IN REMEMBRANCE

"And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me." Luke 22:19.

These words take us back across the far spaces of the years to where a young Man just out of his thirties with a handful of friends is gathered to celebrate the Feast of the Passover. This Feast commemorates the greatest event of their history and looks back to the birth of their nation. It is a sacred and hallowed feast that has been celebrated by their people for more than twelve centuries.

But to that this young Man does an amazing and revolutionary thing. Had these men not loved and trusted Him as they did, they would have been shocked beyond all measure. For here Jesus dares to displace the paschal lamb and substitute Himself. Then He puts a piece of bread in each of their hands and says, "This is my body. Do this in remembrance of me." When you do this in the coming years, it will no longer remind you of the exodus made by Moses. It will rather remind you of the exodus, the freedom, from the bondage of sin that I am to bring through My death on the cross."

-I-

The desire to be remembered is altogether human. First, we may desire to be remembered out of sheer vanity. We may also desire to be remembered because we love. This is the secret of Jesus’ desire. Because he loves us and because he knows that in remembering Him is our individual and social salvation, He says, "This do in remembrance of me."

-II-

Not only do we like to be remembered, but we like to remember. There are some memories that bring bitter pain and anguish. But we
would prefer our suffering in bitter tears to utter forgetfulness.

Here is a mother who has just lost a child. It would be no consolation to her were I to remind her that the years would soften her grief. It would bring only pain if I were to tell her that someday she would forget. She would feel that it was enough to be robbed for a little while of her child, but to be robbed of the memory of him would be a crown of sorrows.

That is the reason some of us have worthless treasurers. That is, they are worthless to anybody but ourselves. But they are priceless to us.

Sometimes it's a rose pressed in a book
Or a letter yellow with age
A chair in which nobody sits,
Toys with which nobody plays.

Sometimes when leaving a friend, we give that friend a small gift that we call a keepsake. It is to help them to remember us. When Jesus was going away, he put this beautiful service in the hands of His church as a keepsake. Thus giving he said, "Do this in remembrance of me."

- III -

What are we to remember? This sacrament focuses attention not on the life of Jesus, but on his death. "As long as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show forth the Lord's death." There are two views about this death to which I call your attention.

1. It was for you and for me. Here at a cost to Himself great beyond all our understanding, Jesus is doing something for us that we cannot do for ourselves. There is much about it that we do not understand. Perhaps we never shall understand. But this truth we can hug to our own hearts. He loved me and gave Himself up for me.

Now it is a moving experience to have had any creature love you
well enough to suffer for you even to the point of death. Years ago a hunter wounded a bear. When the enraged beast was pursuing the hunter so closely that he could almost feel his hot breath on his neck, his dog ran in and attracted the bear's attention. Of course, the bear made short order of the dog, but it gave the hunter time to kill the bear. He then picked up the dog and sobbed over him. It is a moving thing to have even a dog die for you.

The most moving event in history is this fact that the Lord loved us well enough to die for us. But this death is not the death of a martyr. It is the death of one who is the Son of God. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself."

2. The second fact to which I call your attention is this. It is a great privilege if you truly love to be able to help that beloved by suffering and even dying on their behalf. The heart of love breaks often, but it never breaks more tragically than when it has to see a dear one suffer without any ability to help. How many times such lovers have said in brokenness of heart, "If I could only take his place."

Now while Jesus shrank from the cross, He also embraced it and went to meet it with a song. Did you notice what the text said? "He took bread and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me."

Thanks for what? He had broken bread to meet the needs of the ones he loved. That is what the writer to the Hebrews said, that it was for the joy set before Him that He endured the cross despising the shame. It is a great privilege to love. It is a great privilege so to love that we can joyfully help others with sacrifice of ourselves.

The greatest book that Dickens wrote in my opinion is the TAIL OF TWO CITIES. The hero of the book is Sidney Carton. When he first
comes upon the scene, he is a drunkard renegade. We call him the
jackal after one of the most cowardly animals. But this man loved
a pure and queenly woman and that love little by little transformed
him.

Listen as he talks to her in one of his rare conversations with
her. "In the days to come when you see your fresh young beauty, think
now and then that there is a man who would give his life to keep a
life you love beside you."

That day came. The husband of the woman he loves is in prison.
Tomorrow, he is to be executed. Sidney Carton resolves to save him
by the giving of himself. "It is a far, far better thing that I
am doing," he says to himself, "than I have ever done before."
Then he sees written across his mind and the very skies the words
that he had heard at his father's funeral. "I am the resurrection,
and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall
he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."
With these words ringing in his soul, he had himself substituted for
the man who was going to die. The next morning when he had taken
his place on the cart, a little seamstress took her place at his side.
She had known the former prisoner, Charles Darnier, and she had come
to trust him. "I am not afraid, but little, Let me hold your hand
and it will give me courage." Then she looked into the face of her
friend and gasped. "You are dying for him?" she whispered. "Yes,
for him and for his wife and child. Hush." Then they rode together
to the place of execution, and those present declared that his was
the most peaceful face into which they had ever looked.

We remember today that the Christ of God has loved us well enough
to die for us. We are to remember also that he counted suffering
for those he loved a privilege. So may we. Thus losing our lives, we
find them.

"O Cross that liftest up my head,  
I dare not ask to fly from Thee;  
I lay in dust life's glory dead,  
And from the ground there blossoms red  
Life that shall endless be."
IN REMEMBRANCE

"This do in remembrance."

Luke 22: 19

These familiar words take us back across the far space of the years. It is Thursday evening and a young man, with a dozen friends is gathered in an upper room in Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of the Passover. This feast commemorates the emancipation of Israel from the bondage of Egypt. It gathers about it sacred solemnities. It has been celebrated now for twelve hundred years. It reminds those participating of that distant day when Israel began its long trek toward national greatness.

But a most amazing something happens at this particular feast. Jesus dares to push the pascal lamb out of its place. He makes himself a substitute. How revolutionary. How shocking it must have been to these devout Jews had they not believed so profoundly in their Master. As Jesus took bread and broke it and put a piece in each of the hands of his friends he did not say, "Take this in remembrance of the fact that you were bondsmen in Egypt, and that the Lord thy God delivered thee." He rather said, "This do in remembrance of me. Through me there has come a freedom vastly more important than the breaking of the chains of Egypt. Through me is coming deliverance not for the Jews only but for the whole world." How simply beautiful it all is, yet, how majestic. "This simple meal," said Jesus, "will help you to remember."
It is evident from this that Jesus longed to be remembered. Such a longing is quite natural and human. The thought that we shall all one day be forgotten by those who love us and those whom we love is not pleasant.

"For who to dumb forgetfulness of prey,

This pleasing, anxious being ere resigned

Lift the warm precincts of a cheerful day

Nor cast one longing, lingering look behind."

When John Keats ly dying in the early springtime of life he said pathetically, "Here lies one whose name is writ in water." He knew himself for a bit of a genius. He realized that he had a flock of skylarks in his soul. He knew that if he could only live long enough he could free those song birds and they could sing as long as men had a sky above their heads. He was dying before he had the privilege of spilling out the poetry that was pent up within. "Here lies one whose name is writ in water."

Some of you will remember that loose heap of stones that lie upon a promontory overlooking South Cheyenne Mountain. It was a request of Helen Hunt Jackson that she be buried at this spot when her day closed. She made a further request that those who visited her grave should lay two stones upon it and take one away with them. Thus she sought to guarantee to herself a growing monument. It was a rather pathetic appeal to those who should come after to remember her.

Of course there is much in such longings to be remembered that is purely selfish. Then Jesus asked that we remember him he is not doing so for the sake of himself, but for the sake of us. There is nothing selfish in his appeal. He knows that it is only as we remember him individually, as a Church, as a nation, that we can really live.
II.

Not only do we long to be remembered, but we delight to remember. This is certainly the case with every lover. If you really care for anybody, even were you to lose that one, it would be no comfort to you to be told that one day you would completely forget. Here is a mother who has just laid her child to rest. I am trying to console her. How shall I go about it? I may tell her that time is a wonderful softner, as it is. I may say, "You feel your loss keenly now, but as the weeks wear into months and the months into years, your anguish will grow less and less. By and by you will forget altogether. By and by your life will be the same as if your laddy had never been. As if you had never held him in your arms and kissed his baby lips."

"Ah," but you would say, "I do not wish to forget. To lose my baby is bad enough, but to lose the memory of it would be worse still." Thus we live usually hold fast to certain trifles that we call keepsakes. Sometimes it is nothing more precious than an old rose pressed away in a book. Sometimes a chair in which nobody sits anymore, sometimes a useless toy with which nobody plays.

The little toy dog is covered with dust
Though sturdy and staunch he stands;
The little tin soldier is red with rust
And his musket molds in his hands.
Time was when the little toy dog was new
And the soldier was passing fair;
And that was the time when our Little Boy Blue
Kissed them and put them there.

"And don't you go till I come," he said,
"And don't you make any noise,"
And toddling off to his trundle-bed
He dreamt of his pretty toys.
And while he was dreaming, an angel song
Awakened our Little Boy Blue;
Oh the years are many and the years are long,
But the little toy friends are true.

Aye faithful to Little Boy Blue they stand,
Each in its same old place;
Awaiting the touch of a little hand,
And the smile of a little face.
And they wonder as waiting these long years through,
In the dust of that little chair
What has become of our Little Boy Blue
Since he kissed them and put them there."

And, why, I wonder, has the little toy dog been kept, and why hasn't the little tin soldier been thrown away? Well, for one reason. It helps somebody to remember. There are times when they look at them. They recall a joyous Christmas. They recall the delight of a little boy who romped in life's bright morning long ago.

This beautiful service is a memorial service. Jesus gave it to us to help us to remember. He knows how forgetful we are. He knows how prone we are to forget our mercies, our friends, our loved ones. He knows how prone we are to forget God. And so he puts this lovely keepsake into our hands, saying, "This will help you to remember." Come back to it again and again. This do in remembrance of me."

It is all very simple and very beautiful. I have an idea that among the multitudes who have been dispossessed and robbed of their homes and their nations in these recent years, there are few, if they have escaped, who have managed to
smuggle out one treasure. Here is one such, a woman. She hasn't saved much from the ruins. She has lost husband and children. But she has brought along the flag of her country. She looks at it now and then, but it reminds her the nation that she loved and lost. It reminds her of those dearest to her that made that nation what it was.

Sometime ago there was a family back across the river that met one financial reverse after another. From wealth they had been reduced to poverty. Under the strain the husband's health failed, and he passed quickly to where "beyond these voices there is peace." The furniture had to be sold bit by bit. Even the carpets were taken from the floor. But there was one treasure that the wife would not sell. That was her wedding ring. She did not keep it because of its intrinsic value. She kept it because it helped her to remember. There are times when she looked at it that it recalled to her that distant day when loves sweet morning had its dawn. It became a symbol of the mutual devotion of two that had lived and laughed and suffered together. So our Lord is putting into our hands this morning a keepsake. He is saving to us, not sternly, but very tenderly, "Here is something that will help you to remember. This do in remembrance of me."

III.

What are we to remember as we come to this beautiful service?

1. We are to remember how Jesus used his life. He did not use it for himself. He used it for others. That is the way he lived, not for one day, but for all the days. That was the way he lived, not in some great crisis, but in every common-place hour. His complete self-giving on Calvary is no more complete than his self-giving every hour of his life before he reached Calvary. As we come this morning we are remembering that this Jesus loved us well enough to die for us. We are to remember his love and the love of God. That here he is re-
vealing God to men.

