

MARY AND MARTHA WEeping

"Now Jesus was not yet come into the town, but was in that place where Martha met Him. The Jews then which were with her in the house, and comforted her, when they saw Mary, that she rose up hastily and went out, followed her, saying, She goeth unto the grave to weep there. Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw Him, she fell down at His feet, saying unto Him, Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, He groaned in the spirit, and was troubled. And said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto Him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept. Then said the Jews, Behold how He loved him! And some of them said, Could not this Man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died? Jesus therefore again groaning in Himself cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it," John 11:30-38.

Why did Jesus Christ stay outside Bethany and summon Martha and Mary to come to Him? Apparently that He might keep Himself apart from the noisy crowd of conventional mourners whose presence affronted the majesty and sanctity of sorrow, and that He might speak to the hearts of the two real mourners. A Divine decorum forbade Him to go to the house. The Life-bringer keeps apart. His comforts are spoken in solitude. He revered grief. How beautifully His compassionate delicacy contrasts with the heartless rush of those who were "comforting" Mary when they thought that she was driven to go suddenly to the grave by a fresh burst of sorrow. If they had any real sympathy and or perception, they would have stayed where they were, and let the poor burdened heart find ease in lonely weeping.

But like all inconsiderate souls, they had one idea, never to leave mourners alone or let them weep. There are three stages which are discernible to the self-revelation of Jesus Christ in this crowning miracle, His agitation and tears, His majestic confidence in His life-

giving power now to be manifested, and His actual exercise of that power.

The repetition by Mary and Martha, her sister's words, as her first salutation, tells a pathetic story of the one thought that had filled both sisters' hearts in those four dreary days. Why had Jesus Christ not come? How easily He could have come. How surely He could have prevented all this misery. Confidence in His power blends strangely with doubt as to His care. A hint of reproach is in the words, but more than a hint of faith in His might.

Now Christ does not rebuke the rash judgment implied, for He knew the true love underlying it, but He does not directly answer Mary, as He had done with Martha, **FOR THE TWO SISTERS NEEDED DIFFERENT TREATMENT.**

We notice that Mary had no such hope as Martha has expressed. Her more passive, meditative disposition had bowed itself, and let the grief overwhelm her. So in her we see a specimen of the excess of sorrow which indulges in the monotonous repetition of what would have happened if something else that did not happen had happened, and which is too deeply dark to let a gleam of hope shine in. Words will do little to comfort such grief. **Silent sharing of its weeping and helpful deeds will do most.**

So a great wave of emotion swept across the usually calm soul of Jesus Christ, which John bids us trace to its cause by verse 33, "Therefore." The sight of Mary's real, and the mourners half-real, tears and the sound of their loud "keening" shook His spirit, and He yielded to, and even encouraged, the rush of feeling, "Troubled Himself."

But not only compassion and sorrow ruffled the clear mirror of His spirit, another disturbing element was present. "He was moved with indignation," literally. Now anger at providence often mingles with our grief, but that was not Christ's indignation. The only worthy explanation of that strange ingredient in Christ's agitation is that it was directed

against the source of death, namely, sin. He saw the cause manifested in the effects. He wept for the one, He was wroth at the other. The tears witnessed to the perfect love of the man, and of the God revealed in the man, the indignation witnessed to the recoil and aversion from sin of the perfectly righteous man, and of the Holy God manifested in Him. We get one glimpse into His heart, as on to some ocean heaving and mist covered. The momentary sight proclaims the union in Him, as the incarnate Word, of compassion for our woes, and of aversion from our sins.

His question as to the place of the tomb is not what we should have expected, but its very abruptness indicates effort to suppress emotion, and resolve to lose no time in re-dressing the grief. Most sweetly human are the tears that start afresh after the moments repression, as the little company begins to move towards the grave. And most sadly human are the unsympathetic criticisms of His sacred sorrow. Even the best affected of the bystanders are cool enough to note them as tokens of His love, at which maybe there is a trace of wonder, while others snarl out a sarcasm which is double-barrelled, as casting doubt on the reality either of the love or of the power.

It is easy to weep, but if He had cared for him, and could work miracles, He might surely have kept him alive. How blind men are. "Jesus wept." And all that the lookers-on felt was astonishment that He should have cared so much for a dead man of no importance, or carping doubt as to the genuineness of His grief and the reality of His power. He shows us His compassion and sorrow still, to more effect with many.

