jesus, was doing the same sort of work that John and his fellows were undertaking. It ought to have thrilled John to have met this fellow soldier. We should have expected him to have reported the news to Jesus with joyful enthusiasm.

But before Jesus could express his appreciation of this unknown disciple, John added this depressing word, "We forbade him because he followed not us." That is, John refused to give him the right hand of fellowship. He refused to encourage him. He rather tried to make him quit. This he did not because the man was not a real disciple, but rather because he did not belong to our group. He did not baptize just as we did.

Now upon this narrow intolerance Jesus could not smile. Now does He smile upon such intolerance today. I am aware that some that passes as intolerance, is only indifference. Intolerance is bad, but there is more hope for one who is intolerant than for one who is indifferent.

What did Jesus say to John? He rebuked him. "Forbid him not", he said, "for he that is not against us is on our part."

I have yet to know any denominations that did not have some saints among them. I have yet to know one single denomination that does not
have some sinners. I should regret beyond words a conviction that my church was the only one. It is not, thank God. And that same may be said about any other church. When you part company with a man who is doing the work of Christ simply because he is not of your denomination, you do not do so with the approval of Jesus. John was a narrow sectarian. "I stand up, my hands and swear that..."

2. Being a narrow sectarian, he was met thoroughly unbrotherly. Look at this picture. Jesus with his friends is on his way to Jerusalem. He stops to spend the night in a certain Samaritan village. But those villages are narrow. They are as narrow as John. Therefore, when they find that the Master is headed toward Jerusalem they will not give Him a nice lodging. He ought not go to Jerusalem; they thought he ought to worship at where they worshipped. John and James are outraged at such narrowness. Did you ever notice how prone we are to condemn another who has the same fault as we have? A fat woman looks at her plump sister and remarks, "I hope I don't look like that!" John and James said, "Do you want us to call down fire from heaven and burn them up?"

That is a cruel and wicked attitude, but it lives to this day. All through the centuries certain ones have tried to save the world not by making saints, but by killing sinners. But at this suggestion, I think Jesus turned upon John with pained amazement, at least He said, "You know not what spirit you are. I am not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them."

Having just said this, Jesus inflicted real punishment upon that village. He did not do so willingly, he did so because He must. He simply left them and went to another place. No penalty could be more tragic than that. If we fail to give our Lord hospitality, if we persistently shut the door in His face, we will miss Him. These villagers
that might have had Jesus as their guest, miss him because they refused
to give Him welcome. John was narrow and unbrotherly.

3. John was selfishly ambitious. He and his brother, James, were
looking out for one. Their friend and former partner in the fishing
business was forging ahead. He was the most popular man in the group.
If they were to eclipse Simon Peter, they must bestir themselves. They
must somehow get first place in the new kingdom.

John and his brother went about this ugly deed in an ugly way.
He did not go direct to Jesus and ask Him for first place. He went
hiding behind the skirts of his mother. Knowing the chivalry of Jesus,
his mother came with this request, "I want you to do whatever I ask."
That is always an unreasonable request. How often somebody will say,
"Will you do something for me?" The only answer to that question is,
"It is according to what that question is." As children we used to
say to each other, "Open your mouth and shut your eyes, and I will
give you something." But that was a risk.

Jesus was not thus to be taken in. "What do you want?" he questioned.
Then it came out. "I grant that these two sons may sit one to the right
hand and the other to the left in Thy kingdom." That was bad enough in
politics, but when that spirit gets into the church, it does nothing
but harm.

In making this request John had no reference to the choice of
Jesus in the matter. He had no reference to his own fitness. When
Jesus called attention to this by saying, "Are ye able to drink of
the cup that I drink of?", they said quite jointly, "We are able."
We have a quite popular hymn based on this. I never like to sing it
because the author in my opinion totally misunderstood. They declared
they were able, but they were not. They fled like flitting sheep.
Here, then, was John as Jesus found him; A narrow, unbrotherly man,
ambitious with face and power.

What kind of man did John become in the fellowship of Jesus?

1. He became the most intimate friend of our Lord. He is known as the disciple whom Jesus loved. We are not to assume that John said that of himself. Some scholars believed that a disciple of John in revising his gospel wrote that in. But whoever is responsible for saying it, I think the truthfulness of it cannot be doubted. Among the twelve there was an inner circle of three—Peter, James and John. Among the three there was an inner circle of one. John by virtue of his complete self-giving came to be loved with a love of approval to a degree beyond his fellows.

One mark of this special love and confidence is that scene at the Cross. Jesus had brothers, he also had other disciples, but when He hung on the cross, he said to Mary, "Behold thy son." And to John he said, "Behold thy mother." He told John to take his place with his begrieved mother. To be known as the disciple whom Jesus loved is the greatest of all compliments.

2. This one-time intolerant and unbrotherly man became perhaps the greatest lover in the New Testament. He became an incarnation of the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians. It is he who tells us how much God loved the world. It is he who tells us that God in His very nature is Love. It is he who emphasizes the fact that love is a mark of discipleship, and to be without it is to miss knowing God. It is said that when he was a very old man and no longer able to preach, they would bring him into the church and his one word would always be this, "My little children love one another." What a far cry for the man who wanted to burn to death certain ignorant villagers who wanted to refuse his Master a night's lodging.
3. Being a great lover, he became a man of deep insight. Love is keen eyed. The more we love the finer our insight. Being a great lover John came to great knowledge. The key word with him was not "if", but "I know."

He was sure that in the coming of Jesus Christ God had come to dwell among men. He was sure that in following Jesus Christ he had been remade. He had been from from above. He was sure that in the here and now he had eternal life. He was sure that this possession of eternal life would greatly enrich throughout eternity. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." Of all the disciples, he entered deeper into Christ's friendship. He became the deepest lover. He possessed the surest spiritual assertion.

- III -

How was Jesus thus to have this strong and passionate man?

1. When John had an opportunity to follow Jesus, he forsook all and followed Him. Then he came to know and love Him better with the passing days.

2. He gave himself to the Master with the complete abandon.

3. Thus giving himself completely to Jesus, Jesus was able to give Himself to John. And for Him this apostle of love undertakes to explain the great difference Jesus has made in himself and his fellow Christians. He says in this way: "Of his fullness have we all received and grace for grace." There is no excuse for this empty life. As we give our all to Him, he gives his all to us. At least He gives all of himself as we are capable of receiving.
THE MAN OF FIRE

"One of the two which heard John speak and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother." - John 1:40

---------------

When the Prophet pointed out the Lamb of God, there were two who heard and believed and followed. The name of one is given; the other is left nameless. He is the master-mind back of the fourth Gospel. There were six apostles that came from Bethsaida. Four of them are named. John and James are left nameless. John did not mention his own name, nor that of his brother.

I

What kind of man was John? The artists have misrepresented him. I think almost as grossly as they have misrepresented his Master. To look at a picture of Jesus would never give the impression that He was a strong man. He usually has a tender and patient face. His eyes are soft and gentle. But one would never get the impression that there was one of tremendous strength and power. Yet it was He from whose presence the soldier staggered back that night, when they came to arrest Him. "His eyes outshone the Roman torch, and out-flashed the Syrian stars."

Now, we get a similar false impression from the pictures of John. He looks like "Little Lord Fauntleroy" grown to manhood. He has a tender and beautiful face. But it is hardly the face of a man; it is more that of a woman. Judging by his picture, John never needed a shave in his life. All of the other disciples wore beards, even the Master Himself is pictured with one. But John seems entirely too effeminate. He is the one beardless man of the group.
But this is not John as his friends knew him. This is not the John that heard the Baptist preach, and followed Jesus. This is not the hard-handed, gnarled-muscled fisherman that Jesus called upon the shores of Galilee. He called the real John a "Son of Thunder." That means that he was a man of fire. He was a child of the storm. He had dynamite in his heart. He had thunder and lightning in his soul. He carried TNT in his hands. His whole personality has INFLAMMABLE written in bold letters upon him. He was a man of immense capacities. He had capacities for the growing of the rankest of weeds, as well as the most beautiful of flowers.

To be convinced of this, it is only necessary to glance at three typical scenes in the early days of his fellowship with Jesus. These scenes are not at all full of sweetness and light. They show the ugliest of traits, traits that, if left without the redeeming love of Christ, must have made John a curse rather than a blessing.

1. John was exceedingly narrow. He was a thorough-going secretarian. One day he rushed enthusiastically into the presence of Jesus with a bit of thrilling news: "Master, we saw one casting out demons in Thy name." How splendid! How heartening! Here was one who was seeking to drive out wrong, greed, injustice. Here was one who was seeking to bind up the world's wounds, and heal its open sores. Not many were engaged in that high enterprise. Too few are engaged in it still. But here was one whose face the face of Jesus had doubtless not seen, but, had caught His spirit, and was casting out demons. That was something over which to rejoice.
But before Jesus had time to express His appreciation, before Jesus had time to tell how thankful He was, John continued his story: "We forbade him," he said, "we told him to quit."

This, we did, not because his work was full of sham. We told him to quit because he was not following us. He did not believe in our mode of baptism. He did not recite our creed." John was a bit like the preacher who, when told by a fellow minister with whom he had been working: "Fundamentally we are alike, and we are engaged in the same enterprise." "Yes," said his friend, "you are doing the work of the Lord in your way, and I am doing the work of the Lord in His way." What can you do with a fellow like that?

What answer did Jesus make? He does not congratulate the secretary; he blushes for him, and grieves over him.

"Forbid him not," was the command, for he that is not against us in on our part. Jesus said that same thing in another chapter: "He that is not for Me is against Me." That is the one that we remember. We quote it a thousand times, where we quote the other one. In fact, a great many earnestly religious people do not know the former at all. Some months ago a woman said to me at the close of the service: "I don't believe what you said tonight." And there was indignation in her voice. "What did I say that you do not believe?" "I do not believe that he that is not against us is on our part." "Well," I replied, "you must argue that out with Jesus, it is His Word, not mine." Mohn was narrow when Jesus found him.

2. John was a bit of a fanatic with all the capacity for fiery cruelty that goes with fanaticism. Look at this scene. Jesus, with His disciples, is on His way to Jerusalem. They stop to spend the night in a Samarian Village. But these ignorant
villagers are as secretarian and narrow as John himself. Because the face of Jesus is set toward Jerusalem, they will not receive Him - He ought to be worshipping at Judea as they do, instead of going to Jerusalem. Their narrowness fills John with hot indignation. We often blame in others the very faults that are prominent in ourselves. Did you ever hear a sister, who was inclined to be a bit over-weight, say to another: *I hope I don't look like that!*

Now, though John himself was narrow, this trait in these Samaritans was very ugly. It made him so angry that he came forward with this suggestion: "Do you want us to call down fire from heaven and burn them up?" What a remedy for narrowness and prejudice in whose offspring many are the blame, and wrong-headedness! But it is one, from which recovery is very slow. There are those still who want to exterminate and excommunicate all who differ from them. They know no way of christianizing the world except by killing the sinners. That, in truth, is the way that Jesus is going to set up His kingdom at the last. He is going to snatch away the saints and destroy the sinners, and bring in a reign of righteousness by physical force and violence. What a tragic blunder! When will we quit it?

