

CHRIST'S CALL TO YOUTH

"Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me." Mark 10:21.

Christ was on His last journey to Jerusalem. He had just left the house where He had blessed the children, when this man suddenly appeared on the scene. He was a young man; and Christ wants the young -- with the strength of youth in their bodies, the fire of hope in their souls, and the swing of victory in their steps.

"How beautiful is youth! how bright it gleams
With its illusions, aspirations, dreams!
Book of beginnings, story without end,
Each maid a heroine, and each man a friend!"

This young man possessed many praiseworthy virtues. His temperament was amiable. His disposition was admirable and lovable. He was unusually discerning. His character was above reproach. He was justly proud of his clean record. This young man was wealthy. He had many possessions, but that fact speaks of great opportunity and grave peril. No amount of money can satisfy the deep longings of the human heart. This young man had position, possessions, prominence, prestige, and power, and yet he was neither happy nor satisfied. There was a craving in his heart for something which he did not have. He was not displeased with what he had, but he was dissatisfied with what he was. He had not obtained that for which his soul was longing.

Believing that eternal life was the supreme good, the young man wanted to know what he could do to inherit it. It was natural to suppose that he would be willing to do whatever might be required of him in order to obtain the blessing of eternal life. Such was not the case. He wanted the blessing, but he had to have it on his own terms. Consequently, he never received it, because he refused to meet the conditions laid down by the only One Who had eternal life to give. He refused to yield his will to the will of Christ, turned his back on the Saviour, and went away disappointed and grieved. He was unwilling to do what Christ told him, namely, to sell what he had and give the proceeds to the poor; in other words, to dispose of what was standing between him and salvation, to be saved, and then to follow Him.

You, young people, who have just graduated from high school, are at the forks of the road in life. One is the low road of selfishness and sin which leads down into the mud and slime of life. The other road is the high one of godliness, happiness and service. Lying out before each of you today is a road that leads downward and a road that leads upward. Which road are you going to travel?

Christ is calling you to:

I. A New Principle Of Life.

The principle to which Christ is calling you is the one which the cross symbolizes and illustrates -- self-denial, selflessness, sacrifice and service. George Macdonald told us that a selfish man was inside himself, and so had never seen life from Christ's viewpoint. By making self rather than Christ the center, this young man made a double mistake: he set too high a value on his own attainments, and he overestimated his willingness to pay the price of betterment. He was self-deceived as well as self-centered. He had never taken an accurate measurement of himself. So, when Christ's test was applied, he failed. He thought that he was anxious to get saved, but he found himself unwilling unless the terms were agreeable.

II. A New Leadership Of Life.

Christ wanted the young man to receive Him as his Saviour, and then to follow Him as teacher, philanthropist and example. Following Christ's leadership unifies life, as with Livingstone, who on the next to his last birthday, wrote in his diary, "Lord Jesus, my king, my life, my all, I again dedicate my whole self to Thee." Following Christ's leadership concentrates life, as with Paul, whose life-motto was "This one thing I do." Following Christ's leadership conserves life, and renders impossible an aimless, guideless, godless and purposeless career, like the man of whom the President of Leland Stanford University spoke. He said that while driving over a long, hot California road, he overtook a tramp with a bundle thrown over his shoulder. Thinking it selfish not to give a fellow traveler a lift when there was a vacant seat in his car, the President stopped his car and asked, "Wouldn't you like a ride, sir?" The man drawled out, "No, I don't think I would; I ain't goin' no place, and so I ain't in no hurry." Following Christ glorifies life, by making it a mission rather than a career. Regardless of virtue and genius, life is never complete until it is crowned with Christ's leadership.

III. A New Enrichment Of Life.

The upper road where Christ walks and to which He calls us is the road of the noble life and useful service. It is a clean road and one that affords much happiness. I have seen many young people arrive at the forks of the road -- the upper and the lower. I have observed some choose to travel the low road and go down into sorrow, oblivion and uselessness. I have seen others take the upper road, and now they are living beautiful and useful lives. They are a joy to God and a blessing to others. The Lord Jesus Christ says to you Christian young people today, "Follow me." He wants to make you into the finest and most useful people that you are capable of being. He wants you to walk with Him on the upper road of true happiness and great service.