His passage to the tomb was marked by His continued agitation. But His arrival there brought calm and majesty. Now the time has come which He had in view when He left His refuge beyond Jordan, and, as is often the case with ourselves, suddenly tremor and tumult leave the spirit, when face to face with a moment of crisis. **There is nothing more remarkable in this narrative than the contrast between Jesus weeping and indignant, and Jesus serene and authoritative** as He stands fronting the cave-sepulchre. The sudden transformation must have awed the gazers.

He points to the stone, which, probably like that of many a grave discovered in Palestine, rolled in a groove cut in the rocky floor in front of the tomb. The command accords with His continual habit of confining the miraculous within the narrowest limits. He will do nothing by miracle which can be done without it. Lazarus could have heard and emerged, though the stone had remained. If the story had been a myth, he very likely would have done so. Like, "Loose him, and let him go." This is a little touch that cannot have been invented, and helps to confirm the simple, historical character of the account.

Not less natural, though certainly as unlikely to have been told unless it had happened, is Martha's interruption. She must have heard what was going on, and with her usual activity, have joined the procession, though we left her in the house. She thinks that Jesus is going into the grave, and a certain reverence for the poor remains, as well as for Him, makes her shrink from the thought of even His loving eyes seeing them now.

Clearly she has forgotten the dim hopes which had begun in her when she talked with Jesus. Therefore He gently reminds her of these, for His words, verse 40, can scarcely refer to anything but that interview, though the precise form of expression now used is not found in the report of it in verses 25-27. "Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?"

We note Christ's calm confidence in His own power, His identification of its effect with the outflashing of the glory of God, and His encouragement to her to exercise faith by suspending her sight of that glory upon her faith. Does that mean that He would not raise her brother unless she believed? No. For He had determined to "awake him out of sleep," before He left Perraëa. But Martha's faith was the condition of her seeing the glory of God in the miracle.

We may see a thousand emanations of that glory, and see none of it. We shall see it if we exercise faith. In the natural world "Seeing is believing." **In the spiritual world, "Believing is seeing."**

Equally remarkable, as breathing serene confidence, is the wonder filial prayer. Our Lord speaks as if the miracle were already accomplished. So sure is He, "Thou hearest Me," "And Jesus lifted up His eyes, and said, Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me. And I knew that Thou hearest Me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that Thou hast sent Me."

Does this thanksgiving bring Him down to the level of other servants of God who have wrought miracles by Divine power granted them? Certainly not, for it is in full accord with the teaching of all this Gospel, according to which "The Son can do nothing of Himself, but yet, whatsoever things the Father doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise." Both sides of the Truth must be kept in view. **The Son is not independent of the Father, but the Son is so constantly and perfectly one with the Father that He is conscious of unbroken communion, of continued melding of the whole Divine power.**

But the practical purpose of the thanksgiving is to be specially noted. It suspends His whole claims on the single issue about to be decided. It summons the people to mark the event. Never before had He thus heralded a miracle. Never had He designed to say this solemnly, "If God does not work through Me now, reject Me as an impostor. If He does, accept Me as your Messiah."

The monument stands alone in His life. What a scene! There is the open tomb, with its dead occupant. There are the eager, skeptical crowd, the sisters pausing in their weeping to gaze with some strange hopes beginning to creep into their hearts, the silent disciples, and, in front of them all, Jesus Christ, with the radiance of power in the eyes that had just been swimming in tears, and a new elevation in His tones. How all would be hushed in expectance of the next moment's act.

The miracle itself is told in the fewest words. What more was there to tell? The two ends, as it were, of a buried chain, appear above ground. Cause and effect were brought together. Rather, here was no chain of many links, as in physical phenomena, but here was the life-giving Word, and there was

the dead man living again. "The loud voice" was as needless as the rolling away of the stone. It was but the sign of Christ's will acting. **And the action of His will, without any other cause, produces physical effects.**

Lazarus was far away from that rock cave. But, wherever he was, he could hear, and he must obey the Lord's words. So, with graveclothes entangling his feet, and a napkin about his livid face, he came stumbling out into the light that dazed his eyes, closed for four dark days, and stood silent and motionless in that awestruck crowd. One Person there was not awestruck. Christ's calm words, Christ's calm voice, that had just reverberated through the regions of the dead, spoke the simple command, "Loose him, and let him go." To him it was no wonder that He should give back a life. For the Christ who wept is the Christ whose voice all that are in the graves shall hear, and shall come forth.

