

Sunday, May 8th: 2022

The Bible Readings

The Old Testament Reading: Psalm 84

The Reading from the Epistles: Romans 12:9-21

The Gospel Reading: Matthew 5:1-16

The Hymns

- 1: Yes, God is good
- 2: Jesus wants me for a sunbeam
- 3: Who is on the Lord's side?
- 4: Lord, dismiss us with Thy blessing

The Text for the Sermon

2: The Great Question

"What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good?"

[Psalm 34:12]

1: Yes, God is Good

1: Yes, God is good – in earth and sky,
From ocean depths and spreading wood
Ten thousand voices seem to cry:
God made us all, and God is good.

2: The sun that keeps his trackless way,
And downward pours his golden flood,
Night's sparkling hosts all seem to say
In accents clear, that God is good.

3: The merry birds prolong the strain,
Their song with every spring renewed;
And balmy air, and falling rain,
Each softly whispers: God is good.

4: I hear it in the rushing breeze;
The hills that have for ages stood,

The echoing sky and roaring seas,
All swell the chorus: God is good.

5: Yes, God is good, all nature says,
By God's own hand with speech endued;
And man, in louder notes of praise,
Should sing for joy that God is good.

6: For all Thy gifts we bless Thee, Lord,
But chiefly for our heav'nly food;
Thy pard'ning grace, Thy quick'ning word,
These prompt our song that God is good.

John Hampton Gurney, 1802-62

2: Jesus Wants me for a Sunbeam

*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works,
and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*

[Matthew 5:16]

1: Jesus wants me for a sunbeam,
To shine for Him each day;
In every way try to please Him –
At home, at school, at play.

*A sunbeam, a sunbeam,
Jesus wants me for a sunbeam;
A sunbeam, a sunbeam,
I'll be a sunbeam for Him.*

2: Jesus wants me to be loving
And kind to all I see,
Showing how pleasant and happy
His little one may be.

3: I will ask Jesus to help me
To keep my heart from sin;

Ever reflecting His goodness,
And always shine for Him.

4: I'll be a sunbeam for Jesus –
 I can if I but try –
Serving Him moment by moment,
Then live with Him on high.

Nellie Talbot

Hymn Information on "Jesus wants me for a sunbeam"

Words by Nellie Talbot

A brief biographical note in the 1911 Wesleyan Methodist School Hymnal says: "As delegate from her Sunday school to the Annual Meeting of the Sunday School Union, London, Nellie Talbot was inspired, by the children of her host, to write 'Jesus wants me for a sunbeam'. It was published, by Mr E O Excell, set to his own music". Other sources of information say that four people, bearing the name "Nellie Talbot", have been identified as its possible authors. Nevertheless, whoever the real Nellie Talbot was, her hymn soon became, and remained, a very firm favourite.

3: Who is on the Lord's Side?

Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, "Who is on the Lord's side? Let him come unto me." And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him.

[Exodus 32:26]

1: Who is on the Lord's side?
Who will serve the King?
Who will be His helpers,
Other lives to bring:
Who will leave the world's side?
Who will face the foe?
Who is on the Lord's side?
Who for Him will go?
By Thy call of mercy,
By Thy grace Divine,
We are on the Lord's side;
Saviour, we are Thine.

2: Jesus, Thou hast bought us,
Not with gold or gem,
But with Thine own life-blood,
For Thy diadem.
With Thy blessing filling
Each who comes to Thee,
Thou hast made us willing
Thou hast made us free.
By Thy great redemption,
By Thy grace Divine,
We are on the Lord's side;
Saviour, we are Thine.

3: Fierce may be the conflict,
Strong may be the foe;
But the King's own army
None can overthrow.
Round His standard ranging,
Victory is secure;
For His truth unchanging
Makes the triumph sure.
Joyfully enlisting,
By Thy grace Divine,
We are on the Lord's side,
Saviour, we are Thine.

4: Chosen to be soldiers
In an alien land,
Chosen, called, and faithful,
For our Captain's band.
In the service royal
Let us not grow cold;
Let us be right loyal,
Noble, true, and bold.
Master, Thou wilt keep us,
By Thy grace Divine,
Always on the Lord's side,

Saviour, always Thine.

Frances Ridley Havergal, 1836-79

4: Lord, Dismiss us with Thy Blessing

The Lord bless thee and keep thee.

[Numbers 6:24]

1: Lord, dismiss us with Thy blessing,
Fill our hearts with joy and peace;
Let us each, Thy love possessing,
Triumph in redeeming grace;
O refresh us, O refresh us!
Travelling through this wilderness.

2: Thanks we give, and adoration,
For Thy gospel's joyful sound;
May the fruits of Thy salvation
In our hearts and lives abound;
May Thy presence, may Thy presence
With us evermore be found.

3: So that when Thy love shall call us,
Saviour, from the world away,
Let no fear of death appal us,
Glad the summons to obey,
May we ever, may we ever
Reign with Thee in endless day!

John Fawcett, 1739-1817

2: The Great Question

"What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good?"

[Psalm 34:12]

WERE the question "What man is he that desireth life..." to be raised in an everyday context, the answer in the majority of cases would be couched purely in material terms, because that is how it would be perceived. But this

question is raised in the context of the Holy Spirit's overall calling: "Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD". This, as was shown in the previous sermon, means filial fear that is rooted and grounded in love for the Lord.

Let us therefore examine the Psalmist's words further, considering first of

1: *Those to whom the question is addressed*



They are those who love the Lord with all their heart, with all their soul, and with all their mind, and with all their strength, having been born again of the Spirit. As a Divine instructor in the school of faith, the Holy Spirit is calling for a response from all who can truly sing: -

"What a wonderful change in my life has been wrought

Since Jesus came into my heart!