2. As we receive these symbols of the broken body and shed blood of our Lord, we are to remember how desperately earnest was Jesus in his conflict with sin. He hated evil and hated it to death. We are to remember that sin must be crucified in our lives even as it was in his.

3. We are to remember that through these symbols of life laid down, Jesus is giving us his very self. That is what he said to those friends of his in the long ago. "This is my body, this is my very self, that is given for you." He offers us all that he is. This bread and wine were the daily diet of the people among whom Jesus lived. As he offers them to us he is offering himself as the bread and drink by which we live. As we are sustained by our daily food so we are to be sustained by receiving him as the Bread of life and as the Water of life.

4. Finally, we are to remember that the satisfaction for the hunger of our hearts and the new strength that comes to us as a result of this Communion is to be used not simply for ourselves but for others. Remember that Jesus no more had his cross than we are to have ours. "Bear ye one anothers burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ." That was the law by which he lived. That is the law by which we must live or there will be no life in us. But, if as we receive these symbols we receive our Lord himself, then we shall go out to live even as he lived. We can then sing with Paul, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live. Yet not I, but Christ liveth within me."

It is this experience that changes religion and drudgery into exquisite poetry. Here we find the secret of true winsomeness. Some of you will remember that old story of the bell. A certain minister offered to make a bell that would ring with flawless tone. He gathered the finest metal, silver and gold, and put them into a great caldron. And when they were melted he cast the bell. When the people came together to hear it ring there was a note of harshness that
was disappointing. Again the bell was cast with the same result. Then the king became angry and told the minister that unless the bell had a flawless note his life would be to forfeit.

The minister went home with a heavy heart for he knew not what to do next. His wife saw the shadow on his face and asked for the secret. He told her his story. Now it so happened that their only daughter, a beautiful young girl, overheard the story. So that night she slipped out to pay a visit to the Wise Man. When she had told him her story he said, "There is but one way to make the bell ring with flawless tone. With the metal there must be mingled the blood of a devoted heart." So the next day when the metal was seething and heaving in the great caldron the girl rushed forward and threw herself in the caldron. And with the metal there was mingled her heart's blood. Then when the bell was cast and swung in the tower, none had ever heard such winsome music. This is the supreme secret of the Master. "And I, if I be lifted up will draw all men unto me." It is the secret of our power to men. There is none like it. Therefore, our Lord is looking very wistfully at each of us this morning and is saying, "This do in remembrance of me."
"This do in remembrance of me."
—Luke 22:19

These familiar words take us across the far spaces of the years into an upper room in the city of Jerusalem. Here a young Man just out of His twenties is gathered with a company of friends. When these friends had entered the room, they entered with flushed faces and flaming eyes. They were having a heated argument over which one was to be the greatest. Now their voices are hushed. They glance shame-facedly at each other and at their Master. They feel bound together now by the bond of a common sorrow.

This is the case because it has dawned upon them at last that their Master is going to suffer Himself to be done to death. They cannot understand it. They cannot realize why it should be so. But their love for Him keeps them standing by. They could see nothing ahead except empty gray days when they shall walk alone without the companionship of Him who had made their yesterdays so radiant and worthwhile.

The reason for their coming together, these friends feel, is to celebrate with their Master the feast of the Passover. This feast has been celebrated by themselves and their people for more than a thousand years. It speaks to them of a great event in their national life. It bids them remember how they were once bondsmen and how the Lord, their God, delivered them. It tells them how that when death had walked with stealthy feet along the streets and by-ways among the homes of Egypt they themselves found shelter behind the blood of the Paschal lamb. It was a sacred and solemn feast, one that had been endeared to them and to their people for many centuries.
But at this particular feast something new happened. This revolutionary Master of theirs dared to displace the paschal lamb by Himself. He took the loaf and broke it and put a bit into the hand of Thomas, who found faith so hard, into the hand of Peter who was to deny Him, and into the hand of Judas, who was to betray Him. And as He gave them each this bit of bread He said, "This is my body which is given for you." That is, "I am giving you my very self. I am giving you all that I am and all that I have. You are to keep this feast in after day's remembering that this bread and wine symbolizes no more the paschal lamb that was slain in Egypt but that it symbolizes the Christ of the Cross. "This do in remembrance of me."

The desire to be remembered is a very natural and human desire. The thought that we shall be utterly forgotten is not pleasant to any of us.

"For who, to dumb forgetfulness a prey,
This pleasing anxious being e'er resign'd,
Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,
Nor cast one longing lingering look behind?"

When John Keats lay dying in the early morningtide of life, he said, "Here lies one whose name is writ in water." He felt that he was passing too early to have a place in the hearts of future generations. He had vast ability. He had a flock of sky-larks in his soul that he was sure would have sung so long as men had a sky above their heads if he had only been permitted to release them. But dying at the age of twenty-six, he felt he had not been permitted to express the richness of his genius and that, therefore, the world would forget. In that he has so far been mistaken. But depressed by this tormenting thought, he said, "Here lies one whose name is writ in water."

On a certain promontory overlooking South Cheyenne Canyon in the Colorado Rockies there is a loose heap of stones. Under these stones once rested the ashes of Helen Hunt Jackson. It was her request that she be buried at that spot. It was her further request that as tourists should visit her grave, they should put
two stones upon that grave and carry one away with them; thus she thought to perpetuate her memory. The stone carried away would remind its possessor that it came from the grave of Helen Hunt Jackson. The fact that there were two put on the grave for every one taken away would guarantee a growing monument. Thus while other monuments would be vanishing under the gnawing tooth of time, hers would be growing with the passing of the years.

Of course, such desire to be remembered has in it a great deal of vanity and selfishness. But there is such desire where there is no selfishness at all. The more we love, the more painful it is to be forgotten by the ones we love. There is always something heart-warming in being remembered. You had a letter sometime ago from a friend. That friend said, "I was passing through the field and I saw the modest field-flower and I remembered how you loved such flowers, and I thought of you." Or, "I was in the library and I came upon your favorite book and I thought of you. I went to church this morning. The minister selected for his text the passage of Scripture that you love the best, and I thought of you." Love loves to be remembered.

II

Not only does love love to be remembered, but love loves to remember. If we are suffering from a loneliness where there was once a companionship, as painful as that loneliness may be, we are not willing entirely to forget. Here is a mother who has lost her little laddie. Suppose I seek to console her in this fashion: "Your heart is very heavy now and your arms seem very empty. But by and by as the days wear into weeks, and the weeks into months, and the months into years, those thieving years will steal away the very memory of your child. By and by it will be as if he had never lived." There would be no consolation in that. You would far rather have the pain than to be robbed not only of your loved one but of his memory as well.

Because we love to remember some of us keep about us little treasures that
we call keepsakes. Some of them are entirely useless, they would have no worth to any one but to ourselves. Here is an old rose pressed away in a book. Why do you not toss it into the waste-basket and get another rose fresh under the kiss of spring? For the simple reason that this rose is fragrant not only with a fading perfume but with memories as well. There are times when you look at it when you remember how a hand that is now dust gave it to you in life's bright morning years ago. There is an old letter yellow with age, or a common toy with which no child plays.

"The little toy dog is covered with dust,  
But sturdy and staunch he stands; 
The little toy soldier is red with rust,  
And his musket moulds in his hands. 
Time was when the little toy dog was new,  
And the soldier was passing fair;  
And that was the time when our Little Boy Blue Kissed them and put them there.

"'Now don't you go till I come,' he said,  
'And don't you make any noise!' 
So, toddling off to his trundle bed, 
He dreamt of the pretty toys;  
And, as he was dreaming, an angel song 
Awakened our Little Boy Blue—  
Oh! the years are many, the years are long,  
But the little toy friends are true!

"Ay, faithful to Little Boy Blue they stand,  
Each in the same old place, 
Awaiting the touch of a little hand. 
The smile of a little face;  
And they wonder, as waiting the long years through 
In the dust of that little chair. 
What has become of our Little Boy Blue,  
Since he kissed them and put them there."

And why I wonder has not the little toy dog been thrown away years ago? Just one reason—it is not its intrinsic value! In the markets of the world it would bring little more than naked nothing. You keep it because it helps you to remember.

Now this beautiful service that we celebrate this morning we call a memorial service—a sacrament of the Lord's Supper. It is a keepsake put into the hands of the Church, the Bride of Christ, to help the Church to remember. We are so
forgetful. Our Lord knows our weakness. Therefore, He has given us this beautiful keepsake and as He puts it tenderly in our hands, He says to us again this earnest word so full of tenderness, so full of holy urgency, "This do in remembrance of me."

III

What are we to remember as we gather to take these symbols of the broken body and the shed blood of our Lord?

1. We are to remember how He used His life. Life was given to Him as it is given to you and me. How did He use it? Answer—He used it for others. The self-giving that we see on the Cross is but the climax of that self-giving that was His throughout life. This Cross on Calvary is not a single episode in the life of our Lord. It is the eternal heartache of God expressing itself on the pages of history. What God in Christ is suffering here He is suffering from age to age through your sin and mine.

We need to be reminded of this fact constantly—that our Lord is a suffering Lord. He could not live in a world like ours and not suffer. With our imperfect love we cannot do that. How many mothers' hearts today are bleeding through the wounds of their boys! But as I think of the tragedy of this world-wide war the first and greatest casualty is God. His suffering is as much greater than ours as He is greater than ourselves.

2. Not only are we to remember as we gather about this table, the self-giving of Jesus, but we are also to remember that the same self-giving is expected of you—and me. "If he laid down his life for us," wrote John, "we ought also to lay down our lives for the brethren." This Cross is not something that is merely to release us that we may be free to go on our own way. It is to free us that we may serve. Jesus no more had His cross than you have yours and that I have mine. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." There is no substitute for that.
"Must Jesus bear the cross alone,
And all the world go free?
No, there's a cross for everyone,
And there's a cross for me."

3. We are to remember that it was this self-giving of Jesus running all through His life and culminating upon the Cross that enabled Him to live the abundant and zestful life that He lived. I am not forgetting that He was a "Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." I am rather declaring that in spite of that—yes, because of it!—His was the richest and most zestful life ever lived on this planet. I am reminding myself and asking you to remind yourself that you will live abundantly just in proportion as you give abundantly as He gave.

4. We are to remember that it was through this self-giving not only that Jesus came to His best but it was through this also that He rendered His supreme service. It was to the cross above all else that Jesus came as a means of winning men unto Himself. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." He seems to say, "I know the chivalry of the human heart. I know that men cannot permanently resist the love that gives to the utmost."

Naturally the same law that governs the usefulness of Jesus governs the usefulness of ourselves. The measure of a man's power to help his brother is the measure of the love in the heart of him and of the faith that he has that at last the good will win. The reason there is not more saving power in your life and mine is that we are not willing to give to the utmost. The words "to bless" and "to bleed" come from the same Anglo-Saxon root. It is only the life that is willing to bleed that is superlatively able to bless. Mr. Hearne tells this story: There was a certain Chinese king who commanded his prime minister to cast a bell that would ring with a note of flawless sweetness. So the minister sought out the choicest silver and gold of the empire. He cast them into a great cauldron, melted it and cast a bell. But when the multitudes gathered together to hear its faultless note they were disappointed. While it was beautiful, there was a metallic harshness that robbed it of its perfect sweetness. So the king ordered his minister
to try again. But again there was the harsh note. There was a third effort with
the same result.