*He drew a circle and threw me out, Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout, But love and I had a way to win, We drew a circle and took him in.*

What answer did Jesus make to John's cruel suggestion? I can see the pain in his eyes across the very spaces of the years. "You know not what spirit you are", He says, sadly. "The Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." Christ doesn't coerce. He doesn't over-ride. He never undertakes to compel. He is here, not as a destroyer, but as a savior. And having said this, He went to another village. It was the real punishment. It was far worse than the fire that John suggested.
This village that might have had Jesus as its guest did not have Him. If we shut the door in His face, we miss Him, and He goes where He is welcome. That leaves us with an emptiness of heart that is very hell. John was fanatical.

3. John was selfishly ambitious. Peter was forging ahead as a member of the Apostolic group. John and James were afraid that he might be Prime Minister when Jesus set up His Kingdom, instead of themselves. Therefore, they decided to get in on the ground floor. So they came, hiding behind the skirts of their mother, and also seeking to hide their real purpose. They said: "Lord, we want you to do whatever we ask." That type of request is made still. "Will you do something for me?"

And the only sensible answer to a question like that is, according to what that something is. Jesus was not to be taken in in any such fashion. "What is your request?" He asks. Then, it came out. "We want to sit the one on Thy right hand and the other on Thy left. We want to be first." How selfish, and how human! It has been one of the supreme curses of the centuries— that childish cry: "Me first!"

"What you ask", answers Jesus, "is not for me to give. The place you occupy in the kingdom depends upon what you are here, not upon favoritism. Nobody can issue passes to the kingdom of heaven.” If Fritz Kreisler were playing in Birmingham tomorrow night, he could not issue a pass and guarantee that you would enjoy his music better than anyone else. It would depend upon yourselves. "They that are ready go into the feast here and hereafter. To get first place in the kingdom is possible only to him who is, first in character. And that is attained, not by ascending but by descending, not by grabbing, but by giving.
"He that would be great among you, let him be your servant, and he that would be first, let him be your slave. For the son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life, a ransom for many." And because he stooped the lowest, he rose the highest: "Therefore God hath highly exalted him and given him a name that is above every other name."

II

Now, what did Jesus do for the narrow, fanatical, self-seeking, inflammable man? He made him over. That is a heartening truth. It is because Jesus did that in the long ago, and can do that still, that we are here tonight. He is still able to make cowards into heroes, weaklings into spiritual giants. And that is the biggest thing in the universe. The memorials of wars and the broadcasting of stars - this is a little thing in comparison with the remaking of a man.

1. John became the Master's most intimate friend.
From those that followed Him, Jesus chose twelve to be with Him, to learn what He was, and to learn His message, that He might send them forth to preach. From those twelve, He chose an inner-circle, made up of Peter and James and John. Of that inner-circle, one was selected to enter into the very holy of holies of Jesus' friendship. He came to be known as the disciple that Jesus loved. No finer compliment was ever paid any man than that. This does not mean that Jesus did not love all the disciples. He loved those who were not His disciples. But Jesus could love John with a holy and approving love such as He gave to none other of His disciples. This was true because He had come to share in His nature more fully than any of the others.

2. Being greatly loved, John became a great lover.
Love is the theme of his preaching. It was a mark of the new
birth. "We know we have passed out of death into life," because we have loved." He discovered that God, in His very nature, is love. "Every lover," he declares, "is born of God." But the man who doesn't love, however great his claims, does not know God. If a man claims to know Him, and hates his brother, he declares such to be a lie. Love is the proof of discipleship to the disciple himself, and is his supreme proof to the world. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

3. Being a great lover, he was a man of great courage.

When Jesus was arrested, he was seized along with his fellows by a momentary panic. But he recovered quickly. He was at the hall of judgment almost at the time Jesus was. He alone of the disciples seems to have witnessed the trial. He alone was with his Master as He hung on the cross. It is from the cross that Jesus put His mother in his keeping, saying: "Woman, behold thy son; son, behold thy mother." He gave John the holy privilege of taking His place with His mother. John stood in the place of Jesus with Mary. Sometimes we are privileged to stand in the place of Jesus with some needy woman. John's courage was born of his love.

"Perfect love casteth out fear."

Finally, John became a man radiantlly and beautifully certain. One of the key words of his message is this: "We know." He was sure that in the coming of Jesus, God had come. "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld His glory." He was sure of the fact of regeneration. In Him was light. "We know that we have passed out of death into life. He that hath the Son hath light." He was sure that he possessed in the here and now abundant life.

Because he was sure of eternal life as a present possession he faced the future with joyful confidence. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but
we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." He does not have a blueprint of the after-life, but He is certain that there is an after-life. He is certain that in that after-life he is going to continue his fellowship with Jesus, and is going to continue to grow in His likeness throughout eternity. What a transformation Jesus wrought in the life of John!

III

Now, how was this transformation brought about?

It was not the work of John only. Nor was it the work of Jesus alone. It came about through Jesus and John working together.

1. John became a follower of Jesus. He made a beginning. He broke with the old life and took up the new. It was then that he was reborn. But though reborn, he was only a babe in Christ. What a far-cry it is from the John who wanted to throw down fire from heaven and the John whose one message came to be: "My little children, love one another." But all this had its beginning that day when John heard the preacher speak, and began to follow Jesus.

2. John came to be possessed of an ever-growing faith in the love of Jesus, and to respond to that love. John is about the tenderest lover of the New Testament. But it is never his own love that he emphasizes; it is the love of Jesus for Him. "We love Him," he declares, "because He first loved us." Again he says: "We know and trust the love that Jesus has for us." It is in the warmth of this love that his life opened as naturally and beautifully as the blooming of a flower. We are always at our best in an atmosphere that is sweet with love. Many a child and adult, too, who is restrained and uninterested, is nurtured in an atmosphere of criticism, blooms into beauty in an atmosphere of appreciation.
3. As the heart of John opened under the warmth of
the love of Jesus, our Lord entered into His life with greater
and greater fulness. Therefore, when we ask John of the secret
of what he has become, this is what he answers: "Of His fulness
have all we received." Into my emptiness," declares John, "has
come the fulness of Jesus." The light that he has, has not been
bought; it has not been earned, it has not been wrested from the
hand of His master; it has been received. "Of His fulness have
all we received." And since anybody can receive, John believes that
there is no excuse any more for an empty life.

"Of His fulness have we received." What a thrilling
word! Here is a piece of paper, beautiful, but blank. But that
bit of paper falls into the hands of a Tennyson, and it begins
to sing, with the winsome music of "Lonely Hall", or "In Memoriam",
or the "Lady of Charlotte", because it has received all the
fulness of the poet's genius, and of the poet's heart. Here is
a bit of uninteresting canvas. But we look again and it rings
with thunder, and flames with lurid lightning. What has happened?
It points to Turner, and says: "Of his fulness have we received."
And here is a songless life, a life without beauty, a life harsh
and hard. It begins to sing with the winsomeness of heaven and to
flame with the loveliness of the face of Christ. What is the
secret of the fulness which we have received? On our old farm
is a lovely spring. It takes its name from the fact that a
basin has been hewn out from the face of a solid rock. But for
one thing, that basin would be as dry as desert sands the year
round, except when it might be filled with rancid rainwater.
But it holds its emptiness up to the waters that gush from under
the great hills. Therefore, it is always filled to over-flowing.
Its fulness is not due to anything in itself. It can tell its
secret in one sentence, as John told his. As it points to the everlasting hills, it says: "Of thy fulness have I received."
Thus may we hold the empty cup of our lives up before God tonight and He will fill us. Once again He will breathe upon us and say: "Receive ye the holy ghost." God grant that it may be so!
COME AND SEE.
John 1 - 46.

PART I.

When Philip was converted his first thought was of his friends. He had a friend that he felt sure would be interested. He went at once in search of him. His approach was characterized with fine tact and common sense. The sermon he preached is one that is worthy of study.

1. It was shot thru with certainty. Philip spoke with authority. There were a million things, possibly, about which he was in doubt but of the theme of his sermon he was absolutely sure. He did not begin by saying "we hope or we suppose or we trust that we have found." He began by saying "We have found." He spoke out of a rich and satisfying personal experience.

This is a type of preaching that will always be interesting. It will always grip, however listless your audience may be, however seemingly stupid and uninteresting. When you begin to tell about those deep matters of the soul that you know from your own personal experience, then the audience is going to become alive. There is nothing so abidingly interesting as the story of the dealing of a personal Saviour with an individual soul. The one delivering such a message may be wanting in a thousand particulars. His English may be bad, his past may be bad, but if he speaks with the certainty of Philip or the certainty of the woman at the well, he will have a hearing.

2. This sermon is modern in its content. "We have found Him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth," That is, "We have found Him of whom Moses wrote, and of whom the prophets wrote." For many centuries the Jews had had their faces turned in eager expectation to the coming King. Moses had spoken of it, The prophets had
spoken of it. Isaiah had said He was the one who was to be wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities. He had seen Him as the great sin-bearer for the race.

"This sin-bearer," says Philip, "has come." "There is one now present in this stained world of ours who is able to deal adequately and conqueringly with sin in the life of the individual and in the life of the world. That is the message that was fundamental with them. It is fundamental now. The great problem yesterday, today and for tomorrow. The great message is the one that gives a solution to that problem. Philip was convinced that He had the solution. Therefore, he said with assurance; "We have found Him of whom Moses did write and of whom the prophets wrote.

3. This was a personal message. Philip took time to seek out his friends individually. The great victories of the Kingdom have been won in this way. Moody said that the next great awakening would come when a man was willing to take a walk with his friend for Christ's sake. I think it safe to say that it will never come in any other fashion. The world will never be won to God from the pulpit.

Now the fine thing about this type of preaching is one that everybody can have a part in. "They that were scattered abroad want everywhere preaching the word." And there was not a single preacher in the crowd. Not only can everybody have a part in it but everybody can succeed in it who is willing to pay the price. Try it out and you will find out that it pays dividends that are unspeakably rich. For instance, Curtis Smith, Bowl of Soup.

PART II.
PART II.

Who was this man that Philip saw and what kind of man was he? His name was Nathanael. As an apostle he was called Bartholomew. Before he entered the service of Jesus John gives us a few fleeting glimpses of him that enables us to form a fairly adequate estimate of his character.

1. He was an earnest seeker after truth. He was a zealous student of the scriptures. He was a man of constant prayer. Philip knew that he was earnestly looking for the coming of Christ. He knew that it was one of the habits of his life to give himself to prayer under a certain fig tree that grew in his garden. Therefore, he went to him with the greater hope and the greater confidence. "He is eager," he said to himself, "for the coming of Christ." He will, therefore, give eager welcome to my message."

