

Thoughts of Jesus

Your Friend and Mine

JESUS loved people. It did not take very long for the dwellers of Judea and Galilee to find this out. Everywhere He went, men, women, and children gathered about Him, not because they were curious, but because they felt a sense of warmth in His presence.

Jesus had times when He withdrew to some secluded place for meditation, but these were generally when the people were asleep, late at night or in the early morning. As soon as the marketplace began to hum with activity or the Temple courts were filling with the throng, there you would find this friendly Person.

As He goes about, you see Him stop to chat with the merchantman, inquiring as to his business, dropping a word about goodly pearls.

Perchance He meets one blind, and you hear Him say, "Son, how came you to such a fate? Wouldst thou be made whole?"

Again, He sees a mother carrying a babe in her arms as she passes by, and He stops to give the little one a smile and a caress with His gentle hand. Then you see Him enter a home where He remains for some time, conversing with the family.

Jesus did not hold Himself aloof from anyone. Jews, Gentiles, Roman soldiers, people of every class-how He loved them and longed to linger with them on friendly terms.

But He had a holy purpose in all this. It was not to gratify some fleshly desire, some social instinct, or to pass the time in idle gossip. When the Pharisees criticized Him for eating with publicans and sinners, He said, "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. But go ye and learn what that means, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Matthew 9:12, 13.

He was in truth the friend of sinners as they called Him, for all men are sinners and in need of His friendly ministrations.

What would have happened to Mary Magdalene if He had not shown a real interest in her welfare after her repeated delinquencies?

How would Peter have been restored to full discipleship after his fall if on the resurrection morn Jesus had not shown a special anxiety for his well-being? It was Jesus no doubt, who told the angel guard to notify His disciples "and Peter" (Mark 16:7) that He would meet His appointment in Galilee, meaning that He would like to see Peter there along with the other disciples.

Would the wayward woman of Samaria have found deliverance from her sins if Jesus had not loved to converse with anyone who would respond to His friendly approach?

God sent His only-begotten Son into the world to save sinners because He loved them. It was this same love and real interest that sent Jesus here and there over the countryside, speaking to this one and that one, at times loitering beside the road or at some wayside home to enjoy the companionship of strangers. Yes, we do well to sing:

"What a friend we have in Jesus, All our sins and grief to bear."

And what of the multitude that followed Jesus so persistently? Concerning them Matthew records: "And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd." Matthew 9:35, 36.

Jesus loved the multitudes. He was never fretful with them or annoyed because they ran after Him when they discovered where He was. This was the great test of His friendliness. Sometimes they wearied Him and allowed Him no rest, but still He continued to talk with them, giving them words of comfort and counsel and patiently answering their questions.

One day as Jesus was journeying toward Jerusalem, He paused in a certain village, as usual, to visit the people. While He taught and healed, some of the mothers of the place came to see Him, bringing their children with them for Him to touch, and perhaps to bless. The disciples, in their brusque manner, rebuked the mothers for bothering Jesus when He was ministering unto the people, but Jesus was displeased with this, and said unto them, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God." Mark 10:14.

Matthew, relating the experience, says, "He laid his hands on them," but Mark adds this personal touch: "And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them."

The warmth of Jesus' soul is evident from the way children liked to be in His presence. The gospel mentions His loving concern for children on several occasions. He could not have been austere and sad in His appearance, or they would have turned from Him. It has been said that Jesus was never seen to smile. We are told that Jesus wept, but we do not need to be told that He smiled when we read how He took the children in His arms.

We speak of Jesus as Lord and Master, as Creator and Redeemer, as Prince and King, but the terms that draw Him closest to us are Brother and Friend. This relationship was emphasized by the Savior as He was about to face the cruel cross. Then it was that He said to His disciples: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knows not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you. Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you." John 15:13-16.

How thankful we can be that we have a Friend in the courts of God. There before the throne stands Jesus pleading for our cause.