Then the king became angry. He sent his minister to the task again saying,
"If the bell is not faultless this time, your life will be forfeit." The minister
went home with a heavy heart. He told his tragic story to his wife, for he knew
not what to do. But it so happened that a lovely daughter in the sweet radiance
of her early womanhood heard the story. So she slipped out down the darkened
streets to where the wise man lived and told of her father's plight and asked how
the bell could be made to be faultlessly sweet, and the wise man said it could never
be done until the metal, the silver and gold, was mingled with the life blood of
a devoted heart.

With this secret the lovely girl went home. The next day when the metal
was seething and hissing once more in the great cauldron, the girl rushed forward
and before any hands could restrain her she threw herself into the cauldron, and
with the metal was mingled the blood of her devotion. Then the bell was re-cast.
Then when it was swung in the tower and the people gathered together to hear it
ring every heart was softened and every face was wet with tears. The appeal was
the appeal of the Cross. So our Lord is looking very wistfully at you and at me
and He is saying again this old word that has in it His joy and our salvation,
"This do in remembrance of me."
HIS SURPRISING PRAYER

Luke 22:42 - Father if thou art willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless, not my will but thine be done.

I

Jesus is here facing the hard ordeal of the cross. We are not surprised therefore, that in that black hour of crisis he betakes himself to prayer. There is a sense in which prayer is all but instinctive. If you suddenly aim a blow at me, I seek to avoid it without asking how heavy the blow might be or why it is aimed. When we face some grim tragedy, most people pray almost as spontaneously as they shrink from a blow. But prayer meant far more than this on the lips of our Lord. Though in every crisis He prayed, He did not confine His praying to such hours. Instead prayer was the habit of His life. Always He put prayer first.

To be convinced of this it is only necessary to run over in your mind the gospel story. Here we find Jesus moving at times with an assurance, an ease, and a serenity that fill us with wistful wonder as we see His calm face across the far spaces of the years. There were other times when he was obviously putting forth every ounce of His mighty energies, when His sweat was as great drops of blood falling down to the ground. When were His times of ease and serenity and poise, and when were His times of conflict and struggle? His times of conflict were His prayer periods. Having prayed, He went to His work as a victor might go to receive the spoils of his conquest.

Some time ago I delivered the Commencement address for a certain school. A student of the school received a scholarship medal. All that student had to do was to get up from one side of
the platform and walk over to the other and stand while an
official pinned a medal on his lapel. Yet, as simple as was the
procedure, the crowd burst into enthusiastic applause. At once
I said to myself, "If one can receive such applause for so simple
a task as accepting a scholarship medal, I am going into that
business as a profession." But when I found that the chap had to
do some work behind the scenes, I gave it up. Jesus, having won
in the secret place, went as did that young chap to receive the
fruits of his victory.

That our Lord therefore should be on his knees here in
Gethsemane is, I repeat, not surprising, since prayer was the
habit of His life. But what is surprising is the prayer He is
offering. Certainly it is not what I should have expected.
Listen to it: "if thou art willing, remove this cup from me". But
had not Jesus already accepted the cross as a certainty? Indeed
he had. After Simon had made his great confession, Jesus thought
that he was far enough along to hear of the certainty of the
cross. But such was not the case. Instead Simon became utterly
indignant. "Heaven forbid," he said. "No, Lord, this shall
never happen to you." But the reply of Jesus was about the sharpest
word he ever spoke to a friend, "Out of my way, Satan" (Phillips)
Why did He call Simon that ugly name? Because he was using exactly
the same argument Satan had used during the temptation in the
wilderness. Satan was perfectly willing for Jesus to save the
world, if he would only save it while avoiding the cross.

Not only had Jesus accepted the cross as a fact for himself,
but he had even given thanks to God for the cross. "After supper He
took the cup, and when He had given thanks," Do not look upon
this as a mere perfunctory asking of the blessing. Jesus is here
thanking God for the privilege of laying down his life for those whom he loves. Love is ever always joyful so long as it can do something for the beloved.

What was it that enabled the Jackal in Dickens' immortal story, "The Tale of Two Cities" to say "I am doing a far better thing than I have ever done before"? What gave proof of the truth of what he was saying? It was this; when his executioners looked into his face, they found it the most peaceful face into which they had ever looked. The Jackal was glimpsing something of the joy of Jesus; the joy of laying down his life for one that he loved. Jesus had accepted the cross for himself and had accepted it with joyful gratitude.

Not only had He accepted the cross for himself, but he had declared it to be an absolute necessity for every man who would be his disciple. "If anyone wishes to be a follower of mine, he must leave self behind; he must take up his cross and come with me." Naturally, therefore, it is surprising to hear this man who has accepted the cross both for himself and for his disciples, offering this prayer:— "If thou art willing, remove this cup from me."

PART II

Why did Jesus seek, even at this late hour, to bypass that skull-shaped hill outside the city gate? Of course here we can only grope. But remembering that Jesus was as human as we, the reason, I think, was this:— When He saw the cross at close range, when he had come so near to it that he could almost touch its hellish ugliness with his own hand, he found it even more horrible than he had expected. Here he realized more fully than ever before its terrible lonliness. Here, too, perhaps, he
not his first glimpse of that sense of forsakenness which reached its climax in that bitterest of cries, "My God! My God! Why hast thou forsaken me?" Thus Jesus realizing more keenly than ever before the hellish ugliness of the cross found it hard to believe that such an ordeal could be the will of his infinitely loving Father.

Jesus is here, for the moment, in doubt. That is his second reason for this prayer. But what is he doubting? He is not doubting God. Never for a moment did he doubt his Father's love and wisdom and care. Even when he uttered that wild cry on the cross, "Why hast thou forsaken me?", God was still his God. "My God", he said. He still clung to him with a faith that was firm; nor is he doubting God in this hour of sweat and agony in Gethsemane. What then is he doubting?

He is doubting himself. He is doubting his understanding of the will of God. He is now not quite sure that he has understood God aright. He is still willing to do God's will. Though he dreads the cross with a dread unspeakable, there is one something that he dreads far more, and that is flouting the will of God. It is this, "nevertheless", that saves Jesus in this grim hour. "Nevertheless", in spite of all the bitterness of it, "not my will but thine be done". But he is for the moment uncertain as to what the will of God is.

Jesus had to pass through an ordeal like this to be tempted in all points like we are. I think aside from the story of the Passion, about the saddest word in the New Testament is that of John, the Baptist, "Art thou he that should come or do we look for another?" John was sure that he had heard the voice of God. He had felt himself called to be the forerunner of the Messiah.
He had staked everything on that conviction. He had suffered for it. Even now he is in prison for it. As he hears the waters of the Dead Sea lapping their mournful monotony about his prison cell, he also hears rumors that the prophet for whom he has given everything has come and is now in that outside world doing deeds beyond the human. "Why then," questions John, "doesn't he do something about me? Is it possible that I misunderstood God? Can it be after all that my life has been no more than a mistake?"

There is no measuring the tragedy of a doubt like that. Yet countless serious souls have been tortured by it.

PART III

Now what did Jesus do when his black night was upon him? He betook himself to prayer. He prayed this prayer, without any surprising "Nevertheless, not my will but thine be done". That was the wisest possible prayer. Without such prayer Jesus would have utterly failed in his mission. That was the least prayer he could pray without failing both God and man. It was costly beyond words, yet nothing less would do. Had he failed thus to pray, his tormentors could not have taunted with this great word, "He saved others, himself he cannot save", Instead a hopeless world would have wailed, "He saved himself, others he cannot save." "Thy will be done" was the least that Jesus could ask.

But if it was the least, it was also the very best and greatest. With all his wisdom he could not have prayed a greater or more worthful prayer. It is at the center of the prayer he taught us to pray. There were certain petitions of this model prayer that Jesus never used. He taught us to pray for forgiveness, but never did he thus pray for himself. But this petition "Thy
will be done", he made his very own. It is a prayer without which every other is in a sense futile. Thus Jesus here prayed at once the least prayer that any disciple can pray, and also the greatest that even the son of God could pray.

Yet this perfect petition, fitting the clean lips of our Lord, is no less fitting for you and me. It is all men's prayer. Not only so, it is for all an absolute necessity. To fail to pray it is to open the door to every form of wrong doing. Being wrong we naturally do wrong.

That wise father in the "Merchant of Venice" had the right idea. Fearing that he would not live to witness the happy marriage of his daughter, he went as far as he could toward guaranteeing such a marriage. He took three caskets - gold, silver, and lead - in one of which he hid the picture of his daughter, fixing it as a condition that the man who chose the casket that held the picture should be the fortunate suitor.

The first two caskets of gold and silver were alike in this. They began by saying "Who chooses me will get..." If the father had been eager for his daughter to marry a "getter" he would surely have placed her picture in one of those caskets. But instead he put it in the plain leaden casket that bore this inscription - "Who chooses me must give and hazard all he has". He knew that happy marriages could only be had at the price of mutual self-giving. That is just as true in our religious lives. Victorious living can only come at the price of mutual self-giving. Jesus has given all and we must give all to him as we pray this prayer, "Not my will but thine be done".

That does not mean that all self-pleasing leads to the same goal. One man can make self-pleasing the law of his life and be-
come a pauper. Another man can make self-pleasing the law of his life and become a millionair. One man can make self-pleasing the law of his life and end in the gutter. Another man can make self-pleasing the law of his life and end on the platform of a popular pulpit. It is not the different goals that are fundamental. It is the common motive of self-pleasing that lies back of both goals. No wonder, therefore, that "Thy will be done" stands at the center of the prayer that the Lord taught us to pray. It is the sum total of all prayer.

PART IV

Now what happened when Jesus thus prayed? He found assurance. He passed from uncertainty into certainty. It is a striking fact that the one calm, poised, and unruffled figure of the whole grim tragedy of the crucifixion is that of the man who was crucified. On the night of his arrest, who got excited? Who gave way? Not Jesus, but the disciples. They ran like frightened sheep. Even the men who arrested him were so disturbed that they staggered back in the presence of his compelling majesty. On his way to Calvary some onlookers burst into tears. But no tears wet the face of the man who was staggering under the weight of his cross.

When the work of crucifixion was finished and He was hanging on the nails, the mob about him had eyes fiery with hate, cheeks burning with anger. His own friends standing at a distance had eyes too leadened by despair really to see him. The one poised personality was the man who in that frantic hour prayed, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do". Then a little later,
His Surprising Prayer

Arms, with this "Now I lay me " upon his lips, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit".

Here is victory complete and abiding. It was won because our Lord passed from the frail "if" of his first petition to that steadfast "Nevertheless not my will, but thine be done". This is not the easiest prayer to pray. It is not as we are prone to think a prayer of mere resignation. It is a prayer that has in it a battle cry. It is a prayer that often costs "sweat, blood, and tears". Yet nothing less (than this prayer) will do. If we pray it in sincerity, God will take care of our yesterdays. He will both forgive and forget our sins, not only so, but he will fit us for tomorrow. To pray this prayer aright is surely to find a place at the feast of the fullness of life both here and now and in the everlasting yonder.
Luke 22:42 - Father if thou art willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless, not my will but thine be done.

Here Jesus is facing the hard ordeal of the cross. We are not surprised therefore that in that black and tragic hour He takes to his knees in prayer. There is a sense in which prayer is all but instinctive. When we face death or some grim tragedy worse than death, most of us pray almost as spontaneously as we shrink from a blow. But prayer meant far more than this in the life of our Lord. Though in every crisis He prayed, He did not limit his praying to such hours. Instead prayer was the habit of His life. Always He put prayer first.

