

THE MASTER'S MEMORIAL

"And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me." Luke 22:19.

Man has always wanted to be remembered. What will men not do to keep from being forgotten! We build mausoleums, erect monuments, write books, give gifts, endow colleges, strive to achieve greatness this way and that, daring the perilous and the monotonous, struggling, aspiring, toiling -- just to be remembered. There is no doubt that it is sweet to be remembered and bitter to be forgotten. And the higher a man's thoughts, the broader his sympathies, the deeper his love for his fellow men, the more awful the thought that he may be forgotten.

If mortal man feels that way, if the average human being thus recoils from the fact of forgetfulness, how, indeed, must the Master of men have felt? He knew what was in man. He therefore knew how great the tendency to forget, particularly when the human mind is unaided by constant reminders of a material nature, something that one can handle and see.

Did it ever strike you a bit strange that, in marked contrast to most all great rulers of men, Christ never built Himself a monument of stone? We do not have any record that He ever wrote a word, except on the sands, and yet He yearned to be remembered. He felt and uttered, as no other has done, the heart's deep, true protest against being forgotten. So He left us a marvelous memorial --- marvelous in its simplicity, its significance and its success.

Many great and beautiful things have been done in remembrance. Some of the noblest buildings ever erected by the hands of men have been memorials to those who died. Great hospitals, universities and churches have been erected in remembrance of those who have lived and died.

The Bible makes great use of the faculty of memory. Again and again in the Old Testament, God says to the people of Israel, "Remember." "Remember that thou wast a bondsman in Egypt." "Remember the days of old." "Remember all the way which the Lord thy God hath led thee." "Remember, and do all my commandments." "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth." "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy." Christ makes use of one of man's greatest and noblest and tenderest faculties, memory, to bind His disciples to Him. He established a Supper by which His followers in all the future ages will remember Him.

When Ulysses, on his memorable journey through the islands and lands of the Mediterranean on his way home to Ithaca after the Trojan War, was about to leave the enchanted isle where Calypso lived, she came down to the beach as the ships were putting off and said to him, "Say goodbye to me, but not to the thought of me." Through the Supper which Christ instituted the Master saw to it that His friends would not say goodbye to the thought of Him but would remember Him in every generation. All the tenderness and pathos and hope of Christ speak to us at His table as we hear Him say, "This do in remembrance of me."

Throughout the Scriptures one sees the many ways in which God seeks to keep certain significant events in the minds of His people. The great feasts of the Hebrews and their holy days were intended to remind the worshipers of God's leadership and their dependence upon Him. Thus the Passover reminded the Jews of the delivery from Egypt, and the Feast of the Tabernacles called to their attention the hardships of their forefathers in their march through the wilderness toward the land of promise.

It is so easy to let vital things slip out of memory. Much effort must be given to reminding people of what they already know. The Lord's Supper was given to help us keep the sacrifice of our Saviour in mind. So in the upper room the night before the crucifixion Christ took common bread and common wine, things which were found in the poorest homes in Palestine, and exalted them into symbols of His life which was being given a ransom for many. It did not seem likely in that hour that He would be remembered. In a little while He would be in His grave, having been executed as a criminal of the worst class. Surely everyone else thought that the crucifixion would be the end of Him.

This memorial is unique. It is emphatic in recalling the death of Christ. Other men are remembered by their philosophies or by their disciples. Their birthdays and the anniversaries of their accession to power are celebrated, but in this instance the dying hour of One is commemorated. Only one explanation of this fact can be made. Other men accomplished what they did by their lives, whereas, Christ wrought His great work for mankind by His death. That is why the four Gospels give such extraordinary space and emphasis to His death in their brief biographies of our Saviour and Master. This is in contrast with all other biographies, and all other men, but not their death. But what we celebrate most of all in connection with Christ, and what He asked us to celebrate and remember most of all, is His death. By His death He asks to be remembered. He came into the world by the great miracle of the Incarnation, when the angels sang, and shepherds and Wise Men came in adoration to His cradle. When He was baptized, the heavens were opened, and a voice spake saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." When He conquered temptation and Satan in the desert, the angels came and ministered to Him. When He was transfigured on the mount, Moses and Elijah appeared and spake with Him about His coming death on the cross, and again the voice spake from heaven saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." After His death He rose from the dead and appeared to His disciples, and after forty days He was taken up into heaven, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. But it was not by His incarnation, or His baptism, or His temptation, or His ascension, or any great miracle which He wrought, or any sermon which He preached, but by His death that Christ asked to be remembered.

Why was this pre-eminence given to His death? Because of what His death meant. And what it meant He explained to the disciples just before He said to them, "This do in remembrance of me." He informed them that as He broke the bread which was to feed their bodies so His body was broken for their spiritual nourishment; and as He poured out the wine for their refreshment, so His blood was shed for the remission of sins. By this offering of Himself on the cross and by His death, He made an atonement for our sins.

As we observe the Lord's Supper, we remember that all of us are sinners and that it was His death for us on the cross that has taken away the penalty, stain and sting of sin. When we remember His death for us, we remember the worth of our souls. At times we realize how unworthy we are, how unworthy even of what men do for us, and still more, how unworthy of what God has done for us. And yet when we remember that Christ died for us, we realize the infinite value of our souls because He paid such a great price to redeem them. When we remember the death of Christ, it strengthens us against temptation, for the memory of sin forgiven is like an angel with a drawn sword to keep us back from the way of evil. We also remember that Christ will come again. In Paul's writing on the words of Christ, "This do in remembrance of me," he penned the words, "for as often as ye

eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come." Now we observe the Supper and show His death as a pledge of our faith that He will come again.

"We may now know, we cannot tell,
What pains He had to bear;
But we believe it was for us
He hung and suffered there."

Our observance of the Lord's Supper in remembrance of Christ will stimulate in us a purer and deeper love for our Lord Who did so much for us. It will also increase our gratitude to Him for the mighty deliverance which He wrought for our souls. Our remembrance of Him will inspire us to be more godly. As we remember that His sufferings were involved in our redemption, what else can we do but fully surrender our lives to Him and strive diligently to become more godly? When we gather around the Lord's Table in remembrance of Him, He is very near and dear to us. The more conscious we are of His presence, the deeper will be our consciousness of sin, and the more determined will be our desire to live for Him as He wants us to do. As we take the emblems in our hands and partake of them in remembrance of Him, the Holy Spirit will quicken our hope of Christ's return.

As we obey the Lord's command, "This do in remembrance of me," our obedience will beget humility, sustain faith, elevate affections, stimulate love, increase gratitude, inspire godliness and quicken hope.