

## THE CALL OF THE MASTER

"And when she had so said, she went her way, and called Mary her sister secretly saying, The Master is come, and calleth for thee." John 11:28.

Many of the stories from the life and ministry of Christ begin with the account of the needs of some individual. This one begins with the account of the illness of Lazarus. Having lost their father and their mother, and never having had a husband, Mary and Martha were all the more fond of and devoted to their brother, who supposedly made the living for the family.

The two sisters, Mary and Martha, sent word to Christ, saying, "Lord, he whom thou lovest is sick." What a marvelous lesson! When trouble came they wanted Christ to know about it. Through the intervening centuries, as unnumbered multitudes of people have become burdened, they have instinctively reached out through the darkness to feel for the hand of Christ. When Mary and Martha had a great need, they told Christ about it. They thought that was sufficient. They certainly did not think it necessary for them to suggest to Him what to do. They had faith enough in Him to believe that He would do the right thing. We would certainly do well to have and to exercise as much faith. They merely informed Christ that Lazarus, whom He loved, was sick. That was all that they deemed necessary.

Christ's reaction to their prayer was rather surprising. We are told that "He abode two days still in the same place where He was." Finally Lazarus died, but Christ still had not come. That is one of the most difficult things about prayer. If God says, "No," we can accept it. If He says, "Yes," we are glad. But when God keeps on saying, "Wait," we find that the hardest to bear. Sometimes it seems that God waits too long, but He doesn't.

The atmosphere of that home in Bethany must have been one of understanding, peace and sweet fellowship between the sisters and their brother, for we are told that Christ frequently visited there. We are told also that "Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus."

Now Mary and Martha had broken hearts because their brother had died. It was then that "many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them." So many things on this earth have changed -- the clothes we wear, the food we eat, and even the language we speak, but people are still the same. When a heart is broken, friends still come to sympathize and to comfort. What a blessing it is to have someone who cares to share our sorrows! Sometimes a friend who cares means more than anything else on earth. Sometimes when disappointment, accident, sickness and sorrow come, we feel that God has forgotten us, but that is not true.

When anxiety and sorrow visit a happy home the arrival of a loving and trusted friend always brings a wonderful strength and comfort. We can therefore enter into the feelings of Mary and Martha, the two bereaved sisters, when they realized that at long last the Master was coming to see them. They were uplifted wonderfully by the realization that Christ was appearing on the scene. It was because Christ loved Mary and Martha and Lazarus that His coming that day meant so much to those distressed sisters and brought them such ineffable comfort and hope.

As the Master approached the home in Bethany that day, Martha ran out to meet Him and said, "Lord, if thou hadst been here my brother had not died." Even though Christ had delayed His coming until death had removed Lazarus, Martha was not bitter. One of the most pitiful creatures to be found anywhere is a person who has allowed a sorrow to make him bitter. Notice the

wonderful faith and spirit of Martha expressed in her statement, "even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee." Even though her brother had died, Martha still believed that Christ could do something. We have a familiar saying to the effect that, "As long as there is life, there is hope," but Martha went beyond that. She had hope after the life of her brother had ended. Then, Christ said, "Thy brother shall rise again." When Martha was comforted by the Lord, she rushed back into her home and called her sister, Mary, and said, "The Master is come, and calleth for thee." "As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly, and came unto him" (John 11:29).

The compassionate heart of the Master is always seeking sinners and wooing them to Himself. To every sinner the Master always calls through various means. Among them are the following:

#### I. He Calls Through The Bible.

Martha carried the direct word of Jesus to Mary. This is the call of God for sinners through the Word. "Come" is one of the most prominent words. "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isaiah 1:18). A pleading Saviour urges every man to stop and reason. If you will reason, you will get your sins forgiven.

"Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." That is God's call. No one else can forgive man's sins or save his soul. God calls man to Him in order that He might give him forgiveness and peace. "Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price" (Isaiah 55:1).

God knows the thirst of the human heart. He knows how unsatisfying are the dregs of the cup of sin. He invites us to come to Him and to drink. "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked but the wicked turn from his way and live." God does not hate sinners, but He loves them. God does not delight in punishment, but in mercy. He is grieved in His heart by the sins of men, and He is longing, seeking, and pleading for men to return to Him and to be saved.

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30). Jesus promises rest for the weary, ease of heart to the burdened and peace to the troubled. Jesus encourages people to come to Him. "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that comes to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37). His constant grief is expressed in John 5:40 -- "And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." He always begs sinners to come to Him. When He was about to close the canon of the Scriptures, He finished with one more plea to sinners. "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Revelation 22:17). All these Scriptures say: "Come!" The Bible warns people, invites people, urges people, and pleads with people to come to Christ for mercy and forgiveness. One who does not come to Him is without excuse. The only reason that any stay away from Christ is because of their love of sin.

## II. He Calls Through Christians.

Jesus sent Martha to tell Mary, "The Master is come, and calleth for thee." It has always been God's plan that those who have heard His call should tell others. The invitation, plea and persuasion of a Christian constitutes the call of Christ to sinners. Paul said, "Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." We are ambassadors for Christ. Unsaved friend, heed the pleading of the saved. Their invitation is God's call. He speaks to your heart through your loved ones.

## III. He Calls Through His Goodness.

"Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance" (Romans 2:4). His goodness is always calling men to be saved. When Jesus sent the word by Martha to Mary that she should come and see him, there must have come to Mary's mind at once one thousand tender memories that bound her heart to Jesus. She thought of how she had sat at His feet when Jesus visited their home. She recalled the tender deeds which she had seen Him do; how He had healed the sick, given sight to the blind, and forgiven sinners. How different her home had been since Jesus began to come by and spend the night with them. Life had been so much sweeter. What a friend Jesus is! The memories of God are as fresh as dwe, and are new every morning. "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's " (Psalm 103:3-5).

God's blessings should cause all of us to be Christians. As we think of our good health, His protection and our families, we recall "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance" (Romans 2:4)? For all the goodness of God, you owe Him your love and affection and praise. Accept God's mercies, heed His call, trust Christ, receive Him as your Saviour, surrender to Him, and dedicate all that you have and are to Him.

## IV. He Calls Through Trouble.

Those sisters could not see any good in the sickness and death of Lazarus. It was the old sadness, "It might have been." It was unthinkable to them that Jesus had planned this just so, and had stayed away when He could have come; but He rejoiced with His disciples over this opportunity to glorify God. "Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him" (John 11:14-15).

Jesus had holy plans in the death of Lazarus. He used this sorrow to call Mary to Him, and to teach her to trust Him more and to love Him better. God calls through sorrow those who will not heed His pleading and bountiful goodness nor listen to His Word. Some who love business will not listen to Christ until their business is smitten. God calls through sorrow and grief. David said, "Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word."

We do not like trouble; we cannot feel that there is any good in suffering. We shrink from sorrow. Sometimes God has to seek our hearts through trouble. "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth" (Hebrews 12:6).

God calls through disappointment, poverty, trouble and sorrow. What we call accidents are often planned dealings with the hearts of sinners. Give a loving testimony to those who are in trouble. Wherever there is a broken heart, there is always an opportunity to speak for God. "The master has come and calls for you. Will you hear Him and come to Him as we sing the hymn of invitation?