To be convinced of this it is only necessary to pass over in your mind the Gospel story. Here we find Jesus at times moving with an assurance, an ease, a serenity, a poise that make us wistful as we look at his calm face across the far spaces of the years. Then there were other times when he was obviously putting forth every ounce of His mighty energies, when His sweat was as great drops of blood falling down to the ground. When were His times of ease and serenity and assurance and when were his times of conflict and struggle? His times of conflict were His prayer periods. Having prayed He went to His work as a victor might go to receive the spoils of his conquest. That comes out in his entire ministry.

Look, for instance, how it worked in his deeds of healing. One day a leper came to Him. Life had treated this leper so harshly, so persistently had it barked his shins that he had ceased to believe in love. He still believed in power and so
He made his way to Jesus with this half-way faith, "Lord, if you will, you can make me clean." He was sure of the power of the Master but he was not sure of his love. But Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him, saying "I will. Be clean." There was no struggle, no sweat. It seems to have been done with consummate ease.

Toward the end of his ministry Jesus was constantly dogged by a most diabolical set of human hounds. They were shrewd and able debaters who would have given their very souls to have provoked this young prophet into saying some unguarded word that could have discredited him before the people. But he brushed their cunning schemes aside as if they were cobwebs. For instance, The Sadducees who accepted the authority only of the Psalms and who denied the resurrection, brought to him this story.

Once there were seven brothers. The oldest of these brothers married and died without any children. Now, according to an old Mosaic law, it became the duty of the second brother to marry the widow of the deceased in order to raise up children to this departed brother. So the second brother married her, but died without any children. Then the third brother married her and also died without any children. Then the fourth brother married her and met the same monotonous fate. Had I been the fifth brother I should have been half way across the Euphrates River getting away before that ceremony was ended. But failing to take a hint, he stayed on and was liquidated. The same was true of the sixth and the seventh. She wiped out the whole lot.

Then came this question by which they sought to embarrass Jesus about the resurrection. It has a slight touch of sanity
in it. "All seven of these brothers had this woman to wife, in heaven whose wife is she going to be?" Jesus told them that they were speaking out of the abundance of their ignorance. "In the first place", He told them, that heaven is not based on the physical but on the spiritual, hence there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage. "But you claim to believe the first five books of your Bible. Here then is a word from the second book: 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob'". Those old worthies had been dead for long centuries, yet Jesus affirms that they are still alive. This is the case because God is not the God of dead people. He is the God of living people. Thus he set his seal upon the resurrection.

Now that our Lord should be on his knees here in Gethsamene, I repeat, is not surprising, since prayer was the habit of his life. But if it is not surprising that he is praying, the petition that he offers is, to say the least, not what I should have expected. Listen to it, "If thou art willing, remove this cup from me." But had not Jesus already accepted the cross as a certainty? He had. Not only so but he had even thanked God for it. "And after supper he took the cup and when he had given thanks." Do not look upon this as a mere perfunctory asking of the blessing. Instead, He is fervently thanking God for the privilege of laying down his life for those whom he loved.

(There are many times when the heart of love breaks, but it never breaks so tragically as when it stands in the presence of some needy soul that it longs to help, but can not. When his executioners looked into the face of the Jackal in Charles Dickens' "Tale of Two Cities" they found that it was the most
peaceful face into which they had ever looked. What was the source of that peace? How had this man who had seemingly thrown life away come to this victory? How could he say with conviction "It is a far better thing that I am doing than I have ever done before"? He was experiencing the joy of laying down his life for one whom he loved. It was thus that he came dimly to understand how Jesus could take His cup of suffering with thanksgiving.

Now though Jesus had accepted the cross in other days, yet He shrank from it now. Why so? I think that as He met this grim instrument of torture face to face He found it more horrible than even He had expected. Naturally He questioned "Is it possible that my Father who loves me with infinite love desires that I go through with this?" Mark you He is not doubting God but He is doubting His own knowledge of the will of God. He is wondering with utter agony if there is not some way that he can escape Golgotha.

Such doubts may come to all serious souls. Aside from the story of the Passion, I think there is hardly a sadder word in the New Testament than this question from John the Baptist: "Art thou he that should come or do we look for another?" John had heard the voice of God. He had felt himself called to be the forerunner of Christ. He had staked everything on that conviction. He had suffered for it, is even now in prison for it. As he hears the waters of the Dead Sea lapping their mournful monotony about his prison cell, he also hears rumors that the prophet for whom he has given everything has come and
is even now doing wonders beyond the human. "Why then,"
questions John, "does He not do something for me? It is possible
that I have misunderstood God? Can it be that after all (that I
have suffered) my life is no more than a mistake?" There is no
measuring the tragedy of a doubt like that.

But what does this great prophet do in his black hour? He
did not turn to the enemies of Jesus. He did not even turn to
his friends. He turned to Jesus himself with this question, "Are
you he who is to come or shall we look for another?" Notice
the blackness of his doubt. Notice also the brightness of his
faith. He is saying, "Of course it will break my heart if I
have been mislead. It will break my heart still more if I have
mislead others. But even if I have been mistaken, I know that
God did speak to me. I am going still to believe that He will
one day send somebody to lead his wayward children home. Even
if I have misjudged you, I am going to keep my place on the
watchtower in expectation of the coming king." A grim doubt
surely, yet at the very heart of it there was a radiant and
bracing faith. Such was the faith of Jesus. He never doubted
God, but He did doubt that He had understood God aright. Most
serious souls and people can appreciate that because almost
every one sooner or later has to pass through that kind of
Gethsamene.
A Surprising Prayer
Everybody's Prayer

Luke 22:42 Father if thou art willing, remove this cup from me;

Nevertheless, not my will but thine be done. Luke 22:42

Here Jesus is facing the hard ordeal of the cross. We are not surprised that in the black and tragic hour he takes to his knees in prayer. There is a sense in which prayer is instinctive. When we face death or some grim monster worse than death, we pray almost as instinctively as we shrink from a blow. But prayer was far more than this in the life of our Lord. It was not what he did, not what he said, but in the hour of greatest need, when he had resorted to in hours of crisis, though in every crisis he did pray, it was the prayer with which he always began. He put prayer first.

How to be convinced of this it is only necessary to pass over in your mind the gospel story. Here we find Jesus at times moving with an assurance, an ease, and a serenity of poise that make us wistful as we look at his calm face across the far spaces of the years. There were other times when he was obviously putting forth every ounce of his mighty energies and when his sweat was as great drops of blood falling down to the ground. When, were his times of ease and serenity and assurance and when were his times of conflict and struggle? Always without a single exception his times of conflict were his prayer periods. Having prayed he went out from his secret victory to receive the spoils of his conquest. That comes out in his entire ministry.

Look, for instance, how it worked in the presence of human need. One day a leper came to him. Life had treated him so harshly, he had had his ears barked so many times that he had ceased to believe in love. He still believed in power and so he bared his way to Jesus with a half-way faith, saying to him, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me well." He was sure of the power of the Master but not sure, that he would care. But Jesus looked at him and said, "Certainly I am willing."

And he touched him, saying, "Be thou clean." There was no agony in it, no sweat in it. It seemed to have been done with consummate ease.

Toward the end of his ministry Jesus was constantly dogged by one of the most
diabolical set of human hounds, that every good man honest man. They were far older than Jesus and seemingly far shrewder in the ways of men. They were able debaters, humor in it as so many things do in the Bible. Don't be shocked by laughter and tears, they are very close together and they are the very warp and woof of life.

Here is the story: There were seven brothers. The oldest of these brothers married and died without any children. Now since the unit among the Jews was not the individual, but the family, it became the duty of the second brother to marry the widow of his deceased brother and to raise up children to the deceased. So the second brother married her, and he died without any children. Then the third brother married her, and he died without children. Then the fourth brother married her, and he died without any children and if I had been that fifth brother, I'd been half way across the Euphrates River getting away before the ceremony was ended. That sister was dangerous. But he did not take a hint and he stayed on and was liquidated. The same was true of the sixth and the seventh. The last of all the brothers left.

Then came the question that was brought by the Sadducees. The Sadducees accepted only the first five books of the Bible and they rejected the resurrection altogether. So they brought this question in order to embarrass Jesus about the raising from the dead. And they said, 'All seven of them had her to wife, in heaven whose wife is she going to be?' And Jesus answered that they were speaking out of the abundance of their ignorance. 'In the first place', he said, 'heaven is not based on the physical but on the spiritual, for it is not a marrying place. There is neither marrying nor giving in marriage. But you say you believe the first five books of?' Here is a word from the second: 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob'. Those old worthies had been dead for long centuries, and yet Jesus said, 'They are still alive, because God is not the God of dead people. He is the God of living people.' Thus he set his seal upon the resurrection.
It is the habit of his life. But if it is not surprising that he is praying, the nature of his prayer, I think, the petition that he offers is a bit surprising. Listen to it, "If thou art willing, let this cup pass from me." Had not Jesus already accepted the cross as a certainty before? He had. Not only so but he had even thanked God for it! And after supper he took the cup and when he had given thanks. Do not look upon this as a mere pufunctoriy asking of the blessing, he is thanking God for the privilege of laying down his life for the men he loved.

There are times when the heart of love breaks, but it never breaks so tragically as when it stands helplessly in the presence of the broken soul that it longs to help. When they looked into the face of the jackal in Charles Dickens, "Tale of Two Cities" they found that the most peaceful face into which they had ever looked.

What was the source of his peace? How had this man who had seemingly thrown life utterly away come to this victory? How had he come to say, "It is far above the thing that I am doing? He was experiencing the joy of laying down his life for one whom he loved. It was thus that he understood Jesus dimly, when he took the cup and gave thanks.

Now though Jesus had accepted the cross in other days, yet he shrank from it now. Why so? I think that as he met this grim instrument of utter torture, face more terrible than even the Lord expected, came the question, "Is it possible that my Father, my Father, that of which he was uncertain was the will of his Father. When he took that grim cross in his hand and looked at it, when he realized the physical pain of it, when he realized the infinitely greater pain of that loneliness and of shame, when he realized the supreme pain of a sense of forsakedness, that black hour when he felt that the God in whose company he had dwelled constantly through all the years of his life had turned his face away, so that he cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" When he realized something of that terrible tragedy, naturally he said as he looked at that cross, "Is it possible that my Father who loves me with an infinite love desires that I go through with that." He not doubting God but he is doubting the necessity of the cross. He is wondering with utter agony if there is not some way that he can pass over the way. Aside from the story of
It is very common to hear people complain of the fact that they have poor memories. "I can't remember a thing," one will say to you. One of the Bishops of our Church said to me recently that he had serious doubt of his ability to quote from memory the twenty-third Psalm. In certain directions his memory was good, but in others it was exceedingly poor. He bewailed his tendency to forget.

And people are forgetful. There are those who forget their church vows. There are those who even forget their marriage vows. Some people will even forget their grocery bill. They are so skillful that they can forget the money that they borrowed. I had an experience of this kind. A young man came to me asking a loan. But there happened to be one present who had lent him money in other days. And this seeker said he had forgotten to pay and so I was saved.

But you who complain of having poor memories, is your complaint really well founded? In all sincerity we must say it is not. The man who says, "I can't remember a thing" would be speaking the truth if he said the opposite. In reality he can't forget anything. The old Greek, Themistocles, was right therefore when he answered one who proposed to teach him to remember, "Teach me rather to forget."

