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all the vast, minute and ever-changing and ever-shifting thoughts, hopes, dreams and sadness of this strange and complex life of ours. He is not only familiar with it, we are sure, but we have also a pathetic feeling and hope that He cares and sympathizes with us in so far as the actual knowledge of the actual facts of life is concerned. This is what has kept Him always through all the ages the one single person to whom all the plain, simple, silent people of the world have turned with such a sure confidence in His affection. But it has not, for the most of us at least, been at all this way with God. We are puzzled and weary with the search for what He really is and how He really feels.

2. Now if one really felt that God cared just as much as Jesus Christ, and cared in just the same personal, minute way, how utterly different it would be. It would make a difference in so many strange ways that it would be quite impossible to tell them all, but it is easy to see how great the change would be. If it was really true to us we would feel that God was worrying about us at all times when we were not just what He wanted us to be. If we were hard and brutal and selfish and mean, and what we call cantankerous, not even in any way speaking of the things people call sins, but just those common facts which make life hard and human nature not fine and interesting or true; if we thought that this all really distressed Him as we are sure it must have always distressed Jesus when He saw the insincerity, the brutality, the wretched and gross selfishness, then it does make a difference. No one in the best part of his soul really wants to pain or distress his friends. Many people for the sake of others have suffered a good deal of self-denial. This because one feels that it would worry and distress them. Now, if one really felt that God cared in just this way one might go with a quite different feeling and tell Him all these things, make a clean breast of it, put the matter before Him just as one feels sure one would put the matter, whatever it was, before Jesus Christ. And in doing so one might be quite certain that it would meet with His soothing and sympathetic interest.

If you have a son or daughter and you see that they are keeping something from you, though you feel reasonably sure that you know, you have a feeling something akin to what we are told here God

feels toward us. He cares, really cares, is anxious about us, worries about us, if you want to use the word, and does so because most of all He sees that we are not quite sure of Him, perhaps, as again and again it happens, are not sure of Him at all. There is a wide dreary space between the soul of the child and the soul of the parent and nothing can bridge it or seems able to do so. Of course all this is quite childish. It does not in the least agree with the common notions which we have got together from our reading and study or experience. There is nothing scientific or philosophical about it. These both teach some wonderful, some deep and splendid things about what God has done and how vast and mysterious His creation is, but they do not say after all any of the things which Jesus Christ says, nor do most of them resemble Jesus Christ any more than the rest of us do. And the God about which they tell us is not the same, or at least it is not the same side which Jesus so wonderfully speaks of. There is none of that gracious yearning tenderness. There is none of that immediate feeling of a Father quite near and always waiting and wanting a fuller and closer relation with His children. Now this was the God Luther found through Jesus Christ, and this was the God that lifted him up and made him the mighty man that changed the world or helped to change it. He was so sure that God cared, that He looked at and after each of His children, that he was quite prepared to leave everything to Him. If things went wrong, if men were brutal and selfish and did shocking things he was deeply stirred, but he knew somehow and sometime men would learn how much they could trust Him and how great the need is always that they should trust Him.¹

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Faith in Jesus Christ.

¹ Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.—Ac 16³¹.

Faith is the constant experience of the life of God in the soul, a sense of relationship with the eternal. It is the conviction that God is, that He is with us, that He is with us to lead and help and heal. The God in whom we believe is the God we see in Jesus Christ; therefore faith is belief in Jesus Christ. Faith, then, is an experience. It is

¹ S. Means, *Parish Sermons*.

the misfortune of Christian history that this has not always been emphasized. A few choice spirits in the early Christian days lived in union with God and attempted to report their experience. The generations that followed took that report, formulated it into a system of belief, and substituted the statement for the experience itself. Then Christianity gradually became a body out of which the life had gone. Yet down across the centuries comes the first apostles' testimony. 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.'

1. This faith saves from the limitations of finitude. Thereby the range of life is increased both extensively and intensively. Man is no longer shut in by the boundaries of time. He is a sharer of the life of the eternal. Death cannot harm him. He has that within him that transcends the power of change and death. Not only so, but through faith he finds a vocation that gives to his life a meaning and worth that are inestimable. Henceforth the goal of endeavour is that he shall measure toward the standard of Him in whom God dwelt complete. Character, as Jesus realized it, becomes a value to be sought after supremely. 'What shall it profit a man, if he gain the world, and lose his soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?'

And here we come upon the second term of Jesus' gospel. Life is so constituted that no one can win his soul alone. Man, as a child of God, is the member of a family, and wins the opportunity to a larger life in the service of his fellows. 'He that loseth his life shall save it.' Union with God is fellowship in work. Each shares with all in the divine purpose of creating a kingdom of individuals who will be partners in a life permeated and controlled by the divine will. The ministry of Jesus was the inauguration of that kingdom; it was also the evidence that ages of labour and sacrifice would be necessary for its consummation. To win the kingdom Jesus must die; to become one with Him in the life of God His followers become sharers with Him in a process of redemption realized through the ministry of the Cross.

