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## THANKSGIVING SERMON.

Preached by Rev. J. D. Smith, Pastor of the Baptist Church, of Bloomsburg, Pa., at a Union Thanksgiving Service, in the Lutheran Church, Nov. 24, 1898.

(Published by Request.)

Text, Prov. 14:34.—"Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people."

We have met in response to the call of the chief executive of the nation, and the Governor of this Commonwealth, to recognize our obligations to the great Almoner of nations; "to lift up our eyes unto the hills from whence cometh our help;" "to teach our souls not to forget his benefits;" and to come before the Lord with thanksgiving and praise.

It is good for us to pause on these National Thanksgiving Days and take an inventory of our mercies; to look over the blessings that crown our individual lives; to consider the benefits accruing to us through our national existence; to note with gratitude the numberless mercies that flow to us as a nation and a people through the channels of our homes, our government and our religion. That in these services we come to know better the meaning of the text that "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to our people."

With this text before us this morning let us consider as our theme:

The influence of God's truth in the development of the individual and the nation.

By God's truth we mean that system of doctrine which is revealed to us in the Bible, and which is embodied in the person and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth.

The doctrine of the existence of God, who cares for and loves the human race. The doctrine of sin: of atonement for sin, of life: of faith: of life here and immortality hereafter.

The doctrine, that truth to be of use to men must be embodied, must have its expression in human life, and its manifestation in human conduct.

Christ was the embodiment of all truth, what He thought is God's truth, as distinguished from the truths of natural philosophy, or the conclusions of worldly schools of science, as distinguished from the truths of mathematics or the conclusions of metaphysicians.

In a word, that system of teachings, known as the Gospel of Christ, is what we mean when we speak of God's truth and its influence in developing the individual and the nation.

### I. The Individual.

From the first Christianity has been a potent factor in the individual. It taught him, first of all, that there was a world within himself; that the human heart was the domain of God; that it is the purpose of Deity to enshrine himself in the human soul, and to rule from it as a centre. If we stop to analyze this great truth, we find that man is God's highest and best creation; that God's best thoughts are to find expression through man's brain; that he comes to energize human minds and vitalize human thoughts; that the weakest and most defiled soul is a majestic thing when the Creator's spirit chooses it for a temple; that the dwelling of divine forces in Him is the strongest assertion of his greatness.

Hear me. No man is mean who carries such a nature; no effort wants dignity which would transmute such a nature with the life of God. Go, work is the Master's commission. And he vitalizes common nature till they become historic and wonderful. Peter had scarcely been known, save about the shores of Gennesaret, till Jesus commissioned him;—after that he filled Jerusalem and Judea with wonder and alarm by his bold, magnetic speech.

Paul, stung into frenzy in his opposition to Christ, sees a light and hears a voice, and turns with his Jewish soul to Christ. What a change, what a transformation. The persecutor becomes the minister of Christ and makes all Asia Minor ring with his name and become reverent before the message which falls from his lips. You and I have seen the degraded and ruined transformed and lifted up. There is no power on earth that can enable man like the truth of God.

II. Leaving the individual let us speak of the influence of God's truth in the development of the nations.

"Righteousness exalteth a nation; God's ancient Israel furnishes us with the first illustration of the truthfulness of this text. He calls them from among an obscure people, He places them in an isolated country, but in the centre of the eastern hemisphere, and in the very heart of three continents,

that the lessons He taught His chosen people might flow with the tide of the tribes over all the world. Holding the highway of the world's travel and commerce, Israel had in itself the possibilities for the perfect demonstration of the truth of our text. A better country the horizon did not gird, the sky did not pavilion. But the sources of the people's prosperity was not in the favorable position that their land held among nations, nor in the rich red current of ancestral blood in the people, nor yet in the superior brain power, nor in their personal culture. "The Lord alone led Israel like a flock and made him to lay down beside still waters." Study the history of that ancient people and you will see the gradual unfolding of the truth of the text, first upon its bright, and then upon its dark side. Righteousness exalted the nation until all nations bowed before it and the wisdom and glory of her Solomon filled the whole earth. Sin destroyed the nation, and reduced the people to serfdom. God taught the Hebrews, but the lessons He taught them were for all times and all nations.