The fact that we cannot forget is thought to be scientifically proven. For instance, in the short space of a fall a man has seen his whole life pass before him in panorama. In the instant before drowning those rescued have borne witness to the fact that all their yesterdays passed before them in that brief instant like a moving picture. Theologians believe that the books that are to be opened after while are none other than the books of memory.

What then is the difference between the trained memory and the untrained? It is not that one remembers and the other does not. It is the fact that one is able to recall what is in his memory and the other is not able. For instance, the difference between our present world and the world of the far off yesterday is not that the present contains more than the ancient world. We have steam, electricity, etc. These have always existed, but our fathers did not know where to locate them. The wireless was always a possibility, but the men of yesterday did not know in just what pocket it was located.

Now, the man of good memory is one who knows just how to put his hand upon the fact that he desires. He is like the keeper of a systematic desk. He knows in just what pigeonhole the desired paper is. There are many of us who have the fact, but it is so hidden away in our subconsciousness that we never are able to make use of it. We can't put our hands upon it when needed.

When I was a boy I used to trade at the Racket Store. The Racket Store was run by Mr. Jim Holt. Mr. Holt was assisted by a very live and energetic boy named Will, in honor of William Jennings Bryan. I once went there to buy a pair of shoes. He showed me a shoe that fit and I proposed to take the pair. "All right," says he, "we'll find its mate."
And he and Will sought diligently for its mate for not less than thirty minutes, but it was never found. Therefore he missed a sale. (Sam Bell’s speech) This young gentleman when he wrote this speech had a far better word for boogars. But the proper word escaped him and so he had to use the wonderfully expressive one that came to his mind.

Thus you see that while we cannot forget, speaking scientifically, yet practically we do forget. As I hinted above, men forget in all departments of life. But forgetfulness works its supreme tragedy in our relation to God. We forget Him. Sometimes we forget unintentionally. This is true of the man whose life is so crowded with other interests that he has no time to think of things of supreme value.

Second, we forget deliberately. "The fool hath said in his heart, 'There is no God.'" This man did not have intellectual difficulties. His difficulties were moral. God worried him. Therefore he made up his mind to dismiss God and to act as though He did not exist. Of a deliberate purpose he forgot Him.

Now memory may be of infinite service to us. Memory may be our angel. It may also be our devil. The highest use of memory is to make it your safeguard from evil.

There is an evil that comes like an angel of rescue. There is also an angel that builds a wall around your life from the beginning. A mother recently took her young son to see Holman Hunt’s picture, "Jesus The Light of the World." She explained to the lad the meaning of the picture. She told at what cost this guest had come, but how the door was shut in His face; how the knob was on the inside; how the Master Himself could not turn it; but how He longed to get in and what a blessing He would bring if He only succeeded. And when she had told the story she said, "Now son, when He knocks at your door let Him in." And the little fellow said, "Mother, I have never shut the door in His face."

You remember the young preacher who went from college to his new charge to preach his first sermon. He wrote out a very scholarly sermon. And then he thought of his mother and how she had told him if God ever calle him to preach to speak a good word for Jesus Christ. He tore up the sermon that he had written. And his ministry was saved from the beginning by the power of memory.

But you say, "This is not for me. Much of my life is already behind me. I have already sinned." Then I commend to you this text: in the twenty-second chapter of Luke: "Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord." "Then" - after the crime had been committed, after the lie had been told, after the oath had been sworn, after the opportunity big with possibility had been thrown away; "Then" - after Peter had got himself entangled in the awful net of sin, then he remembered. And that memory sent him out to weep and pray his way back to the Cross.

May such a memory come to you tonight. May you remember the lips that have prayed for you in other days. May you remember the vows that you have made. May you remember some of the tenderest ties that bind you to loved ones on the other side. May some blessed memory come to you and prove the angel that will lead you from the City of Destruction to Mt. Zion. That was what saved the prodigal. Memory got hold of him. He saw his old home. He saw his father’s face. He saw the love brightened yesterdays and he allowed these memories to turn his face home.
Now it is within your power to resist memory as it comes to you as your guardian angel. It is within your power to resist memory as it comes to you as your deliverer. If you resist memory as it comes to you in the guise of an angel, then one day that memory may become your devil. Hold back when she tries to lead you with caressing hand and one day that hand will grip you and drag you whether you will or not. "Son, remember". Dives had gone out to hell. He had left much behind, but he had carried his memory with him. But memory there had no longer the power of a rescuer. It only had power to torture. And, mark me, there is no torture greater than the torture of memory. (The murderer who confessed to having the ax with which the deed was done put before him.) (The story of Charles Holmes)
I

What a mysterious and mighty power is memory! Nothing seems more completely at home in the realm of the impossible. It is alike independent of space and time. It can span plains and hills and rivers and continents as quickly as it can cross the spaces of your bedroom. It is far faster than the fastest train. It can fly more rapidly than the fastest airship. In an instant it can take you to the utmost parts of the earth. It is absolutely uninfluenced by space. It is alike superior to time. Here is a man eighty years of age with a memory that can breach the wide chasm made of all his yesterdays, and bring him in an instant to the springtime of life quicker than the lightning's flash. He can look again into dear dead faces and hear voices that are long since silent.

Then memory is a power that is possessed by everyone of us. I know we are accustomed to complain about our memories. "I have a very treacherous memory," one said the other day. "I cannot remember anything." One of our bishops said to me some time ago that he seriously doubted his ability to quote the Twenty-Third Psalm from memory. Though he had been preaching for long years, though he had for years been a student of the Bible, yet somehow he was not sure of his ability to quote the most familiar passage in the whole Book, so treacherous and so unreliable was his memory.
But while we may bewail the fact that we cannot remember anything, our complaint is not in reality true. We would be speaking with far greater accuracy if we should declare that we cannot really forget anything. Upon the tablets of memory every thought and word and deed is being written and no power on earth can rub them out. In this respect the words of Omar are profoundly true:

"The Moving Finger writes; and having writ, Moves on; nor all your Piety nor Wit Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line, Nor all your tears wash out a Word of it."

A drowning man can see his whole life pass before him in panorama in that fraction of a second in which he is sinking the last time. Our brains change. We wear them out and fling them away every seven years. But memory outlives the brain. It outlives the body. We take it with us into the life to come. We are told that the books of which we read in Revelations that are to be opened at the judgment, are none other than the books of memory.

Since, then, we can never forget, the difference between a good memory and a bad memory is just the difference in our ability to lay hold of the fact that we desire. Years ago I went into a store in our little village to buy a pair of shoes. The merchant was a very careless individual. He ran his store with the assistance of a very clever little dog names William Jennings Bryan. He called him "Willie" for short. Willie helped as best he could, sleeping sometimes in the sugar and sometimes in the lard. I found the shoe that suited me but the good merchant could never find the mate. No doubt he had the shoe, but the fact that he could not put his hands upon it lost him the sale, and for all practical purposes he was as poor as if he had been without it altogether.
Some time ago I had a puncture on a lonely stretch of road. On the rear of my car I had a good new tire. But I had it firmly fixed in my mind that I had forgotten my key. Therefore I set out to walk to the next village to get help. At last I arrived and the garage man came back and fixed my tire. When it was all finished I felt in my pocket to pay him and found my key. It was there all the time but I had forgotten it. But it was of no more service than if it had not been there at all. The man with a good memory can put his hand on the key. The man with a bad memory simply does not know where it is. Therefore practically we forget everything. We forget each other's names and try to smooth it over by saying, "Your face is familiar." We forget our church vows; we forget our marriage vows; we forget grocery bills; we forget our lessons. I always sympathized with the young chap who had just read the definition of space in his physics but when his teacher asked him to define space he could only say, "I had it in my head but cannot tell it." We forget poems that we are going to quote. What an agony! We forget the speech that we wrote out with such care.

I remember when a schoolboy at Flatwoods we had a most excellent debating society. The topics we used to discuss were vital and timely. One of our favorites was, "Resolved: That married life is happier than single life." To hear us enumerate the wonders of marital bliss was more fruitful in weddings than a marriage bureau. I do not recall that there was an old bachelor who every survived those tender speeches. Another was, "Resolved: That Columbus deserved more credit for discovering America than Washington for Defending it." Sam Bell had the affirmative side. He declared emphatically that Columbus was worthy of the greater honor, "Because," he said in exceedingly strained and high-pitched voice, "he put out into unknown
seas where there were all kinds of ....... buggers." Now Sam really had better sea monsters than those, but he could not fish them out just at that time. A good memory is one that can recall. A bad one is one that cannot.

\[ ... End of quote \]

II

Now what are some of the uses of memory?

1. Memory is given us as a preventive.

1) It is a preventive against the waste of life. We need to remember always that God Himself cannot do as much with a fraction of our life as we can do with the whole of it. Therefore the wise man gives us this excellent bit of advice, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth." We are to remember in youth because it is possible for us to do so. A child can be a Christian. We do not have to be spiritually sick before we are well. We do not have to get lost before we are found by our Lord. We do not have to go into the far country before we can be at home in our Father's house. Not only can we be Christians in youth, but those coming in youth make the best Christians. That is only common sense. Those who excel at tennis, those who excel at any form of sport, those who excel in any art, are those who begin in youth. The work of the church is being carried on today by those who remembered their Creator in the days of their youth.

2) The memory is a great antidote against fear and discouragement. There are those all about us today whom life has defeated. They have given up. They sympathize with that keen young lawyer who flung out the back door of life the other day and left a poem in justification of his cowardly deed entitled, "Quitting Before the Whistle Blows." For many the color has gone out of the sky and there is little hope of the dawning of a better day.
But those who have thus despaired have done so because they have refused to remember. Take the depression for instance. This is not the only depression that America has seen. It is not the only depression that has ever been in the world. There were scores of them before this land was ever discovered. They found an old moldy manuscript not many months ago. It was at least five thousand years old and yet it bewailed the fact that wealth had got into the hands of the few and that utter disaster was only a few steps ahead.

These are hard days for the church. The war brought with it an aftermath not only of physical poverty but what is far worse, spiritual poverty. There are those everywhere who are flinging away from the church. There are millions who look upon it as a worn-out and threadbare institution. But the church has been discredited before. It has been pronounced dead before. But always there has been a resurrection. These are rather dark days spiritually but they are brighter than the one into which Wesley came. Then Christianity was looked upon by the cultured as an utterly exploded theory. The whole Anglo-Saxon world was in the grip of a blighting spiritual winter. But Wesley came out of that winter-gripped world with his hot heart pounding in his bosom and then springtime came. The course of humanity has not been one of unbroken assent. The tide has constantly ebbed and flowed. There have been relapse and recovery over and over again. But in the end there has been progress. So it will be still if we do not play the coward.

We need our memory to safeguard us against cowardice in our personal lives. You are in a hard situation now perhaps, but it is not the first one you have ever faced. There was a time years ago when something happened to you, a blow fell upon you like a bolt from the blue, and you thought you were utterly ruined. But the very thing
that you believed would work your ruin has been the making of you, and you would not give the brightest days of your life for those that at that time were the darkest. The God that did not fail you then will not fail you in today and tomorrow.

(3) Then we need the ministry of memory to guard us against the damaging sin of ingratitude. The words to thank and to think come from the same Anglo-Saxon root. The reason we thank so little is because we think so little. That is, we forget. We fix our eyes so much on what we lack that we fail to appreciate what we have. Remember the favors that have been done you this past year, the kindnesses, the thoughtfulness of friends, the gentleness of your Lord. John Newton was marvelously converted after an ill-spent youth. He framed a text and put it up where his eyes could see it at all hours of the day. It read like this: "Remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the Lord thy God delivered thee." We need the ministry of memory to save us from wounding our Lord and wounding our friends and robbing ourselves by being thankless.

