

"THE CARPENTER OF NAZARETH"

"Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him." Mark 6:3.

Just before this verse is the statement "such mighty works are wrought by his hands." When they had noted that fact they said in surprise: "Is not this the carpenter?" They did not think that a carpenter could have done such mighty works.

The carpenter! What a title for the Lord of Glory! Is it not strange that He chose to become a carpenter? Surely some precious lesson is enshrined in this choice. It is at once a mysterious and a sobering thought that our Lord spent six times as long working at the carpenter's trade as He did in His world-shaking ministry. He did not shrink from the hidden years of preparation. He must be about His Father's business and accomplish His Father's will. And if that involved eighteen hidden, laborious and tedious years of toil at the carpenter's bench, He would delight to do His Father's will. In His day the trade of a carpenter was not considered dishonorable, and it was a vocation from which many rose to become rabbis. By His own actions He has imparted to a life of toil both dignity and nobility.

To be a carpenter is honorable, but being one does not persuade the world to bestow its crowns of royalty. The fact that Christ worked at this trade, and helped to support Himself and His family, bears real significance.

"Is not this the carpenter?" They knew Him well. He had grown up in their midst. They had watched Him advance from boyhood to young manhood, until He came to be about thirty years of age. Now, after a brief absence from the town of Nazareth, He had gone back, as a teacher. It was not at all strange that He should begin to speak, but the method and marvel of His teaching were strange. Those who knew Him best listened and were amazed. They interrupted His speech by saying, "From whence hath this man these things?" What is the power that lies behind this strange manifestation of wisdom and these strange and wondrous works of which we hear in Nazareth? Then they began to account for Him by saying: "Is not this the carpenter?"

Jesus of Nazareth worked for a living. His family was poor. Work was a necessity. He always met necessity squarely. He was never known to shirk. I doubt if any able-bodied person has a right to live in this world without working. His work may be mental, physical, or spiritual, but the man who never works never contributes to the progress of humanity. Work is both admirable and fundamental. We shall never come upon the day when it is unnecessary for man to work. There is a kind of finality in God's decree that man shall live by the sweat of his face. In that atmosphere men ever have lived and developed their characters. In that atmosphere Christ lived.

In after days when people gathered about Him in multitudes, they never forgot that He once worked even as they had to work. This memory opened many doors of opportunity to Him, which might have otherwise been forever closed. It is easy to imagine when news went about that He was coming into that section that many a farmer would say, "He made the plow that I use. I must hear Him speak." The ox-driver would say, "He made the yoke

with which the oxen pull the burden and it is the best one that I have ever seen. I must hear His message." Old men would say, "He made the chair in which I sit and rest in the evening."

How fitting it was that Christ was a laborer. The hands that were nailed to the cross were hands of honest toil.

He made a man's vocation and religion inseparable. Christianity is necessary in the making of a plow. It operates in the kind of material that goes into the plow. It inspires honesty of workmanship. It tempers, seasons, purifies, and glorifies everything that we do with our hands. Not work but bad workmanship is disgraceful.

When Christ made a plow, He was thinking of the farmer who would use it. When He made a yoke, He was thinking of the oxen that would wear it. When He was making a chair, He was thinking of those who would sit in it. He always had some great end in view in what He did. He made it clear that a person's life is a failure whose labor does not live beyond the span of his own years.

I. The Work of Repairing.

Any carpenter has a lot of repair work to do. If that be true of the work which our Lord did in Nazareth, it is far more true concerning life. How much repairing the Carpenter of Nazareth did with His own wondrous hands! Some of you can testify that you have been in a state of disrepair, and the Carpenter of Nazareth took you in hand, and put you right. In Nazareth it was something that had gone wrong with things in the household. Sometimes it was the mending of a toy which belonged to a little child.

1. Christ repaired a broken home.

In the fifth chapter of Mark we have the account of the Gadarene of whom the demons had taken possession and caused him to be mentally deranged. Local remedies had been tried on him, but to no avail. Instead of getting better, the man grew worse. At length when he became violent and dangerous, the authorities laid hands on him and bound him with heavy iron fetters. He had caused so much anxiety and fear in his own home. Then one day Christ met him and repaired that poor old heart of his, and set his life right; and out of the gratitude of his heart he wanted to go overseas with the Saviour. Christ forbade him to do so, and told him to "go home to thy friends and tell them what great things the Lord hath done for thee."

I can visualize him approaching his home and one of his children, seeing him in the distance, crying out, "Mother, father is coming!" Then, one of the children calls out, "Mother, he is different. Come and look!" Christ mended that broken home.

2. Christ repaired a broken life.

For eighteen years a woman had suffered, and then in a moment Christ repaired her life. When she was healed of her disease, her life was completely repaired. Oh, the joy when the life is thus repaired!

3. Christ repaired a broken heart.

The closing verses of Mark five tell of a little child who had died, and then the Lord Jesus went to that home, took that little child by

the hand, and restored life, and broken hearts were healed.

Christ has always done a lot of repairing. He will repair your home, your life, or your heart if you will put yourself into His hands.

II. The Work of Constructing.

No carpenter would be satisfied to do repair work only. He wants to do some positive work, to build something. Over and over the Word of God shows us how delightful, how beautiful, and how altogether lovely are some of the works that He is constructing. Do you remember this: "He will with the temptation make also a way of escape"? What a lovely thing it is to realize that whatever else awaits us, if we are His, on the other side there is a wondrous home which He has constructed for us. Christ also said: "Upon this rock I will build my church."

In I Samuel 12:6 we read, "The Lord made Moses." Moses was a great man, but he was not a self-made man. The Lord made Moses. First, the Lord made Moses safe. Do you realize that Moses was born unsafe, just as you were? Oh, the peril that surrounded the infant Moses! Secondly, the Lord made Moses humble. The Lord cannot do much for anybody who is not first made humble. To begin with Moses was not humble. The first forty years of his life he was learning to be somebody. And what a mighty somebody he became down there in Egypt! The next forty years he was learning to be nobody. And the last forty years he was learning to help everybody. Third, the Lord made Moses obedient. Fourth, the Lord made Moses successful. Oh, what a mighty work he did for God! How we need to let the Lord make us, and then send us out to be used in His service!

III. The Work of Beautifying.

No good carpenter is satisfied either with the repairing or the constructing. He is not satisfied with mere utility -- he seeks for beauty as well. The thing must not only be useful, but beautiful. If we will commit ourselves into His hands, the Carpenter of Nazareth will not only make us useful in His service, the Carpenter of Nazareth will be made beautiful. Nobody can push you into the hands of Christ; you alone can place yourself there. Are you willing to commit yourself to Him in order that He may repair, construct, and beautify you?