

# Thoughts of Jesus

## The Joys of Jesus

THE character of a man is revealed by the things that give him the greatest joy. Where does he seek his pleasure? What brings him the most satisfaction? How does he spend his leisure time? Answers to such questions are very significant.

What do we find when we look into the life of Jesus? As we follow Him about with the disciples, where does He take us? What do we hear Him talking about much of the time?

Although we know very little concerning the thirty-three years of Jesus' life on earth, yet enough has been recorded to give us an insight into the character of this Man who pleased God. Two things are very evident, we believe: His love of nature and His love of home.

One of the most poignant facts in the life of Jesus was His lack of a home of His own, where there was understanding and comfort. One who gave such tender consideration to women and children, and who evidently found great comfort in addressing God as His Father, could not have been stoically unmindful of the joys to be found in a happy home. But did He have one? No. That He felt the grievous lack is seen in these pathetic words spoken to a man who wanted to follow Him: "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." Matthew 8:20.

Jesus' home in Nazareth, where He was reared, was not one to draw Him thither. There had always been contentions over His strange ways. He had brothers and sisters (Matthew 13:55, 56; Mark 6:3) who had little regard for His mission. In early life they were unsympathetic with Him. He was often the object of their censure.

Concerning this, we have this comment: "They [his brothers] were greatly annoyed at the clear penetration of Jesus in distinguishing between the false and the true. His strict obedience to the law of God they condemned as stubbornness. . . . His brothers felt that His influence went far to counteract theirs. He possessed a tact which none of them had, or desired to have. When they spoke harshly to poor, degraded beings, Jesus sought out these very ones, and spoke to them words of encouragement. . . . All this displeased His brothers. Being older than Jesus, they felt that He should be under their dictation. They charged Him with thinking Himself superior to them, and reproved Him for setting Himself above their teachers, and the priests and rulers of the people." *The Desire of Ages*, pages 86, 87.

After Jesus had fully entered upon His work and began to raise the wrath of the Pharisees, His brothers thought it necessary to seek Him out in the hope of persuading Him to cease His labors or to be more circumspect in His attitude toward the leaders in Israel. Of this we read:

"They felt keenly the reproach that came upon them through their relation to Jesus. They knew what a tumult His words and works created, and were not only alarmed at His bold statements, but indignant at His denunciation of the scribes and Pharisees. They decided that He must be persuaded or constrained to cease this manner of labor, and they induced Mary to unite with them, thinking that through His love for her they might prevail upon Him to be more prudent." - *Ibid.*, page 321.

In spite of His unfortunate experiences in His own home life, Jesus often referred to marriage and the home and sought to lift them to a higher plane than they had ever known before.

In His statement, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:26), He wished to convey the idea that to give up wife and children and family relationships is the supreme sacrifice that man can make.

And how often He showed special attention to women in their sorrows, their sicknesses, and their spiritual needs. Jesus' attitude toward little children reveals the fondness He had for them. On many occasions He used them as examples to follow. Thus He said, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 18:1

Denied the human satisfaction of love and understanding in His own borne, Jesus found them to some extent elsewhere. A humble home in the little town of Bethany for a time supplied the restful retreat among loved ones for which His soul often longed. No more beautiful picture is given of His life on earth than the one recorded by Luke, where the apostle describes a visit of Jesus to the home of Lazarus, Martha, and Mary. (Luke 10:38-42.) How typical it is, Martha showing her love in service, Mary showing it in attention to His words. Though Jesus rebuked the one and commended the other, that does not mean that He did not find satisfaction in the tender ministrations of that homebody, Martha. Of this home we are told: "At the home of Lazarus, Jesus had often found rest. The Saviour had no home of His own; He was dependent on the hospitality of His friends and disciples; and often, when weary, thirsting for human fellowship, He had been glad to escape to this peaceful household, away from the suspicion and jealousy of the angry Pharisees. Here He found a sincere welcome, and pure, holy friendship. Here He could speak with simplicity and perfect freedom, knowing that His words would be understood and treasured." - The Desire of Ages, page 524.

Then we must not forget the tender love that Jesus manifested for His own mother in the very last hours of His life when, looking down from the cross, and turning to John, He said, -Behold thy mother!" meaning, of course, that He was committing the keeping of His mother to faithful John. (John 19:25-27.)

Next to the joys of home were the thrills that Jesus found as He observed the world of nature. It was amid nature in childhood that He learned to know God and His creative power. Often He would escape from the contention of His home to the hillside, where He found release as He watched the birds on the wing, viewed the waving fields of wheat, and took note of the flowers.

How often He used the objects of nature to illustrate spiritual truths. It was easy for Him to say: "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow"; "Behold the fowls of the air"; "A man went forth to sow"; "The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed"; "I am the vine, ye are the branches"; "Learn a parable of the fig tree"; "The harvest is the end of the world"; "First the blade, then the ear, and after that the full corn in the ear."

We are told that Jesus' "hours of greatest happiness were found when He could turn aside from the scene of His labors to go into the fields, to meditate in the quiet valleys, to hold communion with God on the mountainside, or amid the trees of the forest."

Again and again in the Gospels we read of Jesus seeking retreat in the mountains, far from the hurrying throng. He gathered the multitude on the mountainside, where He could point out the beauties of nature and speak of its wonders. He desired to turn away their thoughts from the works of man.

Man's natural state is in the country, surrounded by the living objects of God's creative hand. The city is his invention. It is here that he is most likely to forget God, amid the ceaseless striving for gain, the restless seeking for unholy thrills. It is here that man reveals his superficial character.

Jesus illustrated His greatest joy in the parable of the lost sheep. After telling how the shepherd went out into the desert and the mountains in search of the straying one, He said, "And when he hath found

it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost." Then He adds, "I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repents, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance." Luke 15:5-7.

In telling of His purpose in life Jesus said, "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Luke 19:10. How His soul must have rejoiced as He saw men and women turn from their wicked ways and follow Him. And how He loved the little flock He had gathered out from the world. With what tender solicitude He prayed for them, "I pray for them . . . which thou hast given me. . . . Holy Father, keep through your own name those whom thou hast given me." John 17:9-11. Thus it will be with His true followers today.