"And when Jesus thus had spoken, He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go." John 11:43, 44.

This is the seventh miracle in John's Gospel, and the series of our Lord's miracles before the passion fitly closed with the raising of Lazarus. It crowns the whole, whether we regard the greatness of the fact, the manner of our Lord's working, the minuteness and richness of the accompanying details, the revelation of our Lord's heart, the consolations which it suggests to sorrowing spirits, or the immortal hopes which it kindles.

And beside all this, the miracle is of importance for the development of John's purpose, in that it makes the immediate occasion of the embittered hostility which finally precipitates the catastrophe of the cross, therefore, the great length to which the narrative extends. Of course, it is impossible for us not to attempt, even in the most cursory manner, to go over the whole. We must content ourselves with dealing with one or two of the salient points.

There are three things that are worthy of our notice here. **There is the revelation of Christ as our Brother, by emotion and**

sorrow. There is the revelation of Christ as our Lord by His consciousness of Divine power. There is the revelation of Christ as our Life by His mighty life-giving Word.

First, we have here a revelation of Christ as our Brother by emotion and sorrow. ("In all our afflictions. He was afflicted.") This miracle stands alone in the whole majestic series of His mighty works by the fact that it is preceded by a storm of emotion, which shakes the frame of the Lord, which He is represented by John not so much as suppressing as fostering, and which diverges and parts itself into the two feelings expressed by His groans and by His tears.

The words which are rendered, "He groaned in the spirit," and which is in our version, twice repeated in the narrative, is, according to the investigations of the most careful philological commentators, expressive not only of the outward sign of an emotion, but of the nature of it. And the nature of the emotion is not merely the grief and the sympathy which distilled in tears, but it is something deeper and other than that. The word contains in it at least a tinge of the passion of "indignation," as it is expressed in the margin of the revised version.

What caused the indignation? Cannot we see how there rose up, as in pale, spectral procession before His vision, the whole long series of human sorrows and losses, of which one was visible there before Him? He saw, in the one individual case, the whole "genus." Sorrow over every lost loved one. He saw the whole mass represented here, the ocean in the drop, and He looked beyond the fact and linked it with its cause.

And as there arose before Him the reality of man's desolation through sin, and the thought that all this misery, loss, pain, parting, death, was a contradiction of the Divine purpose, and an interruption of God's order and that it had all been pulled down upon men's desperate heads by their own anger, which is in part of the perfectness of humanity when it looks upon sorrow linked by adamant chains with sin.

But the lightning of the wrath dissolved soon into the rain of compassion and of sorrow, as we read, "Jesus wept." Looking upon

the weeping Mary and the lamenting crowd, and Himself feeling the pain of the parting from the friend whom He loved, the tears, which are the confession of human nature that it is passing through an emotion too deep for words, came to His all-seeing eyes. Tears in omniscience.

Surely as Christians we can see in this manifestation, this revelation of Christ the Lord, expressed in these two emotions, surely there are large and gracious lessons here for all of us. **Here for one thing is the gracious sign and proof of His humanity and of His brotherhood with us.**

John, to whom it was given to tell the Church and the world more than any of the others had imparted to them of the Divine uniqueness of the Lord's Person, had also given to him in charge the corresponding and complementary message, to insist upon the reality and the veracity of His manhood. His proclamation was "The Word was made flesh," and He had to dwell on both parts of that message, showing Him as the Word and showing Him as flesh. So he insists upon the points which emerge in the course of his narrative that show the reality of Christ's corporeal manhood. "Jesus wept," this is humanity weeping.

John joins in with others, who had no such lofty proclamation entrusted to them in telling us how He was "Bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh," in that He hungered and thirsted and slept and was wearied, and how He was man, reasonable soul and human spirit, in that He grieved and rejoiced, and wondered and desired, and mourned and wept.

And so we can look upon Him, a spirit participant of all human experiences, and a heart tremendously vibrating with every emotion that belongs to man. Here we are also taught the sanction and the limits of sorrow. Christianity has nothing to do with the false stoicism and the false religion, which is partly pride and partly insincerity, that proclaims it wrong to weep when God smites. But just as clearly and distinctly as the story before us says to us, "Weep for yourselves and for the loved ones that are gone," so distinctly does it draw the limits within which sorrow is sa-

cred and hallowing, and beyond which it is harmful and weakening.