Then you can see that the prayers of this earnest seeker did not go for nothing. It was, in all probability, in answer to the prayers of this good man that Philip came to him. Cornelius, the Roman Centurian was a man who prayed somewhat after this fashion. Therefore, one day God sent a special messenger who said to him, "Cornelius thy prayers are heard." This praying man was told where he could find a preacher who would lead him into the fullness of life. The man who really wants to know will surely come to know. Nathanael was eager to know.

2. Nathanael was an honest man. That means that he was a very rare soul indeed. We are accustomed to speak of common honesty. But common honesty is often dishonesty. Real honesty, honesty that lives at the very center of the heart and speaks thru every word and thru every act is by no means common. It is a rather rare virtue. We all do not possess it by any means. Jesus said that he was an Israelite
Come and See.

Without guile. That is that there was no deceit in him.

Down-right honesty, genuine sincerity is not only a rather rare virtue but it is as beautiful as it is rare. It is also fundamental. It is the foundation upon which you can build a really strong and worthwhile life. Nothing can be strong that is founded upon a lie. Build a lie into the frame of a skyscraper and it will fall into ruins. Build a life or anything else, and it in turn will fall into ruins. Nathanael was a sincere man. He was a man sincere, without cera, wax. That is, he was just what he claimed to be.

3. But in spite of these fine qualities, Nathanael was a man with a prejudice. He listened with the keenest interest and appreciation to what his friend Philip said until he told him that Jesus had come from Nazareth. When he heard that he flared up at once. He did not like Nazareth. Nazareth was just ten miles from his own village of Cana. Possibly his prejudice was well founded, but whether it was or not, it was a reality. Therefore, he said not without some indignation, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?"

Now in saying that Nathaniel was a prejudiced man, I am not putting him in a class by himself. Honesty of his type was a bit rare, but prejudice as common as blackberries. There is not a man here without his prejudice. The only reason we quarrel with Nathaniel in the least is because his prejudices are not the same as ours. The man I find it hard to get along with is the man who has a different prejudice from mine.

What are some of yours? With some of us it is Al Smith. With another it is Hoover. With another it is the Anti Saloon League. With another it is the Church. With some it is a certain denomination. With
others still it is the prayer meeting. With others it is bobbed hair. With others still it is paint. With some it is one-piece bathing suits. With others still it is the evangelist. With others Christian Scientists.

Now it may surprise you to hear me say that there are some prejudices that are assets rather than liabilities. The right kind of prejudice may be a genuine safe-guard. For instance, I am prejudiced against any drink that has alcohol in it. That prejudice is fairly bred into my bones. There are good people who would not think of drinking in this country who would drink wine when they travel in Europe. I am not saying that they sin, but I cannot do it. I have a deepseated prejudice to it that makes it impossible to me. I am prejudiced against cards. I am so prejudiced that I never played a game in my life. I am prejudiced against companionsate marriage. I am prejudiced against any man or institution that would war against the Bible or against the Church. I believe such prejudices are a bit of a safe-guard.

Then prejudice may not only serve in a measure as a safe-guard but it is often the natural result of that fine conviction that gives life its driving power. There are some who have conviction enough to grow a good strong prejudice. I hate denominationalism, but when I hear a man say one Church suits me just as well as another, I know the chances are quite strong that he counts for nothing in no Church. We are hearing today a good deal of talk of tolerance. But the tolerance of the average individual who talks about it is not tolerance at all, it is moral flabbiness and thorough indifference parading in the borrowed garments of tolerance.

Give me the man of strong conviction without prejudice if you find him; but if you cannot, give me the man with conviction along with
Come and See.

his prejudice rather than that individual who is too broad to be any account. When I started to shave this morning, I had a Gillett razor blade with four sides. Two sides were quite broad almost an inch wide. The other was so narrow that it made you ashamed; and yet I used the narrow part to do the shaving. May the Lord save us from getting too broad to cut anything.

PART III.

What effect did this prejudice have on Nathaniel? /it made him a bit doubtful of the truth of the preacher's message. He could well believe that the Great Prophet had at last come. His own Bible had told him that He was coming; but that he should come by way of Nazareth, that was almost too much. He was in danger of letting one small thing that the preacher had said spoil the whole thing for him. We often do that. We hear a sermon with which we are in ninety-nine per cent of agreeing, but one per cent attacks our prejudice and we throw away the whole sermon.

2. Not only did his prejudice make him doubt, but because he doubted he hesitated to accept Philip's invitation. Nathaniel is the only man among the apostles, so far as we know, that hesitated when he was called. Every other one responded immediately, gladly, but Nathaniel said, "I do not know about that." "I doubt if the man you have found is really the Messiah. I cannot believe that anything good can come out of Nazareth."

Here you see the dangerous side of prejudice. It may at times serve as a safe-guard against evil, but it oftentimes serves as a blind to shut out the light. Here was this man on the point of rejecting Christ just because he did not like the town from which he came. How foolish!
Come and See.

How unreasonable! How human! Many a man has rejected Christ because he did not like the preacher. Many a man has rejected Him because he had been wronged by somebody who had belonged to the Church. Thousands are rejecting Him today because of the prejudices caused by the unfaithfulness of His followers who are known to be not truly His followers at all.

JETHAN

PART IV.

But here is where Philip showed his fine good sense. What did he say to this prejudiced doubter?

He did not abuse him. He did not tell him that he was a narrow-minded provincial. All this was true but it is not always necessary to give your friend a photograph of himself that you have taken. He did not even tell him that he was rejecting Christ from sheer prejudice. This also would have been true, though the saying of it might not have been wise.

Further, he did not resent the fact that Nathaniel had his doubts. This is the more amazing when we realise that his doubts were really born of his prejudice. But there is no use of abusing a man because he is a doubter. Christ never did, and always dealt with doubt in the most frank and friendly fashion. He makes it plain that he is not angry when they are troubled with doubts.

Neither did Philip enter upon a lengthy and dangerous argument to prove the truth of his statement. On the contrary he pointed out the path to certainty. He said, "Come and see." What consummate good sense! If you have a prejudice tonight, "Come and see." If you find the message untrue, then as another has said, you can return to your prejudice. If you have a doubt, "Come and see." If it does not work out then your doubt can be more than a doubt; it can become a certainty.
Come and See.

Christ never demands blind credulity. He is willing to submit Himself to the most exacting test; the test of experience. That is the way to know. And in the deepest sense, it is the only way. "Is there a law of gravitation?" "Come and see." "Jump out the window and try it out."
"Are strawberries and cream delicious?" "Yes;" I answer. "I do not believe it;" you say. "How do they taste?" "I cannot tell you."
"All I can say is, Come and see." "Does fire burn?" Try it out. "Does Jesus save?" Test Him.

There are many things that we cannot test by experience. "Did Mark write the book of Mark?" That we cannot prove. "Is baptism by pouring or sprinkling the only mode of baptism?" Here we cannot prove by experience. But that which matters most can be tested. Does Jesus save? Does He enable you to say, "There is therefore now no condemnation." "Does He impart the peace that passeth all understanding? Does He give strength in weakness? Does He give comfort in sorrow? Does He give hope in the hour of death? Does He enable you to turn away from the new made grave with absolute certainty of finding again those you have loved and lost? He does. This has been found true by an innumerable company that no man can number. If you doubt it, or if you want to believe it; "Come and see."

PART V.

What reply did Nathaniel make? He did not simply repeat his question. He did not stubbornly say "I know that nothing good can come out of Nazareth." He doubted, but he was willing to be shown. There is no harm in doubting. When doubt kills it is when we are proud of our doubts and when we want to use them to save ourselves from moral
Come and see.

responsibility.

I cannot believe, you say. You can if you will to. If this is not true, you make Christ of God a liar. Christ says, "If any man is willing to do His will, he shall know." If you are willing then you will put the matter to the test. If you will not put the matter to the test then you are not an honest doubter. You are just lying to yourself to make yourself comfortable in your sin.

"Come and see," said Philip. Then Nathaniel said, I will. When he came, Jesus complimented him and said the finest thing about him that He could possibly say. There were a lot of mean things that He might have said and spoken the truth. But He complimented him on his honesty. Nathaniel was surprised and asked in amusement. "How do you know me?" Jesus said, I saw you when you were under the fig tree.

Nathaniel was converted at once. "Here is somebody that knows me thru and thru," he said to himself. "He knows my yesterday; He knows my today; He knows my tomorrow." Therefore, he answered in great enthusiasm; "Thou art the Christ." "Thou art the Son of God." In spite of prejudice, in spite of doubt born of prejudice, this man came into radiant certainty. This man is on his way to being an apostle. He is on his way to a future that will grow ever better through all eternity. For Christ said to him, "Thou shalt see greater things than this."

Here then is a message for every man. It is a message for the one who was reared in a Christian home and who has never questioned the Bible. It is a message for the man who has lost his buoyancy and who has gone away from the faith of his childhood. I stand in my place tonight to tell you that there is one who is able to snap your fetters and break your chains. I tell you of one who is able to save unto the
Come and see.

uttermost. The conduct of professing Christian men forced you to doubt this message. You may have doubts arising from a thousand causes but to them all I bring this answer, "Come and see."
'Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see.' — John 1:45-46

This is a story of the conversion of Nathanael. Nathanael had two names. The other was Bartholomew. We have no records of the deeds of this man, other than that he came to Jesus. But while we do not know what he did, we do know what he was. And that is vastly more important. The man himself must always be bigger than any deed that he does.

I

How was it that Philip came to seek Nathanael?

1. He was acting under the impulse that is native to every truly converted soul. The atmosphere in which we move quickly puts out the fire for most of us. The light by which we walk in our early days of fellowship with Jesus too often fades quickly into the light of common day. But as a rule the first impulse of one who has just found Jesus is to tell of Him to somebody else.

Some years ago, a man came forward in one of my services, who seemed rather unconcerned. I asked him if he had accepted Christ, and I told him how. He responded readily that he had. I explained the way of life to him, and he accepted with no more emotion, so far as I could see, than if we had been swapping knives. I went home, wondering if he understood. The next night I looked about at the beginning of the service and failed to see him. My hope of
the genuineness of his conversion grew less. At the end of the service, I found him with his hand on the shoulder of a friend, pleading with him to come to Christ. And I doubted no more.

2. Philip went for Nathanael because Nathanael was his friend. Being his friend he wanted to share with him. That is natural. If you find a new way to tie a tie that you think will improve it, you want to share it. Some years ago, at the close of a service, a splendid-looking gentleman, a graduate of Princeton, came forward and requested a private interview. I thought he wanted to talk of some religious problem, but he told me that I was getting bald-headed, and that he could tell me how to ward off the calamity. We had never seen each other before, but he had something that he thought was good that he wanted to share.

