

A GOOD DAY EVERY DAY

"This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it." Psalm 118:24.

This psalm was meant to be sung on some day of national rejoicing. Some have thought that it points to the period of the restoration from Babylon, when God intervened and set His people free. Be that as it may, it marks the joyful culmination of one of God's mighty deliverances; a day in which joy is a duty, and no heart has a right to be too heavy to leap for gladness.

Private sorrows many of the jubilant worshipers no doubt had, but for this one day at least they must banish all thoughts of gloom and sadness and be glad, for the Lord had done great things for them. Yes; and the Lord has done great things for us. Well may we exult and say: "This is a day which the Lord has contrived; a day which only He could have made possible; we will rejoice and be glad in it."

This psalm was one of thanksgiving for some signal deliverance or victory, and it was sung on some great occasion of national rejoicing. It was the expression of the deep emotion of the psalmist who had come to the temple this day, as he had done many times before. There on many occasions he had accepted the gifts which had been offered -- God's amazing love, God's eager forgiveness, and God's persistent faith in those who had failed Him so often and so signally -- accepting, but with little wonderment, with no thrill, and without any ecstasy in it.

It was all as usual; it had been experienced so often before. And then suddenly, this day, for no reason that we can tell -- except that he had been in deep distress -- the clouds were blown aside, the light of God broke through, and, with a heart stilled and awed and almost frightened, he saw things from God's side of them, saw what had gone into the making of these gifts -- saw them transfigured in the glory of sacrifice. I can see him standing there in amazement, lost in wonder, love and praise, and I can hear him say to himself: "Truly, this is a day which God alone could have contrived; a day that only divine grace and loving-kindness and self-sacrifice could have made possible for me."

Although he lived centuries ago, the psalmist had a philosophy of life that is just as fresh and up-to-date today as it was then. In fact, his philosophy is needed even more in our crowded and hectic day than it was in the more quiet time in which he lived. Let us look at him as he awakened with his face radiant, not only with the outward light of the dawning of a new day, but from the inward light of joy that the new day had brought.

What was the psalmist's secret? He had learned to live a day at a time. Listen to his wise words. He did not say, "That was the day that the Lord had made." It is easy for us to believe that God made some grand days in the far-off yesterday. But the psalmist was not tormented by a backward look. Nor did he say, "That will be the day that the Lord will make." Rather he lives and laughs in the here and now. He says, "This is the day that the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it." Regardless of what yesterday may have been, or of what tomorrow may be, he is going to live joyfully today. He has learned to live one day at a time.

To live a day at a time means to stop living in the past. Many of us have never learned to forget "those things which are behind." Mulling over the mistakes of yesterday paralyzes the efforts of today. Say to yourself, "Yesterday is gone -- utterly and irretrievably gone." It is now completely beyond your control.

Living a day at a time means that one must stop living in the future. Christ spoke of the terrible habit of anticipating troubles and tragedies, most of which actually never take place. Live one day at a time, and live it well.

Yesterday is as completely gone beyond your reach as any day in the year one. Your past is beyond recall. This is true regardless of what your attitude to yesterday may be. Perhaps yesterday bored some of you. You may have found it not only tiresome but painful. Maybe it brought you some bitter disappointments. Maybe it introduced you to some tragedy. If so, you may now be glad that it is in the past.

Others look to yesterday with wistful eyes. Their past is full of delightful memories. Those good days were not so good when they were actually living them. They were the days of their fathers that were good then. But now that they have once been theirs and are theirs no more, they look back to them with wistful eyes.

Still others look upon yesterday with longing eyes because they realize that they did not use it well. They are conscious that they spent its treasure for a poor second best. Some even chose to use it to wound others as well as injure themselves. Naturally they would like to rub out some ugly stains and scars and to heal some wounds, but this is an impossibility.

But, regardless of what our attitude toward yesterday may be, it has gone from us forever. And, tomorrow has not arrived. So, don't try to recover yesterday, or to live in some tomorrow that may never come. Today is all you have. Concentrate on today and live it well. Not only is today all we have and all we can manage, but it is all we need. It is not the quantity of life but its quality that really counts.

"We live in deeds, not years;
In thoughts, not breaths;
In feelings, not in figures on a dial."

In one of his books Dr. F. W. Boreham of Australia related an experience of his college days. He went to conduct the anniversary service in a village chapel in Surrey. He stayed in a quaint old cottage occupied by the widow of a former minister. When he retired he saw that he had been given her bedroom. In the morning when he pulled up the blind he saw that into the glass had been cut the words, "This is the day." At breakfast he asked the old lady about it. She explained that she had had a lot of trouble in her time and was always afraid of what was going to happen on the morrow. Each morning as she woke she felt as if she had the weight of the world upon her. One day as she was reading her Bible she came across the words of our text. It occurred to her that "this day" means any day and every day. "Why should I be afraid of the days if He makes them?" So she scrawled the words as well as she could on the window-pane, so that every time she rolled up the blind in the morning she was confronted with the reminder, "This is the day." Realizing that the Lord had made it, she was no longer afraid. The world has multitudes of people who wake up every morning dreading what the day may bring, or at least not looking forward to it with any joy. It would make all the difference in the world if they would greet each day as it comes as a gift from God, and say, "This is the day which the Lord hath made."

Sir William Osler, the famous Canadian physician, when asked the secret of his success replied that as a student at Montreal General Hospital his whole life had been changed by reading some words of Carlyle: "Our main business is not to see what lies dimly at a distance, but to do what lies clearly at hand." Forty years later Osler told his students that his success had not depended on any special quality of brains, but simply that he had learned the art of living in what he called "daylight compartments." Like Osler we can learn to cooperate with God's plan of dividing life up into days and living a day at a time.