Set side by side the grief of these two poor, weeping sisters, and the grief of the weeping Christ, and we get a large lesson. They could only repine that something else had not happened differently, which would have made all different. "If Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died."

One of the two sits with folded arms in the house, letting her sorrow flow over her pained head. Martha is unable, by reason of her grief, to grasp the consolation that is held out to her. Her sorrow has made the hopes of the future seem to her very dim and of small account, and she puts away, "Thy brother shall rise again," with almost an impatient sweep of her hand. "I know that He will rise in the resurrection at the last day." But that is so far away, and what I want is present comfort.

Thus oblivious of duty, murmuring with regard to the accidents which might have been different, and unfitted to grasp the hopes that fill the future, these two have been hurt by their grief, and have let it overflow its banks and lay waste the land. "Sorrow not as others which have no hope."

But this Christ in His sorrow checks His sorrow that He may do His work, in His sorrow a confidence that the Father hears, in His sorrow thinks of the bystanders, and would bring comfort and cheer to them. A sorrow which makes us more conscious of communion with the Father who is always listening, which makes us more conscious of power to do that which He has put it into our hand to do, which makes us more tender in our compassion with all that mourn, and swifter and readier for our work, such a sorrow is doing what God meant for us, and is a blessing in so thin a disguise that we can scarcely call it veiled at all.

And there is also the lesson here in the revelation in the emotions of the Lord's of a personal love that takes individuals to His heart, and feels all the sweetness and the power of friendship. That personal love is open to every one of us, and into the GRACE and tenderness of it we may all penetrate. "The disciple whom Jesus loved," is the one who without jealousy is glad to tell

us that the same loving Lord took into the same sanctuary of His pure heart, Mary and Martha, and her brother.

That which was given to them was not taken from Him, and they each possessed the whole of the Lord's love. **So for every one of us that heart of His is wide open.** And you and I, may contact such personal relations to the Lord that we shall live with Christ as a man with His friend, and may feel that His heart is all ours.

Now in the next lesson, that which lies side by side with this incident, and which at first might seem strangely contradictory of it, but in fact only completes the idea, the majestic, calm consciousness of Divine power by which He is revealed as our Lord. At one step from the agitation and the storm of feeling there comes, "Take ye away the stone." And in answer to the lamentations of the sister are spoken the great and wonderful words, "Said I not unto thee that if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?"

And He looks back there to the message that had been sent to the sisters in response to their unspoken hope that He would come. "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby." And He shows that from the first moment, with the spontaneousness which, as we have already remarked on these "signs," characterizes all the miracles of John's Gospel. "He Himself knew what He would do," and in the consciousness of His Divine power had resolved that the dead Lazarus should be the occasion for the manifestation, the flashing but to the world, of the glory of God in the life-giving Son.

Then in the same tone of majestic consciousness, there follows that thanksgiving "prior" to the miracle as for the accomplished miracle. "I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me, and I know that Thou hearest Me always. But because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that Thou hast sent Me."

The best commentary on these words, and the deepest and the fullest exposition of the large truths that lie in them concerning the cooperation of the Father and the Son, is to be found in the passage from the fifth

chapter of this Gospel, wherein there is set forth, drawn with the firmest hand, the clearest lines of truth upon this great and profound subject. "The Son doeth nothing of Himself, but, whatsoever the Father doeth, that doeth the Son likewise."

A consciousness of continual co-operation with the Almighty Father, a consciousness that His will continually coincided with the Father's will, that unto Him there comes the power ever to do all that omnipotence can do, and that though we may speak of a gift given and a power derived, the relation between the giving Father, and the recipient Son is altogether a different form, and other than the relation between, the man that asks and the God that bestows.

Poor Martha said, "I know that even now, whatsoever Thou askest of God He will give Thee." She thought of Him as a good man whose prayers had power with Heaven. But up into an altogether other region soars the consciousness expressed in these words as of a Divine Son whose work is wholly parallel with the Father's work, and of whom the two things that sound contradictory can both be said.

His omnipotence is His own. His omnipotence is the Father's. "As the Father hath life, and therefore power in Himself, so hath He given," there is the one half of the paradox. "so hath He given to the Son to have life in 'Himself,'" there is the other. And unless you put them both together you do not think of Christ as Christ has taught us to think, as God and as man, as the God-man. Then we see here in this same scene the revelation of Christ, as our life in His mighty life-giving Word.