2. Then memory is not only preventive. It is a cure. Of course the old adage is true, "An ounce of prevention is worth a thousand pounds of cure." That has been said a million times, but it hasn't been said often enough at that. It is so much better to have a fence at the top of a cliff than a hospital at the bottom. A rescue home for those who have made a shipwreck of life is a fine institution. But the best rescue home is that into which the child was born. But there are some who go astray and who must be brought back, and it is the memory that rescues.

Here is an example. Jesus had warned Peter that his self-assurance was going to get him into trouble. "All ye shall be
offended because of me this night." Peter bristled and said, "You are wrong. Others may but not I." And Jesus said, "This night before the cock crows thou shalt deny me thrice." Peter denied it hotly. Then he forgot all about it. A few hours later his Master was arrested. A servant girl asked him about his loyalty to the Master and Peter declared that he was not a disciple, that he didn't know Jesus at all, that he did not know what any of them were talking about. After he had denied three times over he heard the cock crow. Then, says the story, Peter remembered and went out and wept bitterly.

"Then," that is the emphatic word. "Then." After he had lied, after he had played the coward, after he had missed his opportunity to witness for his Lord in the presence of those that needed Him, after he had broken the heart of the Master that he really loved, after he had broken his own heart and covered his own soul with shame and confusion, then he remembered. Of course it was better to remember it then than never to remember at all. But how tragic that he did not remember till the evil was done, till his opportunity was missed, till his big chance was thrown away.

I am speaking to some young heart who may be going into the far country. But ten years from tonight, possibly twenty years from tonight, you will repent, you will remember Christ's appeal to you, you will come back in penitence to Him. But how about your wasted years? The prodigal remembered. He was haunted by old home faces and old home joys that he could not brush out of his mind. He came back, yet I dare say he met many a splendid chap on the way down that he did not meet on the way up.

Those of you who love Hugo will remember that dramatic chapter in which he describes a cannon ball at sea. The head gunner
had forgotten to make it fast. It broke loose moving with the motion of the ship. It became a terrible menace. It had the agility of a mouse, the weight of an elephant, the ferocity of a tiger. Four men were killed in its fierce onrush. Then there was another. All the others with faces white with terror made their way to the upper deck. Back and forth the monster lunged, grinding into bits the five men already killed. Then the gunner came down and fought with it. What could he do. He could not kill it. It was already dead. Yet it seemed fiercely alive. At last he worked a crowbar between two of its wheels and upset it and the battle was won. "What shall we do with him?" asked the captain of his superior officer. "Decorate him," said the general, "And then have him shot." He remembered, but while his memory saved the vessel it was powerless to save the men that his forgetfulness had lost. To remember God in later years is a great privilege. But however better to remember before life is wasted.

III

To all those who remember in youth, to those who remember even after some of life's best years are wasted, memory becomes an angel of mercy. But if we still persist in our forgetfulness, if we fling it with streaming hands from off our shoulders, then the very power that was meant to work our salvation works our destruction. Your memory will be your angel of guidance if you will allow it. If not it may become your devil. It was so with Dives. Jesus tells the story.

Dives was clothed in purple and fine linen and had a banquet every day. Out of his gate in easy reach was a beggar in rags. He was too sick to help himself. Dives did not set the dogs
on him. He did not have him stoned. He simple left him alone. By and by the beggar died. The rich man also died and the story tells us that in hades he lifted up his eyes. He had left his wealth behind him. He had left his purple and fine linen and his banquets, but one thing he still had was his memory. And that memory was his hell. There is nothing more maddening than chances hopelessly thrown away, opportunities that can never come again.

When I was a lad an unusually brilliant man came into our village to teach school. The dullest observer could readily see that he was far above his place in training and ability. All thoughtful people wondered why he was there. One day I heard him in earnest conversation with my father and this is what he said, "Mr. Chappell, you wonder why I am here. I will tell you. There is something in my life that I have got to forget," and he almost hissed the words out of his mouth, "I have got to forget!" But he could not forget and memory pushed reason off her throne and that brilliant teacher went away from our village a mad man because he could not forget. I do not know what hell is. It may be the mad house of the universe where folks go who have been driven mad by tormented memories.

I call you therefore to the highest use of memory, the memory that safeguards your life. "Remember now thy creator in the days of thy youth." Nobody was ever richer by ever having spent a single day away from Christ. Nobody was ever richer for having spent a single day sowing wild oats for what we sow we reap. I know you may turn to Christ years from now, but to come now is to save those wasted years. But you say, "I am no longer young." Then I read you only part of the verse, "Remember now thy creator."
For even though your best days have dropped into the sunset, even though you have but one bare little handful of moments left, Christ is wistfully eager for these and however little you have to offer, that he will accept eagerly. May your memory prove God's angel to lead you into the fullness of life.
To-night I am to speak to you on the floor and his memory. I will put the chief emphasis on the memory rather than on the fool. In the first of these texts we are urged to remember our Creator in the days of our youth. That is we are to remember God from the very beginning. We are to keep the big, blessed fact of his reality before us from the cradle to the end of the journey. All life is to be his. He is not to have the evening simply, but also the morning. He is not to have the winter only, but the spring with its wealth of life and beauty also. All life is to be this.

In the second text we read that Peter remembered, not from the very beginning, but after a certain time, after a certain event, what was that event. On the eve of his arrest Christ had warned Peter of what was at hand. He had told him that before the crowing of the cock that he was going to deny him. It did not deeply impress Peter. He forgot all about it. That is he forgot all about it till he had done the very thing that the warning had been given to prevent. Then he remembered, after the lie had been told, then he remembered, after the oath had stained his lips. Then he remembered, after he had missed the great opportunity of standing by his Lord in a hard place. Then he remembered, after he had thrown away the great chance of being loyal when loyalty would have counted for so much. After the wrong had been done, after the ship had been wrecked, after the train had gone into the ditch, then he remembered the thing that might have prevented it all. He then went out and wept bitter tears of repentance and came back to God. That was splendid, but that, I submit, is not the highest use of memory. The highest use is the memory that prevents. The memory that cures is only second best.

Now the psychologists tell us that we never forget anything, that we cannot forget, that every thought that we think, that every word that we speak, that every word that we hear and take into the mind registers itself there and that we do not forget, and that we never can. And the theologians tells that the opening of the books as describes in Revelation is nothing more than the opening of the books of memory, that at the judgment there will be displayed the screen of memory like a great moving picture screen, and that our lives will thus witness for themselves.

Now, I am sure that this is all true. I am sure that we really do never forget. The fact that in the brief moment of a fall, or in the instant just before drowning all life passes before us indicates the truth of this statement. But while scientifically we can never forget, practically we do forget. That is what we know is so hidden away in our subconsciousness so that for all practical uses it is entirely forgotten. So that you had little sympathy for that never forgetting theory, especially since that time that you tried to make your first great speech. You remember how you worked on that speech and how it all vanished into thin air when you set yourself to the task of spelling the multitude. (My debating society, Sam Hell!).

Yes, we forget almost everything. That lesson that we learned slipped away from us just at the wrong time. (Space in head). I forgot a dinner engagement once, though I confess that eggs were not at that time 33 cents per dozen. I even forgot a wedding once. I don't mean my own. Nor do I mean one of those to which I was invited to send a present. I mean a real wedding where the groom my have paid a dollar and a half plus his lastling gratitude.

We forget each other and we shake hands like long lost brothers and say, your face is familiar, but the name escapes me at the present. You were looking through some old papers last week and you found one that looked like your own, and when you opened it, it was really signed by yourself. And you were astonished to think that you ever perpetrated such a thing and almost as was in it. If you saw one like it from the hand of each guest and received some of the wrong presenting.
of your daughter you would read her a lecture a week long. And the
most humiliating part of it all was that it was addressed to Tom just
six months before you married George. How shockingly forgetful we are.

Here is a young fellow eighteen and a girl sixteen and they
have about made up their minds to marry. And you tell them that it will
never do in the world, that he has no job and doesn't want any. That she
has no family and doesn't want any, and that it would all be a colossal
blunder. She will think herself a martyr and she will think him a
slandered hero. And if you don't quit your objecting they will marry
before Saturday night. For you had just as well stand in front of the
Niagra Falls and say, "Boo," and expect that great cataract to take off
its hat and take to its heels right up stream, as to fancy that you can
accomplish anything arguing with two children who fancy that they are
in love. But if you just encourage them to continue there mutual devotion
and then quietly separate them, all will be well, for absence certainly
does make the heart grow fonder of the other fellow, and distance
lead enchantment to the view of the other girl.

We tend to forget. Many times this is a blessing, it is well
that you do not feel the same loneliness that you did the first night
you spent in your home after your baby had gone away. It is well that
your grief is not so keen as it was the first day you moved under the
great cloud of your life's supreme disappointment. It is well and mer-
siful that the years soften our griefs and help us in some measure to
forget.

But if forgetfulness is at times a blessing, at others it is
one of life's supreme tragedies. How many wasted and useless lives there
in the world to-day because men forget. How many sad and broken hearts in
the domestic circle because men forget. How many wires are full of heart
ache and wretchedness, not because one was trying to torture them, but
because the husband had forgotten the kindly courtesies and the gentle
thoughtfulness by which he won her. Once you would spring clean across
the room to pick up a bankers' chief for her that was about as heavy as a
sneeze. Now you want her to look after the furnace, be old home is lone-
ly now. But you have forgotten how lonely it is. You don't write. You will
have some very tender things to say one day when death comes and takes
your old white haired mother away, but now you forget.

But life's biggest tragedy grows out of our forgetfulness of
God. It is easy to forget God. You can forget him through sheer in-
difference. You can forget him by crowding your life with a thousand
other interests. You can forget him as the fool forget him. The fool
had said in his heart, there is no God. Notice he said it, not in his
intellect, but in his heart. The wish was father to the thought, God
worried him. The thought of God troubled him. The sense of one who was
present, seeing the poor wretched, selfish life that he lived annoyed
him, so he made up his mind to ignore him, to forget him. And he did it.
That was a use of memory that, however smart he was in the eyes of men,
stamped him in the sight of God with the blank stare of eternal idiocy.

Remember now thy Creator, if you do it will mean an effort. It
will cost you something. How do you remember your friend? Here are two
friends. How did they come to be friends? By association. We do not fall
in love with pictures. How will they continue to be friends? By keeping
up there mutual intercourse. Let one stay in Washington and another go
to San Francisco. Let them never write. They meet again after twenty years.
What is the result. They have slipped out of each other's lives. They
have forgotten. They are no longer friends. And friendship with Jesus is
like that. I care not what sort of Christian you are. Leave off prayer,
Bible reading, church attendance and you will forget. It requires an
effort to remember.
Luke 23:39 "If Thou Be the Christ, save Thyself and us."

The man who uttered these words played his small part in the tragedy of Calvary. He came upon the stage only one time. Therefore, we have very little data upon which to form our estimate of him. Yet I feel that the little we have is enough. We do not need a whole bay to know the nature of sea water. One drop is sufficient. A scientist does not need a whole skeleton to form an accurate opinion of the animal to which that skeleton belongs. One bone is enough. Thus I think the one glimpse we get of this renegade who died at the side of Jesus will give us a fairly accurate estimate of the man.