If we turn to modern illustrations of the relation between religion and national prosperity, we find it in the acceptance or rejection by the several nations of the principles of the reformation of the sixteenth century. We turn to Italy. "I am a Roman," once meant that a man belonged to a stalwart race whose eagles dipped their wings in the sunrise and the sunset, whose legions were heard around the world, whose laws and whose legions controlled men from the pillars of Hercules to Hellespont. But Italy rejected the reformation, and to-day the Roman is represented among us by the man with the organ and the monkey.

Why is Edinburgh, the Athens of the world, while Rome feeds on memories and mummies? Why, amid leaden skies and fog that hides out of sight the land you walk on, is England mistress of the seas and London the heart of the civilized world, while Italy, with a blue sky and sun-lit soil, with a history as old as the beginnings of civilization, is swarming with lazaroni?

What makes the difference between the Scotch and the Irish? Prior to the sixteenth century Ireland was the focus of civilization, and Scotland a race of Barbarians. It is not race that has made the contrast, but religion. Scotland with her Knox accepted the principles of the reformation, Ireland rejected them. Scotland to-day is the synonym of all that is sturdy and strong and true, noble and good—the bonny, bunny Scotch. While Ireland knocks at the door of every nation for sympathy in her struggle to throw off the yoke of England, and meekly bows to the rule of Rome and submits to the bondage of mind and soul. Oh land of darkness, the mother of wit and oratory, when shall thy light appear and thy salvation from the end of the earth! Shall any one say that the difference between these two nations is in the blood? Then Ireland ought to be foremost. Is it in the natural ability, the capacity for things? Then Ireland has the advantage. Is it in the geography of the country, in her soil or climate? I tell you nay.

The reason that Scotland has her Edinburgh, her education, enlightenment and religion, while Ireland is destitute of Universities and remains a potato patch, is because Ireland rejected the truths of the Reformation, and Scotland accepted them. Scotland is justified by faith, Ireland by works. Religion, not environment, not capacity, has made the difference. So with France and England. They were not unlike before the period referred to. France was offered the principles of the Reformation and she answered with the Bastille and Bartholomew's night, and became the atheistic menace of the nations? It is not blood that makes the difference.

There are other nations who would not tolerate religious liberty, and whose history is a fearful testimony to the truthfulness of our text—"righteousness exalteth a nation." Spain, rich in climate, broad in acres, strong in her possessions, with a vast army and mighty navy, occupied the position of dictator to the nations when Luther's voice was heard arousing Germany and Britain. Spain responded to the evangel of the Reformation by establishing the Inquisition. What was the result? The nation became an effete, driveling and dotard thing, the very crone of the nations. The low countries with a soil half sand and half marsh, held Spain at bay when she was mistress of Europe. For centuries she has stood as the symbol of

oppression and cruelty, until in God's time the youngest nation on earth becomes her master, and visits upon her the punishment she so richly deserves. What ever we may think of the doctrine of expansion this much we feel sure of. When at last the line is drawn and the stakes driven geographically it will have been God's hand that has made the charge, and swept the nations out of the channels of the past. And you will remember the contrast is still more apparent if possible in the monetary affairs of the world for the government securities of protestant countries bring a higher price and are in greater demand, in every market of the world than are the like securities of catholic nations.

If you cross the Rio-Grande river, the line that divides geographically the Mexican from the American, you will come face to face with an illustration of the text, "Sin is a reproach to any people." Rich in everything that should make a nation great, with climate and soil unsurpassed by any country, her ground full of precious metals, her people the descendants of the brave, Montezumas with the remains of walled cities and historic palaces, Mexico ought to be great. Yet for centuries she has been as an ash heap among the nations, each one has raked her in turn.

It is not the river that makes the difference between Mexico and America, it is religion.

But what has all this to do with this day and this hour. Hear me. God's theatre of operation is in this country. From this land, bounded by great seas, the gospel is to go forth to every nation, land and tongue. And here is to be the gathering place of the "tribes." Great movements of God's arm is to be made in the latter days, great manifestations of His power, and flashes of His glory are to be seen of men. For the manifestation of His power and the revelation of His glory, He needs a large land and a right people.

