

Thoughts of Jesus

The Unobtrusive Jesus

LET us follow Jesus that resurrection day late in the afternoon as He turns down the Emmaus road. Where is He going? What are His plans on this momentous day? Why is He leaving the great city when His closest disciples had not yet seen Him since His triumph over the tomb? He must be on some important mission. We shall see.

Hastening on, Jesus approaches two men who seem to be in deep discussion as they slowly walk along the rough and winding road. Accommodating His stride to theirs, He silently joins them, and listens to their conversation as is done so often in Oriental lands.

So unobtrusive has He been in this seemingly unplanned course that the forlorn travelers continue their talk, unconscious of His presence.

As they speak of recent events that had to do with the loss of One who was dearly loved, and express their grief and disappointment, tears flow down their cheeks. And yet this very One is by their side!

Jesus hesitates to rudely tear aside the veil that makes them unaware of His presence. Very tactfully He enters into their conversation.

The disciples seem wounded and troubled. Indeed they are offended by the actions of their Lord. He who had healed the sick, cast out devils, could He not have delivered Himself from the wicked plotters against His life? Had He not said, too, that on the third day He would rise from the tomb? And here it is late on that day and only uncertain rumors have come to their ears about an empty tomb.

“What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?” The troubled thoughts and conversation of these men are unconsciously broken by this sign of interest on the part of the stranger who has quietly joined them.

How naturally they reply to His question, “Are thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?”

This is the opportunity Jesus has been seeking. Now He can turn their thoughts in another direction. For this He has left the city streets and turned to this dusty road. How delicately He handles the conversation. He could have boldly declared, “I am your Lord and Master.” All He would have needed to do to prove His words would be to show them His nail-pierced hands, His wounded side, as He did later to doubting Thomas. But no; they are not prepared for such a sudden revelation.

Now Jesus begins to reason with them gently. What right have they to doubt? Have they not read in the Scriptures that these things must be, and has He not told them what is to happen to Him? Why are they leaving the place of His burial so soon? Have they heeded His counsel to meet Him in Galilee? Why this hasty retreat homeward? Surely the Word of God will be fulfilled. Have patience and hope.

Like the choicest ointment are these tender sympathetic words to their wounded souls. The balm of Gilead begins to do its work, and their hearts awaken to renewed hope.

Now the disciples turn to look more intently upon this Stranger. Who is this one? they question. But still they know Him not.

One more step must be taken before they fully recognize Him. Why this devious approach by the Lord of glory? Could He not then have touched their eyes saying, "Behold me, the one whom ye love and seek?" But no; still He hesitates. A crucial moment has come. They stand before the home of one of the disciples.

These men have been greatly comforted by this highway companion. As He is about to bid them farewell and pass on, they say, "Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent." But Jesus does not readily accept this invitation, and not until they press Him to tarry (the Scripture says, "They constrained him") does He enter in.

Now, in the closest fellowship of the evening meal, when all barriers of reserve have been voluntarily laid aside, does the Savior choose to reveal Himself. And how quick the response. All the arguments have been presented. The proofs of Messiah ship have been made plain. Prejudices have been overcome. The hearts of these men are prepared for what is about to happen. The Holy Book states:

"And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight. And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?" Luke 24:30-32.

As Christ makes Himself known a new spirit takes full possession of the disciples. And strange to say, when Jesus suddenly disappears from their midst, no gloom settles down upon them. Now they are certain of their faith, and without taking time to eat or to rest, they spring to their feet and hurry back to the disciples in Jerusalem declaring, "The Lord is risen indeed!"

There is a vital lesson in this beautiful story for all who would be as helpful to others as Jesus was. Why did He act so carefully? Why was He so unobtrusive in His approach to these despondent men? Even when He had an invitation to enter their home He did not respond at once. We are told, "Had the disciples failed to press their invitation, they would not have known that their traveling companion was the risen Lord. Christ never forces His company upon any one."

All too many in their zeal to turn a person from his wayward ways, and not fully realizing the delicate task they have in mind, speak words that repel and do not win. By an unnatural, tactless approach they drive sinners further away from Christ rather than draw them to Him. That is particularly true of persons of delicate and refined natures who resent sudden intrusion upon their privacy. Some, of course, bear more rough handling, but beware lest you blunder in your approach to any man or woman in need of ministrations to the soul.

Here is good instruction for this kind of work: "In the work of soul-winning, great tact and wisdom are needed. The Savior never suppressed the truth, but He uttered it always in love. In His intercourse with others, He exercised the greatest tact, and He was always kind and thoughtful. He was never rude, never needlessly spoke a severe word, never gave unnecessary pain to a sensitive soul. He did not censure human weakness. He fearlessly denounced hypocrisy, unbelief, and iniquity, but tears were in His voice as He uttered His scathing rebukes. He never made truth cruel, but ever manifested a deep tenderness for humanity. Every soul was precious in His sight. He bore Himself with divine dignity; yet He bowed with the most tender compassion and regard to every member of the family of God. He saw in all, souls whom it was His mission to save." Gospel Workers, page 117.

"Of all people in the world, reformers should be the most unselfish, the most kind, the most courteous. In their lives should be seen the true goodness of unselfish deeds. The worker who manifests a lack of courtesy, who shows impatience at the ignorance or waywardness of others, who speaks hastily or acts thoughtlessly, may close the door to hearts so that he can never reach them.

“As the dew and the still showers fall upon the withering plants, so let words fall gently when seeking to win men from error. God's plan is first to reach the heart. We are to speak the truth in love, trusting in Him to give it power for the reforming of the life. The Holy Spirit will apply to the soul the word that is spoken in love.”

“Let your speech,” says Paul, “be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.” Colossians 4:6. This was the manner of Christ toward all who were in need of saving truth. His words were seasoned with grace, and His approach was one of sympathy and understanding.

The unobtrusive manner in which Christ dealt with the two discouraged disciples on the way to Emmaus and on other occasions with the Samaritan woman by Jacob's well and the timid woman of Galilee who was healed by a touch of His garment, is an important lesson to all who would be His followers in the delicate work of turning men to righteousness.