Had you been on Calvary on that fateful Friday morning, nineteen centuries ago, and had seen these two robbers who died at the side of Jesus nailed to their respective crosses, there would have been little to choose between them. Seen through the casual eye, they would have been much alike.

1. They were alike in that they had engaged in the same dangerous enterprise. They were not thieves not in the ordinary sense of the word. No doubt, they had robbed, but they had set out to fight against Rome. Being unable to organize an army and shoot in the open, they had degenerated into a mere robbers' clan who preyed upon Romans when they had the opportunity. When such opportunity did not offer, they were forced no doubt at times to prey upon their own people. They were both robbers; both were outlaws.

2. They were alike in that they had been hunted by the police and brought to trial. They were alike in that they had been sentenced to death. They were alike in that they were even now paying the extreme penalty. Each on his individual cross was dying a slow and painful death.

But in spite of the fact that they had so much in common, they were still very far apart. In fact, I think they separated by a chasm as wide as that
between the stars. One of these robbers possessed a great soul. There was
something magnificent about him. We find it impossible to withhold from him our
admiration. But the other, while possibly just as courageous, impresses us as be-
ing a little man. He was petty. The prevailing impression that he makes upon
me is one of extreme pettiness.

Of course, we use "little" here not in a physical but in a spiritual sense.
There was a time that in order to measure the courage of a man you put the
measuring string around his muscle. He was rated great because of his physical
power. Samson was such a man. Belonging to an iron age, he was a hero of his day.
But we do not measure greatness by muscle any more. We do not even measure courage
by putting a measuring string around a man's arm. It is possible for one to be a
great athlete and a moral pygmy at the same time. Really to measure a man we must
measure his heart. Judged by the standard of moral and spiritual greatness, this
outlaw who said as dying by the Messiah, "Save thyself and us" was a little man.

II

Wherein was he little? What is the mark of littleness? First, he was
little in that he without seeking to know the truth for himself, he took up the
hue and cry against Jesus. It is possible that this greater robber had met
Jesus before. I will give my reason for saying that in my next address. But
there is no indication that the little robber had ever met him before. But he
joined the crowd in his abuse of the Master, not because of any damaging facts
that he knew about him; he merely followed the crowd. He voted with the
majority just because it was the majority.

Now, to take any position just because the crowd takes it is a mark of little-
ness. I saw a cartoon the other day that reminded me of certain people. A woman
was riding down a narrow country road on a bicycle. That country road was bisected
at right angles by a sheep path. It so happened that this woman reached this
crossing just as the leader of the flock of sheep reached it. Now it so happened
that this leading sheep was both a polite and athletic individual. Instead of
running into the bicycle and upsetting the woman, he jumped over both and went on his way. That should have settled the argument, but every other sheep came and leaped high into the air at the same place. By the time that the sheep had stopped jumping, the woman had reached home and had gone to bed. Had you said to this last sheep "What did you jump for"? he would have answered, "everybody jumped."

So we often take our position on moral questions. We share the prejudices of these about us and act on them. When cocktails are passed in the social circle, though our training has been against such indulgence, we accept. When we feel morally let down from thus outraging our convictions, we tell ourselves "everybody drinks." To have no better reason for taking a position on any question than that such position has been taken by the crowd is a sure mark of littleness.

2. The littleness of this robber is further indicated by the fact that he is evidently seeking to take his own pain and bitterness and disappointment out on somebody else. He seems downright angry in his denunciation of Jesus. What is the matter?

He has set out to put through a task at which he has failed. He has not found victory, he has found defeat. But instead of blaming himself, he seeks to take it out on Jesus. Not that he is in any sense to blame but he happens to be present. Here is a mark of littleness from which a good many suffer. A woman came into my study some time ago and glaring at me for a moment said, "I would like to hurt somebody, I wish I could hurt you." Well, we get that way sometimes. Wretched ourselves, we want to make others wretched. Morally sick, we seek to spread our sickness over as wide an area as possible. Life both battles us and wounds us and we try to take it out on somebody else; often upon those who love us best. This is at once little and mean.

3. Then this man showed his littleness in his choice of the one upon whom he vented his spleen. Why did he not take it out on the Romans? They were the ones who had crucified him. Why did he not take it out on the hypocritical
churchmen who were howling at Jesus? He picked Jesus because he thought that his condition was even worse than his own. He himself was dying but Jesus was dying faster. Therefore, he sought to build up his sense of superiority by looking down on one that he fancied worse off than himself.

This too is a mark of littleness at its worse. There is a sense in which misery loves company. There is a kind of misery that seeks to console itself by looking down on one who is even more miserable. There are those who claim that the Germans in the old days were willing to be kicked about by their superiors if they were permitted to kick their inferiors. I am persuaded that the the bitterest antagonism against the negro comes generally from those who are on the economic level with the negro. It seems to me there is that in many of us that makes us want to look down on somebody. That is a mark of littleness.

4. The fourth mark of littleness in the robber is seen in his estimate of values. This man who is dying at his side has claimed to be the Christ. What ought he to do if he is the Christ to prove his deity? According to this robber he ought to save himself. He believes that the big thing for any man to do is to look out for No. 1. All great people, he thinks, get theirs while the getting is good. His highest conception is looking out for No. 1.

Of course, so to believe is not only a mark of littleness but of blindness as well. Frank Gunsaulis had a nephew who died while rescuing others from the Iroquois theater fire in Chicago some forty years ago. Several months later he was traveling in Europe. While in a hotel in Paris a man spoke to him, asking him where he was from. When the minister replied Chicago, the other said "I, too, am from Chicago. I was in a fire there." Then he broke into a maniacal laugh and said, "I saved myself." About that time a keeper came up and led him away. A few moments later this keeper came back to apologize. "I hope," he said, "that this man did not disturb you. He is harmless but he was in that Iroquois Theater fire. He ran off and left his friends to die and it has driven him mad."
must be a kind of madhouse where those unfortunate folks are kept who are small enough to save themselves.

5. Finally, this man showed his littleness by his prayer. Our prayers are very revealing. I think they put the spotlight upon our souls more than almost anything else we do. Little folks pray little prayers and great souls pray great prayers. We can judge the capacity of this man as we hear him pray. Listen to his prayer: "If thou be the Christ, save Thyself and us." That is a mean prayer.

It is mean in the first place because it is so narrow in its contents. For whom does he pray? For himself and his companion in 2rime. I have an idea that his prayer was even smaller than that. I think what he really meant was "save me". Now, there are times when it is perfectly right to pray for ourselves individually. When the publican said "God be merciful to me, a sinner" he was praying a great prayer.

But while prayer may begin with the individual it must not end there. There are those who have a "hat wide" view of Christ. There are others that have an "umbrella" view. They are interested in themselves and the one who walks at their side. We are told to have a view as wide as humanity. We may begin our prayers in a small way. We ought to end them with the map of the world upon our souls.

As this prayer was little in its scope, so it was in its content. For what does this petty robber ask? For salvation. Now salvation rightly understood is a great word. It was to seek and to save that which was lost that Jesus came. There is nothing that we need so much today as we need salvation. But the salvation we need is to something and not merely from something. We need salvation to Christlike character.

But for what is this petty robber praying? Salvation for him is not to Christlike character; it is from paying the penalty for his sin. He is not pained over what he is; he is merely pained over being where he is. Do not think that
in a class he is/...ing to himself. There are multitudes whose one interest in Heaven is not to find fellowship nor its great tasks. Their one reason for desiring to go to Heaven is to escape going to Hell. Here then is a little man.

III

What did his littleness do for him? It cheated him of his chance. It shut the door of life eternal in his face. It is a striking fact that these two robbers came together to the same experience. They both died by the side of Jesus. One was as near to him as the other. Yet the same experience that transformed the great robber left this petty robber a bit meaner and more wretched than he was before.

Here again it is demonstrated that it is not what life does but our response that really counts. These two men came to the same experience. For one it brought life; to the other death. In the letter to the Hebrews, we read this sentence; "By faith the Israelites crossed the Red Seas as by dry land, which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned. Here two groups came in the same cross; one found that cross the doorway to life; the other to a ghastly death.

Now and then one tells of a certain student whose faith was upset at college. Well, that happens at times. There are certain college professors who in spite of their P.H.D. degree, never get out of the sophomore class. I read a word from such one sometime ago. He opened his first address to his large freshman class by saying: "You have come here, many of you tied to your mother's apron strings. I propose to untie you. I propose to kick your props from under you and teach you to swim. If you can't swim, damn you, you can drown. Now that professor may be brilliant but he is still a sophomore nonetheless. Perhaps some of his class did drown; perhaps some learned the better how to swim. Yet the real difference was in the students themselves. A number of circumstances can wreck you. The very same storm that drives one vessel on the rocks may bring another to its desired haven. This experience wrecked this lesser robber but
it brought the greater one to an amazing victory. This petty man was ruined by his own littleness.

IV

What then shall we do about pettiness? First, we ought to war against it. We ought to face it first for what it is, an ugly and ruinous sin. What wiser prayer could we pray morning by morning than this; "Lord, I am going out into a world where my opinions are likely to be set aside, where rivals may take my place. I am going out where I may be pushed to the wall. I am going out where I may even get my heart broken. But, Lord, whatever happens, help me to meet it in a clean way. Save me from littleness."

2. Not only are we to fight against littleness, but we are to fight positively. The only real foe of littleness is bigness, just as the only real foe of darkness is light. Henry Ward Beecher was one of the great preachers of his day. But bigger even than his ability was this fact; if any one did him an unkindness, if he took an unfair advantage of him, that man could count on an unusual kindness from this minister at the earliest possible opportunity. Lincoln was such a man. When Staunton abused him, ridiculed his ungainly figure and called him the "original gorilla", Lincoln retaliated by giving him a place in his cabinet. He met littleness with bigness.

3. Finally, let God into your life. Our God is infinitely great. When he comes in to the little room of our hearts, day by day, do not push him back onto the ceiling and thus become ugly. What a small man was John when Jesus first met him. He was so narrow that he wanted to kill certain villagers that refused his Master a night's lodging, but in the fellowship of his Christ he became so great that he gathered a troubled world in his arms.

Thus, walking with God we come to share his greatness. A few years ago I crossed the North Sea with a missionary from China. I was too sick to have much fellowship with him but he was at that time the best informed man on things Chinese in that great nation. He was drawing a salary of $1200 a year.
The Standard Oil Company, knowing his ability, sent a representative to offer him $10,000 a year to represent their company. The missionary said "No, I can't." Then he went up to $20,000, then to $25,000; then he said "Set your own salary. We will pay it." But the missionary answered, "The first salary you offered was big enough, but I can't accept because your job is too small." Here was a man walking with a great God and he had a great job.

"As the marsh hen singing builds on the water
Lord behold I will build me a nest in the
greatness of God. I will fly in the greatness of
God as the marsh hen flies in the freedom that fills all
the space twixt and the skies, but so my roots
as the marsh grass clings to the spot Behold I will hardly
lay my hold on the greatness of God."
"And one of the malefactors that were hanged railed on him, saying, Art not thou the Christ? save thyself and us. But the other answered, and rebuking him said, Dost thou not even fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said, Jesus, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom."


This immortal story is recorded by Luke alone. Its very audacity is in a deep sense a guarantee of its truthfulness. A writer of fiction could hardly have imagined a story so utterly amazing and stupendous as is the story of the conversion of this robber who occupied one of the crosses beside the cross of Jesus.