The miracle, as we have studied, stands high in the scale, not only by reason of what to us seems the greatness of the fact, though of course, properly speaking, in miracles there is not distinction as to the greatness of the fact, but also by reason of the manner of the working. The voice thrown into the cave reaches the ears of the sheeted dead. "Lazarus, come forth."

And then, in words which convey the profound impression of awfulness and solemnity which had been made upon John, we have

the picture of the man with the graveclothes wrapped about his limbs, stumbling forth, and loving hands are bidden to take away the napkin which covered his face. Maybe the hand trembled as it was put forth, not knowing what awful sight the veil might cover.

With tenderest reticence, no word is spoken, as to what followed. No hint escapes of the joy, no gleam of the experiences which the traveller brought back with him from the "bourne" whence he had come. Surely some draught of lethe must have been given him, that his spirit might be lulled into a wholesome forgetfulness, else life must have been a torment to him.

But be that as it may, what we have to notice is the fact here, and what it teaches us as a fact. **Is it not a revelation of Jesus Christ as the absolute Lord of life and death, giving the one, putting back the other?** Death had caught hold of his prey. Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, then the lawful captive delivered? Yes, the prey shall be taken from the mighty, his bare word is divinely operative. He says, to that ghastly shadow, "Come," and he cometh. He says to him, "Go," and he goeth.

And as a shepherd will drive away the bear that has a lamb between his bloody fangs, and the brute retreats, snarling and growling, but dropping his prey, so at the Lord's voice Lazarus comes back to life, and disappointed death sulks away to the darkness.

The miracle shows Him as Lord of death and Giver of life. And it teaches another lesson, namely, **the continuous persistency of the bond between Christ and His friend, unbroken and untouched by the superficial accident of life or death.** Wheresoever Lazarus was, he heard the voice, and wheresoever Lazarus was, he knew the voice, and wheresoever Lazarus was, he obeyed the voice. And so we are taught that the relationship between Christ in our life, and all them that love and trust Him, is one on which the tooth of death that gnaws all other bonds in twain hath no power at all.

Christ is the life, and, therefore, Christ is the resurrection, and **the thing that we call death is but a film which spreads on the**

surface, but has no power to penetrate into the depths of the relationship between us and Him. Such, in briefest words, are the lessons of the miracle as a fact, but before we close we must remind ourselves that it is to be looked at not only as a fact, but as a prophecy and as a parable.

It is a prophesy in a modified sense, telling us at all events that He has the power to bid men back from the dust and the darkness, and giving us the assurance which His own words convey to us yet more distinctly. "The hour is coming when all that are in the graves shall hear His voice and shall come forth."

There are two resurrections in this one promise, the resurrection of Christ's friends and the resurrection of Christ's foes. And though to both His voice will be the awakening, "Some shall rise to joy and immortality" and "Some to shame and everlasting contempt."

You will hear the voice, settle it for yourselves whether when He calls and thou answerest them wilt say, "Lo, here I am, joyfully, to look upon Him," or whether thou wilt rise reluctant, and "Call upon the rocks and the hills to cover you, and to hide you from the face of Him that sitteth upon the throne." And this raising is a parable as well as a prophesy for even as Christ was the life of this Lazarus, so, in a deeper and more real sense, and not in any shadowy, metaphorical, mystical sense, is **Jesus Christ the life**

of every spirit that truly lives at all. We are, "dead in trespasses and sin." **For separation from God is death in all regions, death for the body in its kind, death for the mind, for the soul, for the spirit, in their kinds,** and only them who receive Christ into their minds do live. **Every Christian is a miracle.**

There has been a true coming into the human of the Divine, a true supernatural work, the infusion into a dead soul of the God-life which is the Christ-life. And you and I may have that life. What is the condition? "They that hear shall live." **Do you hear? Do you welcome? Do you take that Christ into your soul? Is He your life? Are you in the family of God?**

It is possible to resist the voice, to stuff your ears so full of clay and worldliness, and sin, and self-reliance as that it shall not echo in your hearts. "The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of man, and they that hear shall live, and obtain today, a better resurrection," than the resurrection of the body. If you do not hear that voice, then you will "remain in the congregation of the dead."

Martha and Mary, these two sisters in their grief over their brother, bring to us two wonderful ladies in my life, which have opened up the principle of victory over death, and that the sting of death is gone. And that Christ only is the only life Giver to the soul. "He that is alive and believeth on Me shall never die. Believest thou this?"