Look at the difference between Napoleon and Christ Jesus. Napoleon lived to kill and to destroy, while Christ lived to save and to serve. Napoleon had the lowest ideals, and Christ had the highest. The ambition of the former was to rule and ruin, and the ambition of the latter was to save and to serve. Napoleon took the lower road and is remembered as one of the world's greatest failures. Christ took the upper road and is forever remembered as the world's greatest benefactor. Which road are you going to take?

I bring to you Christ's call to youth, and to every Christian regardless of age, to follow Him on the high road. You should follow Him on the high road for various reasons.

1. It is the road of satisfaction.

God's Word tells us about two men who sought satisfaction on the lower road. The Old Testament tells us about one, and the New Testament tells us about the other. Solomon ran the whole gamut of wealth, wisdom, works, wine and women. He came down to the end of the way broken in heart and disappointed in spirit. He cried out, "All is vanity and vexation of spirit." The other was the rich young ruler, who did not find any satisfaction on the lower road and died without salvation.

Satisfaction cannot be found in riches. A wealthy man was asked, "Does your wealth make you happy?" He replied, "I only wish that it did. I know many people who would be happy if money could produce happiness." You will not

find lasting satisfaction in fame. Alexander the Great, at the age of thirty-two, had conquered the known world. Not being satisfied with his conquests, he wept because there were not any more worlds to conquer. Neither will you find lasting satisfaction in sinful pleasure. The pleasures of sin are but for a season. Lasting joy is found only as we follow Christ on the upper road of service.

Paul found real satisfaction through knowing Christ and following Him. You and I must find it in the same way. The life of Christ was the most successful and useful life that was ever lived because He lived for others.

Many fail to find satisfaction and happiness today because they are building their lives on faltering foundations. A woman one day looked out of her window and saw a mother bird building her nest under a rose bush. She said, "Ah, pretty creature, you are building your nest too low. You are risking the lives of the little ones you hope to have someday." Before long there were four little blue eggs in the nest, and then sometime later there were four little birds in the nest, chirping and begging the mother to bring them their food. One day the woman heard a cry of distress from outside the window. Looking out she saw that a snake had crawled up to the nest and was devouring the last of the little birds, while the broken-hearted mother fluttered about in distraction. Her folly was that she built too low. That can be your folly, too. If you build your life on worldly foundations, you will fail to find satisfaction. Let Christ be the foundation of your life. Walk with Him on the upper road and you will surely find it to be a road of satisfaction.

2. It is the road of wisdom.

In Solomon's dream he chose wisdom and God commended him for this choice. Later on we hear him saying, "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding" (Proverbs 4:7). A certain school used the following slogan on a signboard: "Be Somebody." The signboard was simply saying, "Learn something and be somebody." If we are to have wisdom, we must be controlled by the Master Mind, Christ Himself. The greatest minds of the world have been subject to the great mind of Christ.

Emerson and Longfellow were intimate friends. In the latter years of Emerson's life, his mind began to fail. He attended Longfellow's funeral, and looking down into the face of the great poet, Emerson said, "This was a lovely soul, but I forget his name." His mind was in ruins. What a tragedy, but it is a greater tragedy to have a mind which is not controlled by the Master Mind of Christ.

3. It is the clean road.

It takes real courage to accomplish great feats in life, but it takes more courage to face life day by day and live in conformity to the highest and best ideals. I have known many fine young people, who were reared correctly in good Christian homes, and had bright prospects in life. But, when they went away to school, they took the lower road. They chose the wrong companions and launched out on the primrose path. Anybody can do that, but it takes a real gentleman or a real lady to overcome the temptations of daily life and to walk down the high road of cleanliness and purity. If one is to stay clean and to follow Christ on the upper road, he will certainly need God's help.

4. It is the road of usefulness.

Nearly two thousand years ago Christ said that we must lose life if we are to

find it in the true sense. They put Him to death, but they could not kill or destroy the principles and ideals which He taught. One's usefulness is always determined by his nearness and likeness to Christ.