3. He went for Nathanael because he believed that of all the men he knew he would be most interested. No sooner had he found Jesus than he thought of his friend. "Here is a man," he said to him, "to whom Nathanael will be drawn. Here is one to whom he will give his whole heart. He is just that kind of man."

He was sure of Nathanael's interest because Nathanael was a good man. He was one of those devout souls that were looking for the consolation of Israel. That was a dark day. But it was not so dark as to be totally without hope of light. There were some like Simeon and Nathanael who were standing on tiptoe of expectancy. They believed that in a world that was God-made, something wonderful was likely to happen. This expectation was kindled and kept alive by a persistent study of the Bible, and by earnest and confident prayer.
Then, Philip was sure of Nathaneal's interest because he was such a sincere and honest man. Jesus called him an "Israelite without guile." He was like Jacob, after his transforming experience. For years Jacob had lived by his wits. He had been sharp and slippery. He was proud of his cunning. But one night he came to grips with God, and when he stumbled away the next morning, there was a light in his face that was never seen on land or sea. He had been remade. Crookedness had been taken out of him. He was no longer Jacob, but Israel. And Nathaneal was like this, a sincere man, an honest man, a man with that personality of heart which is the open doorway to the discovery of God. No wonder Philip went to see this man with high expectation.

II

What reception did Philip meet? He was at first quite disappointed. He expected to see the face of Nathaneal light up. He expected him to ask with eager interest: "Where is this Messiah? Take me to Him at once." But, instead, he threw cold water upon Philip's enthusiasm. He responded by a question. It was the equivalent of our slang term, "O, year!" -- "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" he replied.

There is no doubt that Nathaneal was keenly interested up to a certain point. What was it that quenched his interest? It was that word "Nazareth." When he heard that Jesus had come from Nazareth, that was too much. Nazareth had a bad reputation. Its reputation was so bad that it had aroused a deep prejudice in the heart of Nathaneal. He lumped all his inhabitants together and labeled them as bad. Therefore, when he heard that Jesus had come from Nazareth, his prejudice made it impossible for him to believe in Him. Now, when we
mention prejudice, we talk about a very common profession. You have yours and I have mine. Mine are not quite so bad as yours, for the simple reason that they are mine. Some of us are prejudiced against one thing, and some another. Some are prejudiced against the new deal; some against the Anti-saloon League; some against the Catholics; some against all foreigners; some against all colored folks; some against all preachers and all churches; some against all ecclesiastical costumes. I read recently of two men who might have been friends, but the author said the collar that the preacher wore built a wall between him and the man that he wanted to win.

As a rule, prejudice is bad. Though not necessarily wholly bad, it is close akin to a conviction. It is a kind of conviction that we reach without due regard to the facts. There are certain prejudices that many safeguard, like I have always been prejudiced against any drink that has alcohol in it. It has saved me from ever tampering in any way with the deadly stuff. Of course there is something narrowing about prejudice, but I am not sure that there is not more hope for one who is too narrow than one who is too broad. Banks are necessary to the making of a river, and convictions, also, to the making of a man. I shaved with a razor blade this morning, that had four sides to it, but the one I used was the most narrow. Some people are so broad that they have no cutting edge to them.

But the trouble with prejudice is that so often it is blind and deaf. It will not discriminate. Because there were some bad people in Nazareth, Nathaneal allowed himself to
believe that all of them were bad. I talked to a young woman some time ago, who had been greatly wronged by a preacher. She had, therefore, broken with the Church, and came to discredit all preachers. While in Washington, I knew a young woman of unusual, forceful character, who was exceedingly antagonistic to church and religion in general. She finally told me how that she had come to the altar as a girl of ten, and her father, who was a bit of a leader in the church, had come and taken her away. This had given her a prejudice; had made her hard and bitter.

III

How was Nathanael cured of his prejudice? When Philip came with his good news, and Nathanael gave his disappointing answer, what did his friend do? He did not abuse him. He did not tell him that he was a narrow-minded bigot who was unwilling to face the facts. Neither did he argue with him. He might have engaged in an argument and lost his friend and his religion as well. He rather gave him the sanest answer possible. He said: "Come and see."

This is the real test - the test of experience. My small boy used to ask of every new dish, "How does it taste?" There was no answer to that question. How does spinach taste, for instance? Mainly, like nothing, though that does not describe it. Does fire burn? Come and see. Does the law of gravitation operate? Try it out. There are some things that you cannot describe. You can only know them through experience.

What is grief? How does one feel as one looks into the face of his dead mother? You could only know by experience. What is it to be in love? What is it to hold your first-
born in your arms? What is it to be afraid? What is it to know and trust Jesus, and to feel the undergirding of His everlasting arms? We only get it through experience.

Now, the thing that saved Nathaneal was that his was the prejudice of an honest man. Therefore, he was willing to face the facts. "I used to have a friend at Harvard University who was brought up in an atheistic home. He was antagonistic to every kind of religion. One day I said to him, "Here is the gospel of John. The author says these things are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, and believing you might have life through His name. Are you willing to read it and examine the evidence?" And he gave an emphatic "No." In the main he was a most honest man, but he wasn't honest here. He loved his prejudice more than he loved the truth. That is too-often the case.

But Nathaneal was different. In spite of his prejudice he was willing to face facts. He was willing to try the matter again. He seemed to say to him, "If I find that this man to whom Philip is going to introduce me does not measure up, if he disappoints me, I can still come back to my old prejudice. It will keep while I am gone. I will certainly not lose anything by putting the matter to the test. I may gain everything."

So he followed Nathaneal into the presence of Jesus. When Jesus saw him, he complimented him. He said, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile." This seems to have startled Nathaneal, and possibly to have aroused his opposition. Is Jesus trying to flatter him? "Knowest Thou me?" is the none-too polite answer. And Jesus told him, and Nathaneal realized that he was in the presence
of one who knew him just as he was, and then and there he believed and said: "Thou art the King of Israel." When Jesus said, "Thou shalt see greater things than this; it was that Nathanael put his feet on that path that more and more unto the perfect day.

And now we come to your case and mine. "We have found Him of whom Moses in the law and prophets did write." That is the testimony, not simply of one, but "of an innumerable company that no man can number." Maybe you are in doubt. Maybe you have a prejudice. Maybe the Christians that you have known have grossly misrepresented Jesus. Then, come and see for yourselves. If He disappoints you, you have lost nothing. If he does not, you have gained everything.

When Ole Bull, the great violinist, was touring this country, he was eager for his fellow-statesman, Ericsson, to come and hear him play. But Ericsson claimed that he had no ear for music; he was a scientist; he was a man of wrenches and belts. But at last the great violinist almost compelled Ericsson to hear him. And the man with no ear for music listened in amazement, and he called for more and more. At last he said, "That is what I have been missing all my life." But he never knew till he tried it out. "All Jesus asks you is just to give Him a trial. If you do that, your testimony will be like that of him, whose grave bears this epitaph: "Here lies one who was satisfied with Jesus."
"Can anything good come out of Nazareth?"

—John 1:46

The man who said that was Nathaniel, also known as Bartholomew. We know very little about this man. We know very little that he said. We know still less that he did. Just what contribution he made to the twelve, just how much he helped forward the cause of his Master in that distant day and through the centuries no one knows but the Master Himself. But we do know something even more important. We know the kind of man that Nathaniel was. We are able to get a rather clear view of the face of the man himself.

When Philip, who was his friend, went to tell him about Jesus, he went of course in part because of his natural longing to share. If one has learned a better way of tying his tie, than his friend knows. He wants to share that knowledge. Years ago I was preaching at Bloody Herrin in Illinois. At the close of the service a fine looking gentleman, a Princeton man, came forward and said, "I would like to see you privately." I was sure he desired to discuss some religious problem. But when we were alone in the pastor's study, he looked me over critically and said, "You are going to get bald-headed. I can tell you how to keep your hair." He was not trying to sell me anything. His remedy was absolutely without money and without price. He was prompted, as was Philip, by a desire to share.

Then Philip went to his friend Nathaniel because he believed this friend of all others would be most interested. "Here is a man who will welcome my message with wide open heart." Of all the men of Philip's acquaintance, I am sure he could think of no one who would listen to his story so eagerly and gladly as Nathaniel. Therefore, he hurried to him with this thrilling announcement, "We
have found him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

I

Why was Philip so sure of his reception? Because he knew what kind of man Nathaniel was. What kind of man was he?

1. He was a man of beautiful and transparent honesty. Jesus, who had a seeing-eye, spoke of Him as without guile. There was no deceit in him. He was inwardly honest. Often we speak of common honesty as if it were as plentiful as blackberries. But such is not the case. Honesty such as that possessed by Nathaniel is none too common. It is as rare as it is beautiful. "Behold," said Jesus, "an Israelite, in whom is no guile!"

This word takes us back across the far spaces of the years to that crisis in the life of Jacob. For years Jacob had lived by his wits. For years he had been a trickster and a schemer. He had stolen his brother's birthright. Then he had stolen his brother's blessing. Then he had fled to his uncle Laban where he managed partly by hard work and partly by shrewd scheming to get the better part of his uncle's flocks. Now he is on his way back to the land of his nativity. He has not only been dishonest, but he seems to have got away with it. He has been cunning enough to gather grapes of thorns and figs of thistles. But here an antagonist meets him who is his best friend. There is a long struggle. "Let me go," says this strange foe, "for the day breaketh." "I will not let thee go," answered Jacob, "except thou bless me." Then comes a question that made Jacob's face grow hot with shame. "What is thy name?" "I am a crook," answers Jacob. "I am inwardly rotten. I am full of insincerity." "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed." Nathaniel was a spiritual prince.

2. Philip was not only sure of an eager reception because he was so honest, but because he was an eager seeker after truth. Philip knew him for a man of
prayer. He knew that he was living in the expectation of the coming Messiah. Nathaniel belonged to that select company who through the years have believed in a world God-made and God-rulled something magnificent is likely to happen. That was the faith that distinguished all the great prophets. They lived on tip-toe of expectancy. They were constantly taking their places upon the watchtower to see what grand thing God was going to do.

This brash expectancy was an outstanding characteristic of the Early Church. They expressed it in a single word, "Maranatha!" It is a word so rich in hope that the translators did not undertake to put it into English. It means, "The Lord is coming." This word became a way of greeting among the early Christians. When they met instead of saying, "Good morning!" they said, "Maranatha!" Often it was a pass-word to their secret meetings. When one knocked at the door of the house of worship, all he had to do to gain admission was to say, "Maranatha!" Sad to say, we have lost some of this expectancy. Part of this has come about because Jesus did not come as the early saints expected Him to come. They were looking for the return of a physical and visible Christ. They could never get away from the conviction that a visible Lord could do more for them than an Invisible. They could never do this in spite of the fact that Jesus said the opposite. He said, "It is expedient for you that I go away." We can readily see that a physical Christ has limitations while a spiritual Christ has none. But because Christ did not come back visibly, some have ceased to expect Him at all.