I have light in my soul, which so long I had sought,

Since Jesus came into my heart..."²

He is seeking to teach holiness of living to the faithful followers of Jesus, such as would respond to the challenge of Exodus 32:26: "Who is on the Lord's side?" by saying: "Saviour, we are Thine!" They are the ones who have been brought up by the mercy of God from the horrible pit of sin.³ Having been set free from sin's bondage, through faith in Christ, they are deeply anxious to walk henceforth in a completely different way — the way of holiness. They have a disposition that makes them ready day by day, Jesus to obey; but they need systematic instruction in righteousness of living. Such are the ones to whom the challenge is directed. In effect, the Holy Spirit through Psalms 34:12 is saying: "Step forward, ye true-hearted, stout-hearted, faithful and loyal, and I will guide you into all truth!"

Our text says: "What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good" -

2: *To what type of life does this refer?*



Is it a life of ease, where metaphorically speaking, the sun always shines and a gentle breeze endlessly blows? Is it a life free from challenges, where everything neatly falls into place, and where there is not a care in the world?

The answer, of course, is “No”. To answer the question, one needs to go no further than what Christ Jesus told His disciples, as recorded in John 16:33: “... in the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”

A Life of Faith

So it is a life of faith, firmly fixed on the Saviour, whose abiding presence and peace will go with His followers.⁴ It is a life of

- ⊖ holiness of heart and of righteousness of living;
- ⊖ of steadfastness for the Saviour – and of
- ⊖ light and of true love for the lost to the glory of God.

Such a life may lead to hardship and suffering in the world, because there are those who have a very different lifestyle and will contend with anyone who does not readily conform to their views. Therefore there may be hostility to be faced. Yet those who walk the way of Christ may boldly declare in Paul’s words: –

“For the which cause I also suffer these things:
nevertheless I
am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed, and
am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have
committed unto him against that day.” [2 Timothy
1:12]

That is a true life of faith in Christ to which believers are called. But where the Psalmist says: “What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days”

3: Is this a promise of a long life? 

At first sight it may appear so. Yet it is well-known that some of the most promising Christians have had remarkably short lives. Therefore it becomes clear that there is another way of understanding these words. A clue is to be found in Psalm 90:12: “So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.”

The essence is that the Christian life is to be lived to the full for Christ, with no time wasted or any opportunity lost. Christians, above all, should be acutely aware that their time on earth is finite. Of course, men of the world know that; though they often do not care to admit it. Now, given that there is but a limited amount of time available, it needs to be put to the most productive use; especially since many a believer knows to his sorrow how he once frittered his life away by vain pursuits.

John Fawcett explores this theme in a little-known children's hymn whose opening verses say: -

1: Swift as the wingèd arrow flies forgive,
My time is hast'ning on;
Quick as the lightning from the skies
My wasting moments run.

2: My follies past, O Lord,
And everu sin subdue:

Those words describe the sort of person to whom the Psalmist addresses his call. They are those who have become aware of the good that they could have done, and didn't do, and are now intent on acquiring a very different

4: *That he may see good*  on the
m. With
: he says:

It means primarily “that he may recognise the good that can be done for the Lord.” Those who take up the challenge may also see the result of their

labours. For instance, Hugh Bourne of the Primitive Methodists, who died in October, 1852, saw the fruits of the work that began in earnest more than forty years earlier. In 1811, the Primitive Methodist Connexion consisted of 200 people. By 1852, it had grown to about 104,000 people for whom God was to be praised. As 1 Corinthians 3:6 says: "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase."

Ask for the Good Way

Not everyone has been so privileged. Some have toiled long, and yet have died without seeing any tangible result. So the psalmist's challenging question amounts to this: "Who are ready, willing and able unconditionally to make the best use of their lives for the kingdom of God?" The answer is: those who truly love the Lord, knowing that "Only one life, 'twill soon be past. Only what's done for Christ will last."

To some extent, the psalmist's challenge resembles Jeremiah 6:16: "Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls."

Steadfastness

Tragically, Jeremiah's heart-searching invitation was coldly rejected. The response was this: "We will not walk therein." That is a prospect for which those, who take up the Psalmist's challenge, must be prepared. They have to learn "not to weary of well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not".⁵ So "seeing good" includes the need for steadfastness in times of hardship. That is, righteousness in the face of rejection, which is an essential part of the path to personal holiness, since -

Holiness is purity within the soul and mind;
Righteousness is godliness in deeds of a noble kind;
"Be holy!" is commanded;⁶ and from that sacred root,
It blossoms into righteousness that ripens into fruit.⁷
Thus holiness is seen and known by how a person is;
And righteousness is surely shown by godly deeds of his.

© Peter Murcott, 4th May:

2022

What a prospect! Who will answer: "Lead me, Lord, lead me in Thy

righteousness''?⁸ May such be your response to Him, who is so gracious as to make frail children of dust strong in the power of His might. Amen.

FOOTNOTES

1: See: Mark 12:30.

2: Rufus Henry McDaniel, 1850-1940.

3: See: Psalm 40:1-3 for the process.

4: See: Exodus 33:14. The same promise applies to the faithful today, witness Christ's words in John 16:33.

5: See: Galatians 6:9.

6: See: 1 Peter 1:15 & 16.

7: See: Philippians 1:11.

8: See: Psalm 5:8.

*Scripture quotations are from the Authorised (King James) Version of the Bible,
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patentee,
Cambridge University Press.*