

THE ROAD TO CHRISTMAS

Luke 2:15

"Let us now go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing which has come to pass." The heavens have blazed with golden glory; our discordant world has been serenaded by music from a land where everybody sings; the angel messenger has announced the birth of a savior who is Christ the Lord. But all this was not enough. These shepherds might have missed Christmas in spite of all their privileges. How did they avoid this tragedy? Only by finding the Christ. And how did they find Him? They found Him by putting into practice the gospel that they had heard. To obey is to know.

Grant us, Lord, the courage to live
up to what we know. Amen.

FILLED WITH FURY
Luke 4:16-30

"Then all in the synagogue were filled with fury." How amazing! The preacher was none other than Jesus Himself. He had begun His sermon so well that His congregation marveled at His gracious words. But little by little their smiles changed to frowns. What had happened? Had He begun to denounce each man to his face? By no means. He had simply told them that God had once used a certain widow not of their race to be hostess to His prophet; that He had cured a certain foreign soldier of leprosy instead of confining His cures to Israel. They were, therefore, filled with fury, not because Jesus had said that God was no longer their father, but because He had affirmed that He had other children besides themselves.

Save us, O Lord, from individual and national self-centeredness. Help us to see in every man a brother for whom Christ died.

Amen.

A SURPRISING NAME

Luke 12: 16-21

"Thou fool." "Certainly," we answer glibly. But while we call this successful farmer a fool when we meet him on the pages of the New Testament, we do not do so when we meet him anywhere else. When we encounter him at the bank or see him passing the collection plate on Sunday morning, we give him an entirely different name. In face we say, "He may be a bit close, he may drive a hard bargain, but whatever else he is, he is no fool." But Jesus insists on calling this man a fool regardless of his setting. This He does because no other name will serve.

"Breathe on us breath of God; Fill us with life anew,
That we may love what Thou dost love." Amen.

OUR WEALTH
Luke 15: 25-32

"All that I have is thine." This elder son had led the life of a starveling and slave. Having remained dutifully at home, he should have had a marvelous story to tell of the enrichment that had come to him through fellowship with his father. But his is only a story of poverty. Listen to it: "Thou never gavest me a kid with which to make merry with my friends." Why was this? It was not because of his father's unwillingness to give, but of the son's unwillingness to receive. This son might have enjoyed the constant fellowship of his father. He might have entered into possession of all his father's wealth. That is the privilege that God offers to every child of His: "Thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine."

Give us, Lord, to look into Thy roomy hand for the wealth that may be ours. Help us by the giving of ourselves to make it possible for Thee to give to us.

Amen.

WHY FOOLISH?

Luke 16:11-21

In what does the foolishness of this farmer consist? We can find the answer by hearing him think. "He thought within himself." His moral imbecility is seen, not so much in what he thought, as in what he forgot. He was so busy thinking of himself and his barns that he forgot three matters of supreme importance. First, he forgot God; second, he forgot his fellows; third, he forgot his eternity. There might have been sense in his making some provision for the few years he might live, but how stupid to forget the eternity in which he must live.

Help us, Lord, so to remember Thee and our fellows that we can in some measure forget ourselves. Amen.

PALM SUNDAY

Luke 19:29-44

"And he beheld the city and wept over it." There is something terribly startling about these tears. They startle us because they seem so out of place. Jesus is at last making an open avowal of His kingship. His disciples are delirious with joy. How shocking that a king should sob on His way to His coronation! Then they startle us because our Lord was not greatly given to tears. "Be of good cheer," was a word that was upon His lips again and again. How awful, therefore, must have been the doom that He foresaw for Jerusalem to have caused Him thus to weep!

Save us, Lord, from the sin of
adding to the weight of Thy cross.

Amen.

TV

THE SILENT CHRIST

Read Luke 23:6-11 "He answered him nothing".
Luke 23:9

Herod was eager to see Jesus. Yet, when at last the two faced each other nothing big happened. Our Lord refused to speak to him. Why? Because He knew that it would do no good. Herod had so persistently refused to hear that his ears had become stopped. If we live up to the light we have, we are sure to come into fuller light. But, if we refuse to see, we lose our capacity to see. God never ceases to speak to us, but we can lose our capacity to hear and to recognize His voice..

