

ONLY THE HUMBLE SHALL BE EXALTED.

– MARK 10:35-45. – MAY 22. –

Golden Text: "For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister."

SEVERAL weeks intervened between the incidents of the last lesson and the present one. In that time the Lord had crossed over Jordan in answer to the request of Mary and Martha that he should come and heal their brother Lazarus, who was sick. Jesus arrived intentionally too late for this, but awakened Lazarus from sleep, and thereby aroused a great storm of opposition, especially amongst the scribes and Pharisees, who sought to put him to death. Knowing that his time was not yet come, he retired into a mountain of northern Judea, but at the time of this lesson he with his twelve apostles was en route for Jerusalem. He had just explained to them more particularly the ignominy, shame and death which he would experience, and repeated his assurance of his resurrection. The rich young ruler had just visited him, and gone away sorrowful upon learning the terms of discipleship. Jesus had just said, How hardly shall they who have riches enter into the Kingdom; the apostles had inquired what they should have since they had left all, and Jesus assured them that they should have a hundred fold more in this present time, with persecution, and in the world to come everlasting life.

The context says that Jesus was walking in advance of the twelve, who were discussing matters amongst themselves, overawed by the stupendous things which the Lord had declared to be imminent. The courage of our Lord in the narrow way fills us with admiration. What a strong character was his! He had no thought of turning back; he was intent upon accomplishing his Father's will – upon sacrificing himself in the interest of others. A noble pattern the apostles saw before them – greatness in humility, victory through service.

A GOODLY HERITAGE DESIRED.

It was at this time that James and John approached the Lord in a private manner. Matthew tells us that their mother Salome was with them and really made the request [R3362 : page 139] for them in their names. Salome is supposed to have been the sister of Mary, the aunt of Jesus, in which event James and John were his full cousins. Realizing that matters were drawing to a crisis they sought of the Lord an assurance that they two might be very close to him in the Kingdom, one on his right hand and one on his left, the two positions of chiefest favor.

Our Lord did not reprove them, for doubtless he read in their hearts a great love and loyalty toward himself; and the desire for the positions indicated not merely the desire for the honors and authority implied, but specially because this would bring them closer to himself. Had the Lord seen in their hearts an evil form of ambition, undoubtedly he would have reproved it on the spot. His answer, however, was so framed as to impress these brothers and all of his followers since with what is implied in joint-heirship with the Lord in the Kingdom. Very forceful is the expression, "Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I drink of, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?"

The cup signifies experiences – as, for instance, when our Lord said, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" (John 18:11.) Our Lord wished his disciples to see clearly that the Father had poured for him a special cup of experiences, and had required of him special baptism into death, as conditions precedent to his glory and Kingdom; and that whoever would become his associates in the Kingdom must become also his associates in the sufferings of this present time – in the ignominy and whatever experiences the Father might see best to permit as tests of faith and devotion and character. Our Lord did not refer to the Memorial

Supper cup, but to the experiences which it symbolized, even as he did not refer to water baptism, but to the baptism into death which is symbolized by the water immersion.

How heart-searching was this question! It meant, Are ye willing? because it would be impossible for the disciples to have known their own ability except in the sense of having confidence in God that he would give the ability to those who had their wills thoroughly subjected to his. This is illustrated in the symbolical baptism, in which one no more buries himself than he raises himself. We merely surrender our wills, our all, to the Lord, and he by his Word and grace works in us to will and ultimately to do his good pleasure – expecting from us only the possibilities, and assisting us to these with grace sufficient for us, for every time of need.

"MY GRACE IS SUFFICIENT FOR YOU."

That these two noble apostles were not inspired by selfish ambitions in this request is evidenced by their prompt reply to the Lord's searching question and later on evidenced by their faithfulness even unto death. They said, "We are able" – that is, "We are willing. God helping us, we will sacrifice everything to follow in your footsteps; we will count nothing dear unto us; we will lay aside every weight and every sinful besetment; we will run with patience the race set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith." This we may assume to be a larger statement of their devotion.

Our Lord's love and sympathy went out to them afresh as he answered them, guaranteeing that with such willingness of heart they should indeed have the experiences necessary to fit them for a place in the Kingdom. What a comfort this is to even the weakest of the Lord's followers who are sincere.

The Lord looketh at the heart, and if he sees there full devotion to himself, he is pleased to grant to such his blessing, his aid, saying, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." "My grace is sufficient for

thee – my strength is made perfect in weakness." We, too, are desirous of sharing the Kingdom with our Lord, yet not from love of exaltation above others, but from a desire to have this evidence that we please our Father and our Lord Jesus – to have this closeness of relationship to him, and to have the privilege of participation with our dear Redeemer in the great work of blessing all the families of the earth in due time. It is well that we should have the Lord's answer clearly before our minds, and know that unless we partake of his cup and are immersed into his death, we can have no share in his Kingdom of glory. Let us then count all things else as loss and as dross to obtain this necessary experience. As it comes to us let us not be fearful, nor think strange of the fiery trials that shall try us, as though some strange thing had happened unto us. On the contrary, even hereunto were we called, that we might now suffer with the Lord and by and by be glorified together with him.

As for the particular place to be occupied in the Kingdom by the sons of Zebedee or by us, our Lord pointed out that the assigning of such positions was in the Father's hands – the choicest positions shall be given to those for whom they have been prepared by the Father. Not that we are to understand that the Father prepared the places in advance by any arbitrary divisions, but rather that the Father's pre-arranged plan is that each of the followers of Jesus shall have positions of honor in the Kingdom proportionate to the zeal of their faithfulness in the present time – for none shall have any part in the Kingdom who do not now prove faithful.