Maranatha ought to be more upon our lips and certainly more in our hearts. When these early saints prayed and looked for the return of their Lord, they were entirely right. They were only wrong about the method of His coming. Jesus is constantly coming today to the individual, to the church, to the nations. He comes in judgment. If we refuse to enter into His will, Any man with eyes to see can recognize the fact that the judgments that are upon us today as a tortured world are because we have refused His way of life. Where we give Him a
chance, He comes in mercy. He will come to you and to me, to all of us, the moment we are willing to give Him welcome. We ought, therefore, to live as did Nathaniel—in expectation.

3. But with all these fine qualities Nathaniel was not perfect. He was a man with a prejudice. When, therefore, Philip broke in upon him with the greatest good news ever told—"We have found him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth"—Nathaniel did not thrill. Though this was the news that he longed to hear above all others, though this was the answer to his dearest hopes and dreams, the sermon was perfect but for one word. That word was "Nazareth". Nathaniel did not like Nazareth. Just why we do not know. Maybe a man from Nazareth had tricked him in a trade. Maybe he had known some very evil men who came out of that city. Be the reasons what they may, he was so highly privileged that he came very near throwing the best sermon ever preached out the window because of one word that the preacher said that he did not like.

II

Now when we come to talk about the man with a prejudice we are talking about ourselves. Almost all of us have our pet prejudices. Of course, mine are not quite as bad as yours because they are mine. Yours are not quite as bad as mine because they are yours. But few of us are entirely free. We are very prone to reach our conclusions without due regard to the facts. That you know is what prejudice is. It is pre-judging, making up our minds before we have suitable basis on which to make our conclusions.

Now I am ready to confess that there are some prejudices that might prove wholesome. For instance, I was brought up in an old-fashioned home where liquor was not tolerated. My father and mother were antagonistic to everything that had alcohol in it. Our farm was not without snakes but we never resorted to this precautionary measure of keeping liquor in the house. As a boy I hated it. If you had asked me why I could not have given you an intelligent reason. I knew
nothing about its chemical analysis. I did not even know that it was a depressant rather than a stimulant. Yet even this prejudice more than once stood me in good stead.

For instance, as a youth of fifteen I made my first visit to the city. I had never seen an electric light in my life. I had never seen a street car. I had never spent a night at a hotel. I was as green as anything that ever grew in the fields. Rambling about the city, it was my misfortune to come upon a group of ruffians from my village. I went with them because I was so utterly lost and alone. They were drinking. By and by as they became intoxicated, they began to insist upon my drinking. At last they were on the point of resorting to personal violence. But I think I should have died rather than take a drink not from deep-seated reason so much as from a deep-seated prejudice.

Then there are values in whose favor I am prejudiced. In my home the minister was a frequent visitor. He was a choice and honored guest. My parents were church people. They loved and honored the church, attended it themselves, and took their children with them. I early became prejudiced in favor of the church. As a lad if I heard one slander the church, I felt he was slandering me and those I loved. My indignation grew hot against him. If one spoke well of the church, I felt that he was defending my friend. Had you asked me why I was so friendly to the church, I could not have given you as intelligent a reason as I think I could give tonight. But I had a bracing prejudice in its favor.

But while all prejudices may not be bad, generally speaking, prejudice is not an asset but a terrible liability. It has a way of stopping our ears and blinding our eyes. It has a way of keeping us from seeing the truth not because we cannot but because we will not. Years ago I taught school in a community where almost everybody belonged to that branch of the Christian church that we called Campbellite. They were of the non-progressive, anti-organ type. They were also most ardent Democrats, but there was one exception. The most outstanding man in the community was a Methodist and a Republican. Naturally he met with much
criticism. One day he said with emphasis, "I am a Methodist and a Republican. I would be both if I knew I was wrong." He was a bit prejudiced.

I met a man once who had had a partnership with one who was prominent in the church. His partner had been not only a member of the church but an office-bearer. But in spite of his high profession, this man proved dishonest. The firm went broke and the churchman got the better part of the money. So what? This man who had been victimized came to discredit all churchmen. He became hotly antagonistic against the church. He became bitterly rebellious against God. He allowed the sin of one man to blind him not only to the goodness of other men but even to the goodness of God.

It is amazing how nearly Nathaniel came to allowing his prejudice to work his undoing. "We have found him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth," said Philip. "Nazareth? Nazareth?" answered Nathaniel, "do you mean to tell me that your prophet came from Nazareth? It is not possible. I do not believe it. All in Nazareth I have seen have been hypocrites and liars. I'll have nothing to do with your prophet. Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?"

III

What reply did Philip make? He did not shake his fist in his friend's face and tell him he was prejudiced. He did not argue with him. He invited him to put the matter to the test. "Come and see," he said. That was altogether sane. He believed in his friend's honesty. He knew that for Nathaniel to question the possibility of a prophet coming from Nazareth would be dishonest unless he was willing to put the matter to the test.

"Come and see,"—that is the only real test of any matter. Our small boy used to vex me by asking this question whenever a new dish was offered, "How does it taste?" It is impossible to answer such a question with accuracy. How, for instance, does spinach taste? Well, it tastes to me a bit like the essence
of nothing. But I do not claim that that is an adequate answer. The only way to know is to taste it. How does it feel to have your heart broken? How does it feel to be in love? How does it feel to hold your first-born in your arms? There is only one way of knowing and that is through experience. Is Jesus Christ the Man He claims to be and can He do all He claims to do? There is no way to find out for yourself without trying Him.

When I was a student at Harvard, I had a good friend who claimed to be an atheist. He had been brought up in a home where there was no God. He was a delightful and brilliant young chap though one of the most wretched men I have ever met. One day I took up the Gospel of John and read to him this verse, "These things are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, and that believing ye might have life through his name." I said, "Here is the evidence. Will you examine it as you would any other evidence and act accordingly?" He answered, "No." In so answering he indicated a lack of sincerity.

If somebody comes to me and accuses you of having done some shameful or dishonest deed, I will then and there come to mistrust you. But suppose you find it out and come to me and say, "There is a way that you can know the facts. Before you accuse me suppose you take time to know what the facts are." If I go on with my accusation without an investigation, I am dishonest. I am lacking in sincerity. This is just as true as it would have been had Nathaniel dismissed Jesus without an investigation simply because He came from Nazareth.

The saving characteristic of Nathaniel then is genuine honesty. He was highly prejudiced against Jesus. He did not see how any decent man could come out of such a place to say nothing of the Messiah. Yet he gave himself a chance to learn the facts. He knew that if he investigated and found out that Jesus was an imposter, he could come back and take up his old prejudice and hold it. Our prejudices will always wait for us while we investigate. They will be waiting when the investigation is over. Nathaniel came to see.

With what results? When Jesus saw him He complimented him, "Behold an
Israelite in whom is no guile." The answer of Nathaniel indicates surprise.
It also indicates a question—"Is this man trying to flatter him? Is he trying
to catch him with fulsome compliments? Nathaniel is not to be taken in in this
fashion. Therefore, he does not thank the Master. He rather answers with a hint
of indignation in his voice, "Whence knowest thou me?" Then Jesus said, "Before
Philip called you, when you were under the fig-tree in your place of prayer
I knew you." Then Nathaniel answered, "Thou art the king of Israel."

Thus Nathaniel found the answer to his heart's desire. Thus he became a
Christian. Thus he reached spiritual certainty. Thus countless millions have
reached it since then. Any man who is willing to put the matter to the test
can know for himself. Years ago I spent an entire evening with a young married
man who lived close to my church. This man was a rather clever young chap who
posed as an atheist. He loved to hear himself argue. I was younger then than
I am now and so argued with him until it was time to leave. Then after a word
of prayer I went home feeling that my efforts had been a failure.

The next Sunday I found that they had succeeded thus far—the young fellow was
at church. Not only so, but when the invitation was given to surrender to Christ
he came forward. After I had received him into the church his friends gathered
about him to congratulate him. But he seemed a bit bewildered and embarrassed
by their congratulations. He said, "Don't misunderstand me. I am a stranger to
Jesus Christ. But you said that if I would be willing to do His will I would
come to know Him. That is the basis on which I have come. I am willing to sur-
render to Him though as yet I have not found Him." "That is all right," I
answered. "In surrendering you have done all that I asked you to do because it
is all that God asks."

His wife told me the remainder of the story. When he reached home, he said
to her, "Can you pray?" "I'll do my best," she replied. "Then let us get down
on our knees and pray." She said, "I began in a blundering way, but I had not
uttered but a few words until he took it up. He prayed with freedom and power.
When he rose from his knees, there was a light of a great assurance in his face. He had come to know. Do you believe there is anything for you in Jesus at all? Would you like to know? If you would like to know enough to give Him a chance, you will be sure. Can anything good come to you tonight from our Lord? My final word is this—"Come and see."
"But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came."

---John 20:24

We are indebted to the author of the Fourth Gospel for all we know about Thomas. In the first three Gospels he is only a name. In the Fourth he becomes a pronounced personality. I somehow feel that I know him almost as well as if he had been my neighbor. John certainly has a genius in character delineation. In a few brief touches, he takes a man who was nothing more than a name and makes him into a vital creature whom we cannot but admire.

In the study of this very human man, I am taking a text that comes at the end of his life rather than at the beginning. But this fact will not prevent us from getting a view of the life of Thomas as a whole. This text emphasizes a trait of character that is emphasized by every scene in which Thomas appears. Let us read, therefore, again this word in the twentieth chapter of St. John: "But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came."

I

Who is this missing man? Jesus has already been crucified. The little group who were once so confident and joyous in the fellowship of their Master are now all but crushed. The One whom they had loved with such passionate devotion has died a shameful death. His body lies in a tomb. A great stone is across the mouth of that tomb, marked by a red Roman seal. But they have passed through too much together to renounce it all at a single moment. Therefore, they gather together these friends of Jesus after His death.
But when they had come together in the upper room, there was one man who was missing. Two chairs were vacant. But they did not expect one to be occupied. Judas had already gone out into the silence. But one man was expected that did not come. Who was he? His name was Thomas. Thomas was a friend of Jesus. Not only so, but he was one of the twelve. He had been drawn into the inner circle. But when the ten got together for a service, he was conspicuous by his absence.

That, of course, is a familiar picture. There are always those who are missing. When the friends of Jesus gather together for worship, there are those who fail to come. Sometimes they fail so persistently that the community ceases to respect the church or to regard it as of any real value. It is safe to say that no community ever loses respect for a church until the membership of that church loses respect for itself. Thomas was among the missing.

II

Why was Thomas missing? It was not because Thomas was indifferent. Thomas had loved his Master with passionate devotion. He cared, and cared deeply, for Jesus and the things for which Jesus stood. Of course, there are those today who fail to attend church because they are indifferent. They have ceased to care. Some of them, perchance, have never cared. Others have once been interested enough to stand at those altars and assume the vows of the Church but little by little the fire has gone out. Little by little, they have forgotten. Today, from sets they have become liabilities. They no longer care. But this was not the case with Thomas.