Look at the picture. It is Friday morning in Jerusalem. Though it is yet quite early, the streets are already thronged with people. There are many out-of-town visitors. Rome has chosen this day for the execution of certain prisoners. She has done this because she desires as large a number of people as possible. She believes in public executions. It is thus that she seeks to make crime cow and hide its head in the most distant parts of the Empire. There are throngs of people who are intensely eager for the "show."

People have always had a love for the gruesome. But these people were not only eager for that reason, but they are more eager for all the prisoners are doubtless well known. One of them is especially so, as He has stirred His nation from one end to the other during His brief ministry of three years, - some have loved Him with passionate devotion, others have hated Him with a fiendish hatred. Some believe Him to be the Messiah, Upon the board that is now tied about His neck and that will later be put above His head upon the cross is His name and the crime for which He is charged, "Jesus, the Nazarene, the King of the Jews." He has just passed through a terrible night of torture. He has been scourged. He is greatly weakened from the loss of blood. Therefore, he staggers but feebly forward under the weight of His wooden cross.

The other prisoners have come to prominence in quite a different fashion.
They had begun perchance by being ardent patriots. They were bitter haters of Rome but unable to organize armies and fight in the open, they had organized robber clans. These had homed in the vastness of the mountains and had swooped down to prey on the passers-by as ruthlessly as they felt that Rome had preyed upon themselves.

As they shoulder their crosses, there is more in them to appeal to the crowd than in Jesus. They walk jauntily forward for they are alive and sinewy and hard as nails. Like men, they fought; and like men, they are determined to die. They join with the rabble in their contempt for their fellow-sufferer. He is too weak to take it. But they have been great haters and they can face the worst that even Rome can give. Jesus has already fallen more than once under the weight of His cross. Just as the procession is passing out of the city gates toward that grim skull-shaped hill called Calvary, He falls and is unable to lift the cross again. A certain Jew, Simon, by name, who is making his way into the city is arrested in the name of the Emperor and is compelled to bear the cross of Jesus. Simon never forgot that fact. There is good evidence that he came to bear the cross of his own free will in later years.

The tragic weakness of Jesus did not arouse universal contempt, some pitied Him. It was at this time that certain women began to weep for Him, but Jesus did not desire their pity. An attitude of pity toward Christ is never right. He did not look upon Himself as a helpless victim going out to an inevitable defeat. He was going out bravely to die for a cause. Therefore, He turns and says, "Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children." The tragedy of that hour was not that Jesus had suffered, as that the religious leaders of that day knew nothing better to do with God's supreme revelation than to crucify Him.

When they had come to the place of execution - a weird skull-shaped hill - four soldiers took charge of each prisoner. Certain charitable women came forward and offered them a drink of highly medicated wine. This was an opiate to lessen the
sufferings of the victims. Death by crucifixion was about the most horrible torture ever devised. Therefore, this boon of an opiate was not grudged even to the worst of criminals.

The robbers, doubtless, drank deeply, but when Jesus tasted it and discovered what it was, He put it from Him. This was the case, not because He was indifferent to suffering, but rather the case because He had work still to do in the very act of dying. He could say more truly than any other, "If I were ever a fighter, so will I fight one more - the best and the last. I would shed that my eyes and the forebode except past me." But he will not creep past! And to this refusal we owe those precious seven last words from the cross.

When the work of actual crucifixion was over and each cross stood in its place, then the revilings of the crowd broke out. Strange to say, the leaders in this matter, with the staid and dignified churchmen of the day, religious leaders, and learned doctors of the law were not above taking this mean and cowardly advantage of the helpless man. "If thou be the Christ," they hissed, "save thyself and come down from the cross." "He saved others," shouted another with bitter scorn, "Himself, He cannot save." "He trusted in God," shrieked yet another, "let God now save Him, if He wants Him."

This atmosphere of hate became the unifying weed of the crowd. The soldiers were brought under its influence. They too, though they had nothing against Jesus, joined in the reviling. They put the same test that the religious leaders had put. "If thou be the Christ, save thyself." And strange to say, even the two robbers were swept along by the current of mob hate and contempt so that they, though suffering a like fate, had time to vent their venom upon the man of the central cross.

But soon, one of these robbers fell silent. I see him bow his head for a moment. He is still as death. Something has happened. There is bewilderment in his face that changes in a conviction. And out of those fierce eyes that a brief moment
ago glared a bitterness and hate, there looks a great tenderness. The howlings of
the mob against Jesus have become almost unbearable to him. The revilings of his own
companion in crime have come to pain him more than the nails that pin in his hands.

What, I wonder, has made the difference? This robber has been doing a
little seeing and a little thinking for himself. He has had his ears opened and he
has heard strange words. While he and his companions have exchanged curse for curse
with their tormentors, this man of the central cross has hardly broken the silence at
all. When He did speak, what an amazing word it was. He said, "Father, forgive them
for they know not what they do." He is even trying to find some excuses for the
cruelty, the blindness, the stupidity of his murderers. He is trying to fling about
their misguided shoulders the sheltering folds of a protecting prayer.

Then the words of the mob strike him, "He saved others, Himself He cannot
save." Maybe it is true. Maybe this man is different. Certainly, he has never seen
anyone like Him before. No such personality has ever crossed his rugged path. And he
turns his head as best he can and reads again the inscription, "Jesus, the Nazarene,
King of the Jews." That was the joke of the day; bitter sarcasm conceived by Pilate
to outrage the Jews. But to this keen-eyed robber, it ceased to be a grim jest and
became an amazing fact. He is a King, after all!

By this time, the reviling of his companion has become unbearable. As
best he can, he turns upon them with amazed desperation. He spits out these words almost
fiercely. "Dost thou not even fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And
we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done
nothing amiss."

This dying robber is the only one who has really seen Jesus. This man,
he says, has done nothing amiss. Here is one who is spotless. He realizes as true what
Jesus has declared of Himself, that He was without sin. And what effect did this vision
have upon the robber himself? It brought to him a sense of his own guilt. He was suffer-
We are living in a day of a vanishing sense of sin. The prodigal's broken confession, red with shame and wet with tears is not at home in our day. Lady Macbeth washing her blood-stained hands and crying, "Out, out, damning spot," leaves the modern audience a bit cold. How has this come about? We have lost our sense of sin because we have so largely lost our sense of God.

Here is a man who declares himself guilty. He confesses his sin. Why? Because he has seen himself against the white background of Jesus Christ. Had he compared himself with his companion in crime, he would have felt no such sense of guilt. He might have picked out some gray-beard churchman and declared, "I am a criminal, it is true, but I am a saint in comparison with that old fossil-hearted reprobate." And that would have been the truth, but it never would have brought him to repentance. As long as we compare ourselves with ourselves, we can be very comfortable in our sins. But not so when we stand in the presence of this Man of the central cross.

When Hugh Price Hughes ran a mission in the east end of London, his workers were accustomed to carrying a white carnation. One night when one of these visitors sat talking to an outcast woman, this woman suddenly burst into tears. "What is the matter?" asked the visitor. She reached out a ringer and touched the white petals of the carnation and said, "I am not like that. I once was white, but it is not so any more." Against the pure white background of this lovely flower, she had caught a vision of her own stained life.

It is ever the case with those who come to any real sense of God. Isaiah was doubtless one of the whitest men of his day, but when he saw the Lord high and lifted up, he cried, "I am a man of unclean lips." Job maintained his integrity unafraid, but when he caught a vision of God, he declared, "I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now that my eyes seeth thee: Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." And Simon Peter falls down before Jesus to say, "Depart from me, for I am a
sinful man, O Lord." Where there is no sense of sin, there is no sense of God. But wherever there is a sense of God, there is a sense of sin.

It is unspeakably beautiful also that this repentant robber takes the part of Jesus before he takes his own part. Soon, he is going to pray a beautiful and trustful prayer, but before he asks Jesus to help him, he does his best to help Jesus. As far as possible, he flings his own tortured body between Jesus and his tormentors and tries to defend Him. That, to me, is unspeakably beautiful. There wasn't another man in all the world who at that moment dared speak up for Jesus. But this daring robber with his keen insite has the audacity to reverse the decision of the court and declares that the sufferer in sight is innocent.

When this man thus spoke out for Jesus, thus took His side, he was certainly not far from the kingdom. A friend of mine told me of dealing with a penitent soldier some years ago. He explained the way of life to him, but the soldier did not see the light. At last, he said to the soldier, "You pray." "I am not fit to pray," was the answer, but after repeated urging, he did pray this prayer, "Lord, I am not fit to pray, but if there is any place anywhere that you would like to have some body die for you, I would take it as a favor, if you would let me be that man." And the light that was never seen on land nor sea broke over his face.

Having taken the part of Jesus, this robber then makes one request. "Remember me," he prays, "when thou comest in thy kingdom." What a simple and humble and modest prayer. He is not asking, as James and John, for a seat on His right hand or on His left, he is only asking for the boon of a kindly thought. He is only asking to be "remembered." This lesser robber is praying too. This is his prayer, "If thou be the Christ, save thyself, and us." Here we find two contrasted ideas of religion. The lesser robber prays not for cleansing, but for comfort. He is willing to remain a thief, he only wants to escape from the consequences of his sins. The other is not concerned with
consequences, he is concerned with character.

These two contrasting views of religion linger to this day. The one test that some put upon their religion is this - their own personal comfort. They believe that the Lord ought to pay them in dollars and cents and in physical well-being for being good. If He does not, then they feel aggrieved. To this class belong those who say, "I lost my religion when I lost my money. If thou be the Christ they say, make me comfortable."

But Jesus has not come to make us comfortable, He has come that we might have life and that we might have it in abundance. And this abundant life usually comes not to those who never have an ache or a pain, not to those who never know hardship. It generally comes to those who have to come up through great tribulations. This bigger robber is not asking for a temporary salvation, his physical sufferings mean little to him. He is asking for the big things, rightness with God, rightness within himself. "Jesus, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom."

This man, then, is a king after all. This robber alone has read a right the inscription above His head. He has no retinue except a howling mob. He has no crown except one of thorns. He has no scepter except the nails pinned in his hands. All his royal wardrobe is in the hands of the Roman crap-shooters. Yet this daring robber penetrates the disguise of shame, the disguise of scorn, the disguise of death, and sees in this dying Christ a King. He is a King now in His own right.

Being the King that He is, He is able to grant favors beyond death. What an amazing faith. The robber is dying and he knows it. The Man at his side is dying more rapidly than himself, he knows that too. Yet dying robber turns to dying Christ and prays, "Remember me..." not if you come into your kingdom, but "when you come..." When you have swept through this black tunnel out under the fair skies of life's eternal morn, remember the robber at whose side you died. The faith to pray that prayer is unsurpassed in the whole heroic history of Christianity.
And what was the response of Jesus? Did He look at him sadly and say, "I should like to help you, but I cannot. Do you not see that I am dying more rapidly than you, that my lips fairly drop blood as they drop the syllables?" No! He gave no such answer. With glowing heart, He rather replied, "Today, thou shalt be with me in Paradise." "Today." How quick the response. Salvation is a process. It is also instantaneous. It is as quick as the flash of the lightning. Instantly, a trusting heart may pass out of death into life, out of darkness into the everlasting light. "Today, thou shalt be with me in Paradise."

What did Jesus mean by that? He meant that that very day He Himself would be consciously alive in the world unseen and that this repentant robber would also be consciously alive in the world unseen and that there they would renew the fellowship that had been begun here amidst the agonies of the cross. And I am perfectly confident that when Jesus stepped into eternity that day that He had a redeemed robber by the hand.