5. It is the road of power.

A railroad engine has tremendous power, if and when it is used. Young people have latent talents and power. Oh, that these talents might be used for God and for others! If you have the power of a Cadillac, you ought not to pull the load of a wheelbarrow. If you have the opportunities of a steam shovel, you ought not to dig with a spade. Take the great power which God has given you and use it for Christ and His great work. Your strength may be small, but if you will attach your weakness to the great power of Christ, your life will be so much stronger and so much more useful, and you will be able to make a worthwhile and lasting contribution to the world. If you will follow Christ, you will be in the pathway of power.

Lives are transformed when they follow Christ. Matthew was a despised and greedy tax collector. What he loved, wanted and worked for most of all was money. Sad to say, he was unscrupulous as to how he got it. One day Christ went down to the toll booth where Matthew was at his post of duty. Aware of Matthew's sinfulness, need of forgiveness, and possibilities in God's service, Christ uttered the call to him, "Follow me." He called him to salvation, to intimate friendship, to holy fellowship, and to sacred employment. Instantly, unhesitatingly and resolutely, without asking a single question, Matthew answered the sudden, clear, definite and effectual call of Christ, and stepped out of his bondage into liberty, peace, satisfaction and joy as he came into possession of eternal life and began his journey with Christ on the upper road. Because of what Christ did for him, Matthew might have said what a song writer penned years later:

"In loving-kindness Jesus came:
My soul in mercy to reclaim,
And from the depths of sin and shame
Through grace He lifted me.

From sinking sand He lifted me,
With tender hand He lifted me,
From shades of night to plains of light,
O praise His name, He lifted me!"

Peter was a blundering, cursing fisherman, but when the Saviour saved and transformed him, he became a mighty instrument in the hand of Christ. Jane Addams was a frivolous society woman, but when she was saved and transformed by Christ, she gave her life in the service of the poor and she has been named one of America's greatest women. Sir Wilfred Grenfell was a young medical doctor who wanted to settle down in a lucrative London practice. But, when he was made over by Christ, he went out to give his life away for the fisher-folk on the frozen coasts of Labrador. And he is recognized as one of the world's truly great men. The human race has been blessed wonderfully by those who have followed Christ on the upper road.

6. It is the road to heaven.

If you are not saved and ready for eternity, you are not ready for anything. The main thing in life is not to get an education, nor to carve out a great career, but to get one's self into right relationship to God through faith in Christ. With Him as your Saviour and Lord, you are ready for life, ready for death, and ready for eternity.

The president of a great railroad system lay dying. Gripping the hand of his son, he said to him, "Son, you are holding the hand of the greatest failure in the world." The son said, "Father, you haven't been a failure. You have built a great railroad empire. You have made millions of dollars -- you have employed thousands of people." "Yes," replied the father, "but in doing all of this, I have left Christ out and the man who does that is a failure, whatever else he may do in life." That man was right. You may amass a great fortune, you may count your friends by the thousands, you may rise to the heights in this world, but any man who leaves Christ out of his life is a dismal failure. He has little to live for in this life and nothing to look forward to in the life to come.

Two little children, a girl and her younger brother, were walking through a railroad tunnel, when, to their horror and consternation, they heard a train thundering down the track. They knew that they would not be able to get out of the tunnel before the train arrived, so they threw themselves against the side of the tunnel and held onto the rock for dear life. As the train came through the tunnel, almost touching their little bodies, the girl kept on screaming to the little boy, "Cling to the rock, brother! Cling to the rock!" Oh, young people, Christ is the Rock of Ages. You are going to need Him now and forever. Let me urge you always to cling to and follow Him. The world's voices will call you to the lower road, but always follow Christ on the upper road, and strive only for His approval.

The world may cast its flowers at your feet. The world may heap honors upon you, but let me urge you always to lift your eyes above the world and to keep them fixed upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
Look full in His wonderful face;
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,
In the light of His glory and grace."

Let everything that you do be done for His approval. Then life will be so much sweeter and better for you. You will then be able to make a real contribution to the present and oncoming generations, and at the end of the way you will hear Him say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."