Nor did Thomas stay away because he did not wish to be bothered. He did not remain at home because he wanted to hear Charlie McCarthy or some other star program that was being broadcast from Damascus. Ours is a religion of the cross. Some of us shirk it because we do not like
to put ourselves to any trouble. We share in some measure the sentiment of one of the most contemptible characters that Shakespeare ever drew.

He was a man who wanted to pose as a creature of great courage, but he was unwilling to pay the price. He excused himself with this brawny word:

"But for these vile guns, I too would have been a soldier."

Why, I repeat, was Thomas missing? It was not because he had found satisfaction elsewhere. It was not because he felt no need. There was not a more needy man in Jerusalem. He remained away because he had lost heart and lost hope. There was not even a horizon in his life where he might hope for a dawn. "Thomas, aren't you going to Church tonight? I saw Peter, James, and John going. Why not join them? Jesus might manifest Himself?" Thomas would have glared at you and answered, "No, I am not going. The reason I am not going is that Jesus is dead. If I thought I might meet Him, of course, I would go. I would crawl over red-hot coals to go if I saw any chance of that. But Jesus is dead I tell you. I heard that awful cry on the cross—'My God! My God! Why hast Thou forsaken me?' I saw Him bow His head and dismiss His spirit. There is no use."

Perhaps that is the reason many folks stay away from church. They have ceased to expect anything when they come. They have been disappointed. Sometimes the minister has let them down. Sometimes the hungry sheep have looked up and have not been fed. Having come, they have gone away with a sickening conviction that we do not quite possess what e claim. They have come saying, "Sir, we would see Jesus." But in some fashion we obscured Him rather than revealed Him, and they have turned away in disappointment.

Yet, as trivial as it may seem, church attendance is at once a privilege and an obligation. Christianity is a social religion. It has been pointed out that the first commandment may be kept by an isolated individual.
"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, mind, and strength." But the second commandment can only be kept in fellowship with others. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." The only possible way to do this is to know your neighbor and have fellowship with him. Then, Jesus has given promises whose fullness we claim only as a group. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in their midst." That is a promise for those who attend church.

This sense of hopelessness that kept Thomas away from this little service among the ten is one of his outstanding characteristics. Thomas was one of those unfortunate souls that clung about the shady side of life as ivy about an old ruin. He was always expecting the worst. Anything so wonderful as the promises of Jesus were for him too good to be true. He loved Jesus, clung to Him in spite of all his misgivings, but he went on looking on life's gloomy side.

Take this scene: Jesus is comforting his friends with a promise of a reunion beyond death. "Let not your heart be troubled. Ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself that where I am there ye may be also; and whither I go ye know, and the way ye know." Here gloomy Thomas broke in. "Lord, we do not know where you are going. We do not even know your destination, and how can we know the way?" In spite of the words of Jesus, Thomas could not but expect the worst.

Here is another scene that speaks to the same purpose. Jesus has decided to return to Jerusalem. On his last visit, the Jews have tried to stone Him, but now, in spite of a known danger, he is going back. His friends try to warn Him. "Master, the Jews have sought to stone Thee,
and goest Thou thither again?" But what says Thomas? "Let us also go that we may die with Him." It is typically gloomy. The whole venture is going to end in death, but it is grandly heroic too in spite of the gloom. "Even if it does end in death, I, for one, will not shrink from it. I am willing to die with Him." Thomas, then, was a man gloomy by temperament, but with a heroic and loving heart. Because he had given up hope, he cut himself off from the service of the church at a time when he needed them most.

III

What did he miss by not being present? Sometimes folks do really miss something by not attending church. Of course, there are those who do not believe this, but it is true none the less. By remaining away from this service, Thomas robbed himself, robbed his fellows, and disappointed his Lord. What then did he miss?

1. He missed the realization of the risen Christ. Jesus manifested Himself to those at that little service. He has done so times without number since then. He has promised to do so wherever hungry hearts gather together. There was no man in Jerusalem that longed for spiritual certainty more than Thomas. He had despair of receiving it, but he would have received it if he had only had faith enough to be present. Many despondent souls have come into God's house to go away with their burdens lifted, singing in their hearts. "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord."

2. Thomas, by missing seeing Jesus, missed the peace and gladness that the vision of His face and sense of His presence always bring. There was not a sadder man in the city. There was not one that was more restless
and worried and feverish. Had he only attended this service, the light of a great gladness would have shone in his heart. He would have gone away in the possession of a peace that passeth all understanding. But he missed this because he was not there when Jesus came.

3. Then, Thomas missed the privilege of getting his old job back. The ten that were present in this little service were recommissioned. When Jesus died, everything crashed. Up to that time, they had been engaged in the greatest of all enterprises. They had been working with Him in the bringing in of the Kingdom of God. But with His death, they lost their job. Life no longer had any high and holy purpose. But when they met Him once more, He said, "As the Father hath sent Me, even so send I you." And they went away with the sense of the fact that they had been recommissioned. They felt that after all life was a priceless something. But Thomas missed this, because he was not with them when Jesus came.

4. Finally, not only were these ten recommissioned, but they received a new fitness for the great task that they were to undertake. It was a foretaste of the great power that was to come at Pentecost. "He breathed on them and said, 'Receive ye the Holy Spirit!'" How close they came to Him in that intimate little service among the ten! They came so close that He breathed on them. Thus, they were gladdened, recommissioned, reinforced. They went out to face life with a new and high enthusiasm, and when they met gloomy Thomas, they said, "We have seen the Lord!" Missing seeing Jesus, Thomas had nothing to give. What a help he might have been if he had only been in this little service! What a thrill he would have brought when His fellows saw the joy of the Lord looking out from His troubled eyes! But this he failed to receive; he had nothing to give. Therefore, I repeat, he was a disappointment to himself; a
disappointment to his friends, and a disappointment to his Master. When they told him their plan story, instead of being a help to them, he did his very best to put out their holy fire and to quench their joy.

Listen to these friends: "We have seen the Lord." Thomas turns on them almost angrily, "You are wrong," he seems to say with indignant emphasis. "It is impossible. I'll never believe it. Why, unless I should put my fingers in the nail of the hand and thrust my hand into His side, I'll not believe." By this Thomas meant to say that nothing in all the world could convince him that his crucified Master could ever live again. Therefore, for a whole week, Thomas went on hugging the black mantle of darkness about him.

IV

But even this gloomy man came into the light. Even this chronic doubter came to possess certainty. How did it come about?

1. Thomas deplored his doubts. There are some who seem to look upon doubt as an asset rather than as a liability. But that is not the case. I am aware that doubt may become a road to a larger faith. It may also become a gateway to hell. No man is the richer, for instance, because of his social doubts. If you believe that every man has his price, I do not congratulate you; I rather pity you. No man is the richer for his domestic doubts. If you doubt the members of your family, if you believe that your son is a rascal, that your daughter is not to be trusted, if you have a suspicion that your wife is disloyal, such doubts do not make for heaven. They make for hell. Thomas was a doubter. But he was not proud of the fact. Some folks seem to be proud of their doubts. They feel that by doubting, they are relieved of certain moral obligations that they wish to shirk. Thomas was a sad and honest doubter.
2. Being a sad and honest doubter, he was willing to be convinced. Informed that the sun rises in the east, he might have denied it. He might have told you emphatically it could not be so; but, having so affirmed, he would have added this: "But I'll give myself the advantage of the doubt. I will face the east at the hour appointed for the sunrise, and, if it really does rise, I will see it and confess it." When told by his friends that Jesus had appeared in their little service, he denied it with bitter emphasis. But when a week later they met for another service, Thomas was there. What volumes that speaks for his sincerity and his heart hunger! "I cannot believe it, but I am going to give myself the advantage of the doubt because it is so worth believing. If it is true, it is the most beautiful truth ever told."

Eight days after, the disciples were again within and Thomas with them. What then? What was the good of it? "Then came Jesus, the door being shut, and stood in their midst, and said unto them, "Peace be unto you." Then, He said unto Thomas, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing." Thomas did not need to reach forth his hand; he rather crumbled upon his knees in joyful realization, saying, "My Lord and My God." Tradition tells us from that experience he went out to give his life for the Master Whom he so intensely loved.

The roadway to certainty that Thomas traveled is one that is open for you and me. When I was a lad, I got lost in the woods in a terrible night of storm. I lost all sense of direction. Therefore, I dropped the reins upon the neck of my horse and rode for hours in a blinding storm. At last I looked up to see the faintest needlepoint of light upon the black bosom of the dark. I rode toward it because it was the
only speck of light in my darkened world. By and by I found that that light looked out from my mother's window, and that she was behind it, waiting for the home-coming of her boy. If you will begin where you are, if you will face the east however dark your night, one day the Sun of Righteousness will rise upon you with healing in His beams.
"But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came."

—John 20:24

As in the case of Philip and others, we are indebted to John's Gospel for practically all we know about Thomas. Without this author, Thomas would never have really lived as a personality. He would have been only a name. Even in this Gospel, he appears only three times. Yet through these brief glimpses we feel that we know him almost as well as if he had been a personal friend. He is called "Thomas, the twin." Whose twin he was it is impossible to say. As his name generally comes next to that of Matthew, some scholars have concluded that he and Matthew were twin brothers. Supposing that to be the case, there were three sets of brothers among the twelve. But this is only speculation.

There is one fact about Thomas, however, that is beyond controversy. This twin was a born pessimist. He clung to life's darker side as naturally as ivy clings about an old ruin. By nature he seems to have doubted whatever had any sunlight in it. The hopeful things of life were for him just too good to be true. He seems to have been a pessimist by temperament. He persistently looked at the whole instead of at the doughnut. Given the choice of the lesser of two evils, he seemed naturally to have believed in the greater. I think one reason that he was so drawn to Jesus was that the Master brought him some relief from his persistently gloomy outlook on life.

I

Look now to the text. I am beginning at the end of Thomas' story rather than at the beginning. "But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with
them when Jesus came." Here is the scene: The Master has been crucified. For every one of the disciples that was the final tragedy. The bottom has dropped out of everything. There was not even a horizon in their lives, where they might hope for a dawn. But they still assemble in their upper room. They have gone through too much together to turn away from it all right at once.

Now when they came together, there was one pew that was vacant. Who should have occupied that pew? Who was the missing man? It was not the shrewd spider, Annas. It was not the politician Caiaphas. It was not compromising Pilate. It was not even Judas. This broken man had already flung himself out of life by his own hand. We, therefore, expected none of these.

Who then, I repeat, was missing that his fellows expected? Who was it that failed to carry his part of the load? Who was it that failed to meet his responsibilities? Who was it failed to claim his high privilege? Answer—Thomas. Thomas was a follower of Jesus. He was one of the twelve. He was a member of the official board. His fellow disciples had a right to count on his presence. But when things got dark and when every man was needed, Thomas was not there. This story of Thomas has an emphatic word to say on the importance of church attendance. It is important to others. It is important to ourselves. It is important to the Master.