THE MEEKEST AND MOST ZEALOUS.

It is not for us to decide the zeal and faithfulness of the apostles – to say which two would better fill these positions of chiefest honor. The Father will make no mistake. It will not surprise us, however, should we find the Apostle Paul in one of these two positions. His faithful, loving zeal and loyalty seem to shine out conspicuously even amongst those who were also faithful and loyal. It is not for us to have

any ambitious feelings respecting this matter, except that we desire always to serve the Lord and be pleasing to him, and eventually to be as close to him as possible. When we remember that the closer we come to him in the present trials and experiences and **[R3362 : page 140]** suffering with faithfulness the closer we will be to him in the future, it explains to us the meaning of the Apostle's words when speaking of his severe trials: he called them light afflictions but for a moment, working out a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. – 2 Cor. 4:17.

We recall that there had been, a little while before, some rivalry amongst the apostles as to which should be greatest in the Kingdom. At that time Jesus took a little child as an exemplification of candor and guilelessness, and assured them that unless they became as little children – simple-hearted, honest, candid, they could in no wise have any part in his Kingdom. Now, when the **[R3363 : page 140]** ten other disciples learned the special mission of Salome and the request made by and for James and John, they were indignant at them. Possibly some of them, Judas included, were very anxious for the authority and power and dignity of the throne, but without the very special love and longing to be near the Master himself which seem to have influenced James and John in their request. But Jesus set matters straight with them all, and turned their displeasure into an opportunity for another good lesson, by the assurance that the chief positions in the Kingdom would be given along the lines of meritorious service, and that thus each one of them would have his opportunity to strive for the chief position by striving to render service to the others.

Amongst the Gentiles the rulers are lords, who do no serving but are served, but among the followers of Jesus the rule is to be reversed; he who would serve most was to be esteemed most highly. What a beauty there is in the divine order of things! how thoroughly all who are right minded can sympathize with the principles here laid down! How reasonable they are and how contrary to the spirit of the world. Truly, the Lord's followers will in this sense of the word be a peculiar

people in their zeal for good works – for serving one another and for doing good unto all men as they have opportunity. The Apostle Peter emphasizes this point (I Pet. 5:6), "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time." "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted, and he that exalteth himself shall be abased." – Luke 14:11.

OUR LORD SERVANT OF ALL.

The Lord did not have one standard for his followers and another standard for himself. Consequently, when they heard him say, Whosoever of you will be chief shall be servant of all, they could promptly recognize that this was the course that he had pursued – that he had been servant to them all; and it was on account of the services that he was continually rendering them that they delighted to serve him, to acknowledge him their Master and to walk in his steps. Indeed they had seen only a small fragment of the Lord's sacrificing and of its far-reaching influence as a service to others. We can see this as we recognize the fact that our Lord was about to die, not merely for his disciples, not merely for the Jews, but to be a propitiation for the sins of the whole world, that the whole world eventually might have a blessing – a blessed opportunity for coming to life eternal through the merit of his service. Our Lord called this to their attention, saying, "For verily the Son of man came not to be ministered unto [served] but to minister [serve], and to give his life a ransom for many." This is one of the very explicit statements of Scripture respecting the object of our Lord's death – that it was not for his own sins that he died, that on the contrary it was for ours, and that in thus dying he gave himself a ransom price – a corresponding price for the sins of the whole world.

No other lesson requires to be so carefully learned by the Lord's people as this lesson of humility. It has to do with the very humblest of the flock, as well as with those who are teachers and elders and pilgrims, etc.; but the degree of force that seems to come with the

besetment or temptation seems to multiply in proportion to the position and attainments of the individual. Pride and ambition may be in those who have no official position in the Church, often asserted in fault-finding and criticism which, to the hearers, is intended to imply superior wisdom or ability on the part of the critic – that his wisdom and ability only wait for opportunity to manifest his greatness above his fellows. We are not objecting to a kindly brotherly word of criticism given privately and with a view to helpfulness, but merely to the kind which vaunteth itself and seeks to do injury to the reputation of another occupying a preferred position.

"BE NOT MANY OF YOU TEACHERS."

As the Apostle intimates, however, this besetment bears chiefly upon those who have some talent, some ability, and whom their fellows have to some extent honored as teachers. Little men, like little ships with broad sails, are in great danger of being capsized if too strong a wind of popularity play upon them. Not only so, but we believe that even the most humble, the most faithful, the most zealous to be servants of the cause, have continual need to be on their guard lest their good intentions should be used of the Adversary as a trap for their ensnarement. Let us remember the Apostle's words, "Be not many of you teachers, my brethren, knowing that a man [who is a teacher] shall receive greater condemnation" – he is exposed to greater trials and temptations as a result. This must not hinder any who have talents from using them, but it should make each one very careful that he does not think more highly of himself than he ought to think, but to think soberly. If the judgment of the majority of the congregation does not recognize his adaptation to the service of a teacher, he should humbly accept its conclusion as correct, no matter how highly he had thought of himself previously. And even if the majority should conclude that he is worthy of a position as a teacher in Zion, he should tread very softly before the Lord, very humbly, realizing that those who in any degree attempt to impart instruction in spiritual things to others are to that extent **[R3363 : page 141]** acting

as representatives and mouthpieces of the Lord himself, the Head of the body; and all should keep in mind the Lord's words in this Golden Text and his own exemplification of the matter – that he who serves most and not he who lords it most should have the chief respect of the Lord's people.