Our government is the crystallization of the old world's thoughts of liberty. Our national fibre is composed of the best blood of all nations. The stern and unyielding Puritan, the brisk and philosophical Frenchman, the patient and metaphysical German, the cautious and conservative Englishman here meet and unite in one fold of American life. Our fingers are on the pulse of every nation, and the blood of all peoples are in our veins. In this fact that we are kindred to all nations is a promise of peace and favor forever.

Is there not cause in all this for thanksgiving, and is not the righteousness of the people the righteousness of God?

Nations are composed of individuals, and the righteousness of the individual is the "righteousness that exalteth the nation." To judge of our condition as a nation, then we must study the individual in the three great departments of his complex national life—the social, the political, and the religious.

In the social life of our people we see changes that to the thoughtful bring pain and concern for the future of our American homes. I am not one to look upon the dark side of things, neither do I believe that as a whole the race is growing worse instead of better, yet there are alarming indications of decay in our social life that marks the downfall of the home if not arrested. I would speak of them not to cast a gloom upon your hearts, but to suggest their remedy.

The American home was never so American and never so rich as it is to-day in resources, yet its purity must be guarded with ever increasing vigilance, for with our rapidly advancing civilization, with our enlarged opportunities for usefulness, and with our less restricted commingling of all classes and conditions of society, there has come to be a freedom in immorality, an exemption from that disgrace which ought always to track and trifle with innocence, that if left unchecked must bring a harvest of woe and shame upon our homes. The saddest commentary that can be written upon our American life is, that we live too much upon the street, too much at club houses, and too little at home. The gilded club rooms and modern French flats and boarding systems are doing more to break up the family, and to break down the purity of our home life, than, perhaps, any other thing. The increasing irreverence on the part of children for their parents, the open immorality, not to say obscenity, of the conversation of many parents before their children, is to be deplored. Vul-

garity, coarse and rude, is the rule instead of the exception in too many homes. Christian men and women engaging in unholy and impure conversation with unchristian neighbors, thereby bring a reproach upon the cause of Him who has commanded us to let our conversation be in the heavens. Our yea, yea, and our nay, nay.

The cry of the people is, give us reformation, so political parties are organized to reform politics. The churches say send us revival.

Hear me. There will be no reformation and no revival, either in religion or politics, until we begin where God begins—in the home. God pity the people when children are debauched by sights and sounds on the streets as they are in our land, and find no influence in the home to counteract the evils of out-door mingling with others. Our government rests upon the homes. Make the home strong, and true, and Christian, and the institutions of our government will stand forever.

Over against the evils that threaten our childhood stands the system of our public schools, with their noble, consecrated teachers. Men and women of pure thought and pure lives, whose aim is not only to develop the brain, but to teach the child and young man and maiden to know themselves.

Go out from this place, ye parents, to guard your homes as never before, from the tide of corruption and pollution that is beating up to their very thresholds.

Political.—I care to say but little about our politics; I am sorry they are not cleaner and purer, but it is a cause for thanksgiving, that after the heat and vancor of a political contest our people settle down to the quiet of our homes and affairs, without bitterness of spirit.

We owe Switzerland a debt of gratitude for our political and religious principles. They sprung from the reformation and were converted by Calvin. He said:

1st.—There is no necessary connection between church and state.

2d.—All authority belongs to the people.

3rd. It is best delegated to the rulers by the ballot box.

We have witnessed, during the past months, one of the most marvellous waves of patriotism sweeping over this country. Armies have been raised, battles fought, victories won, on land and sea. New lessons given. We are slow to learn, that righteousness is an essential element in patriotism. *Wickedness is treason.* No man can be dishonest in business, or intemperate, or practice any vice, however secretly he may do it, and not be a traitor to his country, for by just so much he is injuring the moral character in which alone his country stands.

The man who loves his country will not seek to corrupt his country's conscience, by using corrupt means in order to procure political favor. Let us learn that righteousness in politics is not a thing of the past. God hasten the day when wickedness of all kinds will be looked upon not only as sin against God, but as treason to one's country.

Religion.—Since our last Thanksgiving day there has been a quickening and intensifying of the religious life of the people. Emphasis is being laid not on doctrine or church membership, but upon life and right living as never before. Watchmen upon the walls are seeing eye to eye. With the wave of patriotism has gone a wave of religion, thank God, that has swept many hundreds and thousands into God's kingdom.