Not only was Thomas missing, but he was missing at the most unfortunate time. Of all the services to have missed, this was the one that Thomas most needed. When was it that Thomas failed to attend church? "Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came." He was not absent simply when the preacher had not prepared his sermon and when neither he nor the congregation prayed and the service was as cold as an icicle and as dry as Sahara. Thomas was not with them when Jesus came. At that glad hour when the Master made good His promise of manifesting Himself to His friends, Thomas was away. How tragic!
II

Why, I wonder, was Thomas missing? Why when his friends gathered together for worship was he not among them? There are some very common excuses that I am sure Thomas would not have made. "Thomas, why did you not attend service this Easter Sunday night? Why were you not present at that hour from which all other hours have taken on new meaning?"

To begin Thomas did not stay away, because he was indifferent. He was absent not because he had ceased to care. He had loved his Master with passionate devotion. He loved Him still. Of all the twelve there was not a man, I daresay, who would have gone further and gone more eagerly than Thomas, if he had had any faith that Jesus was coming. He was, therefore, not absent because he did not care.

No more was he absent because he had become interested in other matters and had found satisfaction for the needs of his life in other directions. Thomas was not satisfied. Thomas was not joyful. Had you searched every heart in Jerusalem you would not have found one fuller of sadness, you would not have found one more utterly broken than the big, roomy heart of Thomas. He was not staying away, therefore, because he was satisfied with husks that the swine ate. Few stay away from our services for that reason. The truth is that nobody has found satisfaction for the hungers of his heart until he finds them in Jesus Christ. He is the Bread of Life and all men are hungry until they find Him.

Neither did Thomas stay away because he could not be bothered. There are many easy-going souls who would like to be helpful. They would rejoice in making a worthwhile contribution to their church and to their fellows. But it is simply too much trouble! They would like the usefulness that comes from a vital religious experience, but it simply comes too high. These remind us of one of the most contemptible characters in Shakespeare. This creature desired to be thought heroic without paying the price of heroism. Therefore, he said, "But for these vile guns I too would have been a soldier." Thomas was not absent because it was too much trouble to attend.
No more was Thomas missing because he had made up his mind to attend, but just as he was opening the door some friends came over to listen to the radio to hear the latest program from Damascus, or to have a game of bridge. How often church people allow themselves to be kept from church by their unchurched neighbors. If the next time your neighbor comes over to see you Sunday evening, you will say to him, "I am just starting for church. Come and go with me, and we will have a delightful visit on the way and we can continue it when we get back," such an attitude will do either one of two things. It will convince your neighbor of your spiritual earnestness in such a fashion as to draw him the closer to you, or it will at least convince him that Sunday evening is not the best time to call.

Why, I repeat, was Thomas absent? He was absent because he had absolutely lost heart and lost hope. He had always looked on life's darker side. The first time he comes upon the scene is connected with the story of Lazarus. Jesus has announced His intention of returning to Jerusalem. The disciples remind Him that the Jews there had sought to stone Him. Therefore, it seems to them it would be very unwise to expose Himself to such danger again. But Thomas comes forward with this word that is as heroic as it is hopeless, "Let us also go that we may die with him."

Yes, Thomas was certainly a pessimist. He seems surely to have been born on the dark of the moon. He sees nothing ahead for his Master but death. Yet he loves Him enough to be willing to die with Him. His pessimism was born of his doubt, but doubter that he is, he is willing to risk his life. Some of us are not willing to risk very much even on our faith. This man loved his Master well enough to die for Him though he saw no hope of the dawning of a better tomorrow.

The next scene is about a table where Jesus has just taken His last meal. He is now telling them that the impending separation is not going to be forever. "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will
come again, and receive you unto myself: that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know." Thomas broke in with almost brutal bitterness, "Lord, you are dead wrong," he seems to say. "We do not know where you are going. At least I don't. And since I don't know where you are going, how can I know the way?" He is his same pessimistic self.

Now if Thomas was pessimistic in these two scenes, his pessimism is certainly not surprising when we come to the final scene. Jesus has been crucified. Night utter and complete has settled over the world of Thomas. I met him on the street. "Thomas," I said, "I saw your friends on the way to church a little while ago. Are you going? They might meet Jesus you know." Then Thomas glared at me. No, I am not going. Why should I go? Jesus is dead. I was by when they arrested Him. I attended His sham trial. I saw Him scourged. I heard that bitter cry that I will hear forever—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" You think I would not go if I thought I could see Him? I would crawl across the world on red hot coals for that privilege. But there is no use. Jesus is dead." He remained away because he had lost heart and had lost hope. I wonder how many others are staying away for that same reason.

III

Did Thomas miss anything by not attending? Yes, he missed a great deal.

1. He missed the realization of the fact that Jesus was alive. While Thomas was brooding over his despair and nursing his broken heart, while he was facing the long gray days ahead that he was sure he would have to walk alone, Jesus was already alive. He had already broken the bonds of death. He was eagerly waiting to reveal Himself to those who had eyes to see Him. When the ten came together, therefore, we read that Jesus came and stood in the midst. They became sure of their risen Lord. Thomas missed this assurance because he was not there.

2. Failing to see Jesus, he failed to find the gladness and the peace that his presence brought to those who did see Him. Listen to the story: "Then were
the disciples glad when they saw the Lord." Their gladness knew no bounds. The saddest man in Jerusalem at that time was Thomas. But he might have shared their gladness if he had only been present. Not only did they find gladness, but they felt peace. Jesus said unto them, "Peace be unto you." Meantime the heart of Thomas was as restless as a sea whipped by a tempest. Thomas might have had peace only he was missing when Jesus came.

3. Then Thomas missed the privilege of getting his old job back transformed and transfigured. The ten were recommissioned at this meeting. Jesus said unto them, "As my Father hath sent me into the world, even so send I you into the world." When Jesus died these men lost their jobs. They had been out on a great enterprise. They were dreaming of world conquest. But with the death of Jesus life lost its meaning and its purpose. They felt themselves forced to go on living when they had nothing left for which to live. But through this meeting with Jesus they were recommissioned. Life recovered its meaning and purpose and far more. Thomas missed this because he was not with them when Jesus came.

4. Not only did Thomas miss being recommissioned as were his friends. He missed the equipment for the performing of his high task. His friends were not only recommissioned but re-equipped. "He breathed on them and said, Receive ye the Holy Spirit." How close these ten came to their Master in this little service! "He breathed on them." Powerless, desperate, broken-hearted, Thomas needed this equipment of the Divine Presence. Nobody needed it more. Of course, you and I need it as much. But he missed it all because he was not with them. There are times surely when to fail to attend church is to miss riches unspeakable. So Thomas found it!

When these friends, coming from this service, meet gloomy Thomas, their radiant faces seem to him little better than a mocking insult. These friends were all a-thrill as if Jesus had never died. They cling to their desperate friend, saying, "We have seen the Lord." Thomas was not thrilled. He was half-angered. Therefore, he turned upon them indignantly. "Nothing of the kind!" he seems to say.
"You have not seen the Lord. He is dead. I do not believe a word of what you say. Before I would believe it, I would have to thrust my hand into his side and put my fingers into the very print of the nails." By which grim declaration Thomas meant, "Nothing in the world can convince me that Jesus is risen and that you have seen Him."

Yet even this incarnation of gloom and despair came out into the radiance of spiritual certainty. That is heartening for every one of us. Sometimes we get the idea that nobody ever had difficulty in coming to spiritual certainty but ourselves. There are many of us for whom faith is not easy. There are many for whom doubt seems to be as natural as to breathe. Let us bear in mind that such was the case of many in the long ago who won their way to spiritual certainty. Paul at one time was dead-sure that Jesus was an imposter. Yet he came to believe in Him well enough to die for Him. Thomas was as sure that Jesus was dead forever as he was sure of his own existence. Yet even he came to be sure of the risen Christ as he was of himself. This I say is heartening to all of us who find it easier to doubt than to believe.

IV

How then did Thomas, the doubter, and, therefore, the confirmed pessimist, win his way to spiritual certainty?

1. He was not proud of his doubts. I have heard folks speak of their doubts as if they were great assets. Now doubt may be a roadway to a larger faith. It also may be a roadway to hell. No man is necessarily richer because of his doubts. We are not richer because of our social doubts. When Elijah made up his mind that he was the only good man left in the world, he was not enriched by that conviction. He was weakened by it. If you believe that every man has his price, you are not to be congratulated, you are to be pitied. No more are we the richer for our domestic doubts. If you have lost confidence in the members of your own household, you have not come closer to heaven thereby but closer to hell. Naturally, if you have lost confidence you have become the poorer. Thomas was wise enough
to see this. Therefore, he was not proud of his doubts.

2. Then Thomas was an honest doubter. There are such who are dishonest doubters. A dishonest doubter is a man who, having come to doubt, seeks everywhere for material that will strengthen his doubts whether they are justified or not. There are those who feel that doubt relieves them of certain moral responsibilities. They question the value of the church. Therefore, they have no responsibility toward it. They are under no obligation to help carry on its work. Not only so, but they read those books and cultivate the friendships that will strengthen them in their doubt.

Not only do they seek to fortify themselves in their doubts, but they are equally zealous in refusing to expose themselves to influences that might strengthen their faith. Informed that the sun rises in the east, they say emphatically, "I don't believe it." Not only so, but when the sun does actually rise, instead of facing the east, they face the west and go quietly on with their denial. Thomas was not like that. "Thomas, we have seen the Lord. He met with us today." "I don't believe a word of it. I never will. I never can."

Then what? It did not end there. Listen: "And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them." There you see the honesty of the man. "Thomas," his friends said, "the last time we met, Jesus came and stood in the midst. You say you do not believe it. We do not blame you for that. It is hard to believe, but we are having another meeting Sunday night. Suppose you come along." "I will be there," said Thomas. And so when his fellows assembled, Thomas' pew was not vacant.

What was the result? What happened to this man who was willing, cost what it might, to know the truth? Here is what happened. "Then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God." The whole scene is but an illus-
tration of that emphatic word of Jesus, "If any man is willing to do his will, he shall know." Therefore, if you are in doubt, if you long for spiritual certainty, you will find it as millions of others as you walk the path of obedience.
"And when he had gone a little father thence, he saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the ship mending their nets. And straightway he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after him."

— Mark 1:19-20

Surprisingly little is known of the Apostle James. We know that he was a brother of John, doubtless the older brother. He was a member of the inner-circle of the friends of Jesus. Before his conversion he was in the fishing business with Simon and Andrew, and his brother, John. But this brother, who is the master mind behind the Fourth Gospel does not mention his brother, James. He takes other names among the apostles, that are names only, and makes them into personalities. But with the memory of his and his brother's early ambition, in his mind, he never mentions himself or James. But in spite of this fact, by certain hints, and by reading between the lines, we are, I think, able to form a pretty accurate opinion of the kind of man Jesus was.