2. This faith saves from the hurts and ills of time. It has been said that the unchristian conduct of society to-day does not instance the failure of Christianity, for no serious attempt has yet been made to apply the principles of Jesus to social relations. This same claim might be made

regarding one aspect at least of the life of the individual. The mass of men and women are weighed down and their happiness marred by fear and anxiety, prompted largely by ills of their own making. This should not be. Life in God is greater than all these things and need not fear because of them. Fear is the great enemy of man, and fear is only another name for lack of faith. Jesus often wept in the presence of anxiety and heartache, but His tears were tears of sympathy for the failure of faith. It was so difficult for His followers to learn the lesson He came to teach, that they could rise above life's ills. To His disciples He said: 'Have faith in God . . . If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.'

We have poorly learned this lesson too. The haggard aspects of life—its pain, sorrow, misfortune, and disease—fill our souls with fear, when all that is needed is the venture of faith to prove that life is friendly and essentially trustworthy. Trust in God, with a clear sense of his aim for life, banishes fear as the morning sun scatters the dark. Who can separate us from the love of God? Can tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or trial, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, for through them the real treasures of life are won. He that has found God has found a source of contentment; there is no fear for him who realizes that the eternal God is our refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.

3. This faith saves from the guilt and power of sin. Sin is primarily separation from God. It is indifference to and rebellion against the will of God. It is following the momentary peculiar interest, as opposed to the appeal of a larger good. To be saved from sin a man must be drawn away from obedience to narrow self-interest into devotion to the law of the larger life. He becomes ready to sacrifice present impulse to reason, the gratification of the moment to future realization, individual gain to the welfare of the common life. Faith accomplishes this change. As the act of coming into conscious union with God, faith begins a process of transformation in character that is destined to terminate in righteousness. The will is the spring of action. When the will becomes right it tends to righten the whole life.

Sin may have wrought permanent physical injury, but a change of will has in it the promise of re-birth in character. Not only so, but the life of God in the soul makes available to man the resources of the Infinite. The will of man is energized and made capable of an attainment otherwise impossible. Jesus stated this fact under the allegory of the vine and the branches. 'Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.' Jesus is the world's Redeemer, for it is through Him that man is drawn away from his sin into union with the eternal. He has taught man to hate sin. He banished the cloud of guilt from the human soul when He said, 'It is not the will of your Father . . . that one of these little ones should perish.' He struck new courage into man's heart when He declared that God is ever labouring and suffering for His wayward children's sake. Through faith in Him souls have gone from darkness to light, from the power of sin and death to the power of the Spirit and life. Dead unto sin, they have become alive unto God through Jesus Christ.

I may not be able to satisfy my understanding concerning the marvels recorded in the Gospels about Jesus, but this I know when I come into His presence I see one who has made God known to me; I see one who reveals to me what a man ought to be; I learn that my life may be lived in union with the Eternal, and that when thus lived it wins a power that enables it to rise above trouble, sorrow, death, and sin. This is enough. I bow before Him and lift up my prayer that He will give me faith to follow Him and grace to become day by day more like Him.¹

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

The Vine.

'I am the true vine.'—Jn 15¹.

As He approached that Valley of Death which each one of us must at last pass through alone, Jesus had a great desire for one hour of quiet companionship with His friends. From one of His secret followers in Jerusalem He borrowed an upper chamber that He and His disciples might, as a family, take their last meal together undisturbed. He made one final effort to recover

¹ H. B. Williams, *Fundamentals of Faith in the Light of Modern Thought*.

Judas Iscariot from his crime, but in vain, and, unable longer to endure the traitor's presence, bade him go and fulfil his design. Then with characteristic self-devotion He set Himself to prepare His disciples for the tragedy of the morrow. He told them that He was about to die, and used His unflinching courage to impart courage to them. You will leave Me, He said, to face this hour alone; yet I shall not be alone, for the Father will be with Me. I shall seem to leave you alone; yet you will not be alone, for the Father will give you the strength-giving Spirit He has given to Me, and that Spirit will abide with you for ever. You will not see Him, but you will know Him, because He will be in you as He has been in Me. You will think Me dead, but I shall not be dead. I will come to you, and you will share My imperishable life with Me. And My Father will come, and we will dwell with you and bring peace to you. And then He gives in a simple and to them familiar figure His interpretation of the Israel of the future, borrowing the figure from the Hebrew Psalmists, one of whom had, in the Exile, sung of the vine which Jehovah had planted:

Thou broughtest a vine out of Egypt:
Thou didst drive out the nations, and plantedst it.

To this cry of the seemingly deserted Israel, Isaiah's use of the same figure furnishes a reply: 'Let me sing for my well beloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard.'

In the days preceding the Last Supper, Jesus had recalled to the multitudes in the temple this ancient figure and had compelled from the people their condemnation of the rulers of Israel: 'The Lord of the Vineyard,' they had said, 'will destroy those wicked men and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen who will render him the fruits in their season.' And Jesus had commended their verdict: 'The kingdom of God,' He said, 'shall be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.' Now, speaking to His disciples to revive their hopes and inspire their courage, He recalled to their minds the familiar Parable of the Vineyard, and gave to it a prophetic interpretation.

This is the fullest description which Jesus has left to the world of His ideal for that Brotherhood to which He has committed the completion of His commission. The members have organized