Lord, thou dost ever stand at our heart's door and knock. Make us quick to respond. Save us this day from the tragedy of the deaf ear and the unfeeling heart.

VI

COMPROMISE

Read Luke 23:13-16 "I will therefore chastise Him and release Him". Luke 23:16

Years ago my brother and I decided to jump a stream that was some ten feet wide. But when I led off and was well under way he shouted, "Stop, Stop". The result was that ~~I neither fully jumped nor fully stopped.~~ I compromised and thus landed in the middle of the stream.

fac'd by a question ?

The ~~question before Pilate, was one of~~ right and wrong, ~~But, he~~ neither dared to be as just as he knew he ought to be, nor as unjust as the Jewish authorities urged him to be. Therefore, he ~~took a middle~~ *compromised,* ~~course~~ and ended by becoming a partner in the supreme crime of history.

Grant us, O Lord, sweet reasonableness in all our contacts today. But save us from so loving the praise of men that we trifle with our inner light and thus help afresh to crucify Thee.

THE PETTY OUTLAW

Read Luke 23:32-39

~~Luke 23:32-39~~ "Save yourself and us".
Luke 23:39 (R.S.V.)

Here is a man who is dying in easy speaking distance of Jesus. Naturally in his agony he prays. But how petty his prayer! He does not ask for salvation from sin, but only from its penalty. He does not hate being what he is, he only hates being where he is. His one interest in heaven is that it offers an escape from hell. Of course it was impossible for our Lord to answer his blind and self-centered prayer. He can only give mastery over circumstances by giving victory within ourselves.

Father, as we come to thee in prayer, save us from that littleness that ~~even now~~ prompts petty prayers. So enlarge our hearts that we may offer prayers big enough for thee to answer.

THE GREAT OUTLAW

14
Read Luke 23:42 "Jesus, remember me when you come in your kingly power". Luke 23:42 (R.S.V.)

What a wide chasm divides this great soul from his companion in crime! ~~He takes the part of Jesus before he takes his own.~~ Having spoken out in the Master's defense, he then utters this simple prayer: ~~In it~~ *Jesus Remember me!* ~~he makes no plea for escape, though he is suffering the very pangs of hell. The agony of being where he is is forgotten in the greater agony of being what he is. "Jesus, remember me", he prays. So what? Our Lord, did not fail him. He gave him victory then and there, also when He stepped into Paradise that day He had this redeemed robber by the hand.~~ *held him by the hand when a little later he*

cannot answer that prayer

For this great prayer and its answer we thank thee, Lord. We bless thee that when we give thee a chance thou art still able to do beyond our power to ask or think.

Amen

APR 1945

THE EASTER CERTAINTY

Luke 24: 13-13

To their Easter was more than a date.

It was an experience

"They knew Him." Here are two disciples, doubtless a husband and wife, who begin a journey in despair to end it in joyous certainty. From a conviction that their Master is dead, they pass to an assurance that He is alive forevermore. How did they reach this certainty? They had had some evidences of the Resurrection before they came to this crowning experience. There was the testimony of the Scriptures opened by the Master himself. There was the testimony of their own burning hearts. But all of this was not enough. Just as evidences of bread cannot satisfy our hungry bodies, so evidences of the Resurrection cannot satisfy our hungry hearts. These found certainty because they came to know Jesus Himself. "Their eyes were opened, and they knew Him."

We thank Thee, our Father, that this certainty is for those of the 20th Century as well as for those of the First. We thank Thee that Thou art saying still. "If any man is willing to do His will, he shall know."

Amen

THE EASTER CERTAINTY
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EXPERIENCING EASTER

Luke 24

Sent Dr.

Garth, Apr 15
1949

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Excerpt of sermon by Dr. Clovis G. Chappell
Pastor, First Methodist Church
Charlotte, North Carolina

April 15, 1949