I

What kind of man was he?

1. Our first hint comes from the name given him by Jesus. He, with his brother John, was called the "Son of Thunder." That does not mean, as we shall see later, that he was loud, but it does mean that he was strong, that he was a man of fire and passion. He had lightning in his heart, and dynamite in his whole personality. He was a man capable of vastly daring. He had a capacity for doing greatly wrong.
and for calling grandly, right. He was a man of great native
ability, of genuine personal power.

2. Then, we learn something of the calibre of the
man by the position he occupies among the apostles. Not one of
these intimate friends of Jesus was a weakling, but James was
among the first. He belonged to that inner circle, Peter,
James, and John, upon whom Jesus relied in a peculiar way.
His name is placed next to that of Simon, who was the ac-
knowledged leader of the group. There was a time, as we
shall see later, when he seems even to have eclipsed Peter
and to have become the outstanding leader of the early church.

3. Finally, James seems to have been the silent
man of the group. He was evidently not greatly given to
talk. Peter is talking all the time. He naturally said some
wise things, along with some very foolish things. But we do
not know of a single word that James ever uttered, except what
he said along with his brother. I think it was he or John
that was the spokesman, but it is impossible to say. Therefore,
I take it that we might call this man "James, the silent."

Now, we owe a great debt to the talkers, but we are
also indebted to the silent. Aaron was a fluent speaker, while
Moses was a mere stammerer. Yet, Moses was worth a thousand of
them. In the immortal drama of Job, you remember how Job lost
first his wealth, then, those that he loved, then, his health.
A broken and battered sufferer, he now sits upon an ash heap.
His three friends come to see him. They are struck dumb by his
terrible suffering. For a whole week, they sit with him in
utter silence. Had they kept this up, as another has said, they
would have made themselves immortal, but at last they broke into
words, poured the hot acid of a dry theological discussion into
the wounds of their friend, and thereby forever blasted their own reputations.

I heard the other day of a parrot who saw a big police dog sleeping close by his perch. Now, this parrot had a sense of humor. So, he flew down close to the dog and shouted: "Sick! sick! sick!" The dog leaped to his feet and looked about him. And the parrot laughed. The joke was so good that he tried it a second and a third time. At last his mistress returned to find him with his tail feathers plucked, and with his wing feathers awry. She tried to get the parrot to talk, but was answered by the wise statement that he had already talked too much. That is a common complaint.

When I was in Washington some years ago, I was called to conduct a funeral of a man who was not a member of my church. I knew nothing of him, and so I simply read the burial service and prayed. The next day I received a check for $50.00. I was sure that there was some story back of such an unusual procedure. So, I made a few cautious inquiries. What I learned was this: The year before, the man who sent me the check, had lost another brother. The preacher who held his funeral had preached an hour and a half. I was being paid for my silence. With a lesson like that before me, I should have learned more than I have learned.

James, the silent! What a blessing he must have been to his master! There are times when words may bring healing in their hands, but there are other times when their greatest eloquence is in silence. You have witnessed this in times of sorrow. Here is a mother, for instance, who has lost her laddie. A friend comes in and talks beautifully. But there seems little comfort in what she says. Another comes, who has
passed through a like experience. Her sympathy is too deep and
sweet to put into words. She simply puts her arms about the
sufferer and holds her close in silence. Then, the founts of
great grief are broken up in her heart, and she is strangely
comforted. When the heart of the Master was breaking, He must
have found vast consolation in this big, silent man who could
never utter words, but who could love and sympathize and act.

C. F. Finney in factory

How did James come to be a disciple? Of his first
introduction to Jesus, we can only guess. But I am sure that
we can guess with fair accuracy. When John the Baptist pointed
Jesus out as the Lamb of God, two men followed him, one was
Andrew, the other was John, who became the beloved apostle. John
tells us that Andrew at once went and found his brother, Simon.
But for fact that he has become too modest and humble to mention
his own name, he would doubtless have said that "I went at once
and found my brother, James." We may be almost absolutely certain
that James was first introduced to Jesus by his brother.

Then, later on, Jesus came and called these two
sets of brothers into his intimate fellowship. "Follow me,"
he said to Simon and Andrew, "and I will make you fishers of
men." His call was possibly the same to James and John. Notice
the content of this call.

1. It was a command. "Follow me." That means,
"Accept me; obey me, take me as your Lord and Master."
Yes, the command is the same to you and me. The conditions of
the discipleship have in no wise changed. There is no doorway
into the kingdom except the door of a personal surrender.
There is no way of being a Christian except by renouncing all
and following Jesus.
2. With this command, there was a promise attached. "I will make you." The man who puts his life into Christ's hands is remade. He is reborn. The new birth is a universal necessity. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." It is a universal privilege. It is one that must appeal to every man who knows his own needy life, for we all sob at times:

"Oh, for the man to arise in me,
That the man I am may cease to be."

How tragic it is, therefore, when we face life's supreme privilege with blinded eyes, as if it were something to be avoided.

"Must we be born again?" we answer reluctantly. "You may," Jesus replies. In the tale of Two Cities, there is a story, you remember, of a physician who was locked in a dark cell in the Bastille for many long years. At last the Bastille was stormed, and the prisoner was set free. But, so long had he homed in the dark, and so long had he lived under lock and key that he did not know what to do with light, or with freedom. So, the faithful old servant that took him in charge had to build a dark room for him and lock him up to keep him from going mad. He had no peace, then, this poor victim, till he heard the key turn in the lock, and knew himself shut in. Some of us are like that. But Jesus said, "You may be free. You may come out in the sunshine; I will remake you."

Not only does Jesus propose to make us, but He makes us into something finer and better. He is not come to take our laughter for tears. He is not come to take our strength for weakness. He is not come to take our morning for black night. He always touches life to transform it. He is always making a
colorless water of the worthless to break into the fine red wine of the worthwhile. "You have caught fish", he says, "up to now. After this, I will make you fishers of men." Catching fish is a thrilling experience, as every good fisherman knows. But catching men is as infinitely more so as man is higher in the scale of being than a fish. "Follow me," said Jesus, and I will remake you and give you the finest of all fine tasks.

And what response does James make? We do not know what he said, but we do know what he did: he left his task. He turned his back on his father with his hired servants. He seems to have belonged to a family that had more possessions than the average, but he turned his back on everything, and cast his lot wholeheartedly with this penniless Christ who had taken captive his very soul.

III

And what was the outcome?

1. Jesus made good His word. He remade James. His remaking was at once instantaneous in the process. The moment James responded to the call of Jesus, he was reborn. The new birth may take place in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye. But having been reborn, we are yet babes in Christ. James was far from perfect after his conversion, even as you and I. He was vastly intolerant as we can see from the fact that he joined John in his desire to call down fire from heaven and burn up those who differed from him. He was full of worldly ambition, as is evidenced by the fact that he desired the first place in the Kingdom. But, there came a time when self was slain under the shadow of the cross, and James became the
most self-forgetful of men.

2. Not only did Jesus remake James, but he used him as a fisher of men. He entered into the inner circle of the three most intimate friends of Jesus. He became the second strongest man among the apostles. In fact, as we read between the lines, there was a time when it would seem that he was the outstanding leader of the world. This is indicated by the fact that when Herod and the politicians became afraid and wanted to destroy the early church, they struck at the acknowledged leaders. They arrested James, and Peter, but the first one to be arrested, and the first one of the apostles to die for his faith was James. Jesus caught men in His lifetime; He is catching them to this hour.

IV

The story of the martyrdom of James is so briefly and almost brutally told, that it leaves us a bit bewildered. Listen to it: It is recorded in the 12th chapter of the Acts: "Now about that time, Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. And he killed James the brother of John with the sword." How brutally brief! How little the writer seems to make of it! How easy for Herod is, as another has said, as if a man should go walking in a field of daisies and should clip off the head of a daisy with his walking cane. "And he killed James, the brother of John, with his sword."

This brief record is all the more amazing in the light of the story of the martyrdom of Stephen. We are told all about that. We know the background. We know how Stephen looked. We know his last words. We know how he bore himself. We know about his funeral, but about this great silent man,
James, we know nothing at all. It is also striking to note the contrast between James and Peter. They were arrested about the same time. We read that prayer was offered of the Church for Peter; that in answer to the prayers of the Church Peter was set free. But if anybody prayed for James, we know nothing of it. Doubtless they did. But however earnest their prayers, the end of it all was that Simon Peter was set free, and James was led forth to die.

Almost equally remarkable was the contrast between James and his brother John. They entered the ministry at the same time. They were intimately associated in work for possibly some fifteen to seventeen years. But James was the first to die. And John was the last. What does it mean? It would seem to indicate that death is a very small matter looked at from life's other side. How trifling a difference it makes now whether James died a few years before John or not! How tame the prize at which we grab will look one day when we view it from some watchtower in eternity! James' story tells us that nothing matters greatly except rightness with God.

Some years ago, there were two young chaps in one of our colleges who loved the same girl. One of them was a broad-shouldered, breezy athlete, a thoroughly fine animal, attractive and magnetic, but with a vein of weakness in his moral fibre. The other was an under-sized fellow, not vastly attractive, but of sturdy moral worth. And the girl at first found it hard to choose between them.

Now, it so happened that this breezy attitude one had certain trust funds in his possession. The temptation to use them for his own gratification was too great, and he fell into dishonesty. Unfortunately it became the duty of his rival in love to expose him. He faced up to that duty with a heavy heart,
with the result that his one-time friend was sent to prison. Time passed on and the young man who had had to expose his rival married the girl, and became a professor in his Alma Mater. One cold, rainy night, the little professor was sitting in his study doing some reading. He felt a cool breeze at his back. He turned to find the window open, and a man facing him in penitentiary stripes, with a gun in his hand. It was his old rival.

"I have thought of this a thousand times," said the intruder, with a bitter smile, "I have rehearsed it at night in my bunk. You ruined my life. Now, I am going to ruin yours." "No," answered the little professor, as he looked at him with eyes strangely unafraid, "I did not ruin your life. You yourself ruined it when you became a thief. Nobody could ruin your life but yourself. Nobody can ruin my life but myself; you can kill me but you can't ruin my life."

The escaped convict glared at him. He was a bit bewildered, and taken back. Then, he continued, "How you have made me suffer, and how I have longed to make you suffer as you have made me, and that is what I am going to do now." "No, you are not," the professor answered. "It is impossible. You can kill me all right, and no doubt you will, but my suffering will not be like yours. Yours is the suffering of a guilty conscience. Mine will only bring an instant of agony, and then entrance into a fuller life. You are utterly powerless to make me suffer as you have suffered." And this little professor, along with James, had hold of that wealth of which neither life nor death can rob us. This same wealth is for you and me. Jesus will put it into our hands ever more and more, if we respond to this command, which is also an invitation, "Follow me!"