There are no such things as good days and bad days. They are all God's days. "This is the day which the Lord hath made." Each day is good because God made it. In one of his letters Vincent van Gogh, the Dutch painter, wrote: "How beautiful it is outside when everything is wet from the rain. I ought not to let a single shower pass." He went out

eagerly to meet everything that God's day brought him, sunshine and showers alike. God works in shadows as well as in light. He uses the sorrows of life as well as its joys. So we need not dread the day, for it is God's day; even the shadows are in His hands.

Christ taught us to make the most of today, keep free from anxiety about the future, because the God Who cares for the smallest bird is quite capable of looking after our needs. God will supply our needs each day if we do that day's work faithfully and well. We should commit the future quietly into the hands of God. The future may be out of our control, but it is not out of His. Though we do not know what the future may bring, we do know the God of the future. He is our Father, and He knows what we need. Let us leave our needs confidently to Him! That is how our Saviour lived. He made the most of His limited time on earth by filling each day full with the work of bringing men to God.

Let us learn to receive each day as a gift from God, and find in it the hand of God at work! Even the day of trouble and disaster, the day of defeat and disappointment, may become a day of God's own making. It is told of one of the Covenanting martyrs that when he awoke on the day on which he was appointed to die, he said to a fellow-prisoner, "This is the day which the Lord hath made," and went out joyfully to meet his Lord. Many of our days are just ordinary days, with their round of small duties. Yet each day is one of those "all the days" for which our Lord promised His abiding presence with us. "I am with you all the days, every day, and all day long."

If you will take this text, as God meant for you to do, and build your life around it, then every day, come what may, can be a good day. It is strange and sometimes sad what life does to people. But even more strange and more sad is what people do to life. Life is a gift from God. It is a tremendous privilege to live. When you handle life with skill, it becomes a fabulous experience. And some people make it so. But unhappily there are many poor souls who foul up life. To recognize this tragic fact just read the daily newspaper or listen to the newscasts on television and radio. What a pity that there are so many in the United States who, while they may have achieved certain satisfactions, still find no real meaning in their lives, no deep, throbbing joy, no sense of greatness in what they are or in what they do, who find life -- to quote Hamlet -- "stale, flat, and unprofitable."

Every day we live is made by God. Sometimes we wake to find the sky overcast. A gloomy atmosphere seems to fill every nook and cranny of our homes and we in turn become affected and influenced by it. The day goes by slowly. All our plans are changed and we feel like finding fault with everybody and everything.

Now, I ask you, do you think this is the proper attitude to take on an off day? God does not. He says that we should "rejoice and be glad." Why? Because He made the day, allowing the gloom and the lack of sunshine. He had a purpose in permitting you to live through such a day. He would have His children to be free from the influence of outside conditions. If we are happy only when there is a joyous atmosphere about us, then we show to the world our own joy and gloom instead of that which comes from His indwelling in our lives. We should take the days just as they come, but always possess a uniformity of glad reaction. We should rejoice on a desolate day just as we do on a joyous one. A believer's attitude toward every day should be one of cheer and happiness. Days of adversity, sickness, and sadness are as much days which the Lord has made as days of prosperity, health and happiness. Every day has its contribution to make to your life. If all days were full of sunshine, you would not appreciate God's goodness and you would never know the meaning of divine grace and comfort. The day of bereavement teaches you to lean on God without murmuring; the day of loss instructs you to lay up treasures in heaven, "where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt and where thieves do not break through nor steal"; the day of sickness impresses you with the need of submission and points to the Great Physician, Who heals. The day of sunshine and gladness is an oasis in the

desert, a sort of divine encouragement balancing up the dark days.

"This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it." What a grand and magnificent philosophy this is! If more people practiced it, this would be a different world. There would be fewer grouchy grumblers, and fewer folk to take the joy out of living.

Yes, every day can be a good day. Ah, but someone who calls himself a realist would reply, "You know that there is a variety in our days and you're bound to have some bad days." To be sure, as Longfellow wrote:

"Into each day some rain must fall,
Some days must be dark and dreary."

That is true. But just what is wrong with rain? And just what is wrong with some darkness in a day? Of course there are going to be hard days. There will even be tragic days. But the important thing isn't whether you have dark days. It is what you do with the dark days. The important thing isn't whether you have hard, tragic experiences. It's what you do with the hard, tragic experiences. You will find good in every difficulty if you will look for it. Sometimes you have to struggle to find it. This is the subtlety of life that many people do not understand. Something they call "bad" happens to them. And to them it is all bad. They don't say to themselves, "God has buried something good in this, and I am going to find it." But the person who searches does find it, and later he looks back at that day which he said was a bad day and knows that it was a good one. Every day can be a good day.

When some dark, hard day comes to you, stand off and take a look at it, then think of Christ and say to yourself, "This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it." Then tear that difficulty apart, for somewhere in it you will find the good which God has placed therein for you. This is a glorious truth, built into the very essence of life itself. Every day can be a good day if you will place yourself under the daily guidance of Christ. With His help every day can be a good day.

"I met God in the morning
When the day was at its best,
And His presence came like sunrise,
Like a glory in my breast.

All day long the Presence lingered,
All day long it stayed with me,
And we sailed in perfect calmness
O'er a very troubled sea.

Other ships were blown and battered,
Other ships were sore distressed.
But the winds that seemed to drive them
Brought to us a peace and rest.

Then I thought of other mornings,
With a keen remorse of mind,
When I, too, had loosed the moorings
With the Presence left behind.

So I think I know the secret,
Learned from many a troubled way --
You must seek Him in the morning
If you want Him through the day."