In all this complex life of our people I can see the hand of God bringing out his purposes in the nation. A great, new destiny is before us, moulds have been broken and new ones created, demanding a higher type of manhood and womanhood. God grant, that as a nation and a people, we may measure up to the fullness of the measure of God's mind, in the opportunities opened before us. We have prayed for a repetition of the day of Pentecost; but before there can be another outpouring there must be another gathering, and where, in all the lands, are the people flocking as in this. Already every language, every tongue, is represented here, and all nations are on our shores. May God grant, that with the gathering of the tribes, may come to the bottom of the Holy Ghost. Truly, righteousness has exalted our nation. Our lines are fallen to us in pleasant places, and our God has given to us a goodly heritage.

COUNT YOUR MERCIES.

"The sun never shown through a

MAKE UP  
YOUR MIND  
To Buy Your  
Suit,  
Overcoat,  
Storm Coat,  
Reefer,  
Hats,  
Underwear,  
Gloves,  
Sweaters,  
and  
Boots and  
Shoes

NOW

While the assortment is large. This stock must be cleaned out entirely in a very short time.

Gidding & Co.

more wonderful summer. The ground has produced bountifully, no scourge has sought our fair land."

The war undertaken for humanity, finished before we could complete our preparations for war, and ended so gloriously, the great new destiny opening before us. No longer any North and South, but one people, with one flag, and one destiny.

Some of you have had sorrow and loss, tears are wet on your cheeks, but God is good and loving. Go to your homes, friends, to live better, nobler, grander lives, with faith in God. Go show your thanksgiving by remembering the poor around you, and may the God of our fathers go with you. Amen.

### The Famous Welsh Singers.

Bloomsburg is to be favored on Monday night Dec. 5th with a musical entertainment of a high order given by the famous Welsh Singers, now making a tour of this country. They have been in America about six weeks, and have been singing to crowded houses in the larger cities. They were secured by Dr. Welsh of the Normal School, because they had no engagement for that night, and were passing this way.

They were in Wilkesbarre on Nov. 17, and the papers next day were filled with glowing accounts of the performance. Lovers of music in Bloomsburg have a rich treat in store for them. Tickets at Bidleman's book store, 50c. for reserved seats. On sale Dec. 2.

J. B. McHenry, Ira R. McHenry, Sutton McHenry, Purr McHenry and B. E. Long, of Benton, and M. D. Pennington, of Fairmount Springs and Charles Dolf and son of Scranton, returned on Thursday from a three weeks hunting expedition at Forest Port, New York. The gentlemen were very successful. The result of their efforts was six fine deer. The Benton *Argus* says that Ira was the champion shot, he having killed two and wounded a third. We would have picked the Ex-Sheriff for the best marksman. He will have to tell us how it all happened.

Wilbur E. Fisher, who has been at Porto Rico for about three months with the Volunteer Engineer Corps, arrived in town Saturday evening. The entire regiment is off on a sixty day furlough. He says civil life on the far off island would not be so bad, but when it comes to military life, why it is different. He has known it to start in and rain for two whole weeks without cessation. The whole regiment is very desirous to get out of the service, and he rather expects to be mustered out at the expiration of the furlough.

C. Z. Schlicher, of Mt. Grove, who is a teacher, in attendance at the Teachers' Institute, this week is exhibiting a late invention called the "Milk Extractor." He is the inventor and maker and claims that with its use more and a better quality of milk and butter can be extracted from vegetables, grain, etc. than can be had from the cow. We will not attempt to explain the modus operandi; but any one wishing to see the machine can do so by calling on Mr. Schlicher at the Central Hotel. The invention is truly a remarkable one.

In New York the other day a 10 year old girl told the Judge in one of the courts that she had never heard an oath except as a bad word; that she had never heard of the Bible; that she had never heard of God, and did not know she had a soul. And still they keep on sending missionaries to people who are not half so bad.

At the request of a number of soldiers who served with Pennsylvania commands in the war with Spain, legislation will be introduced to permit of the admission to the soldiers' orphan home of children of soldiers serving in that war, and the legislation will have powerful backing.

Dave Marion's Extravaganza Company, which was to have appeared at the Opera House Monday night, didn't reach town. Financial reverses, no doubt, turned him in another direction.