

# A GREAT REFRESHMENT.

## Dr. Talmage Says God is a Fountain of Joy That is Unappreciated.

### An Everlasting Well of Gladness—Water for the Thirsty.

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WASHINGTON, D. C.—In this discourse Dr. Talmage represents religion as a great refreshment and invites all the world to come and receive it; text, Genesis xix, 8. "We cannot until all the flocks be gathered together and till they roll the stone from the well's mouth; then we water the sheep."

A scene in Mesopotamia, beautifully pastoral. A well of water of great value in that region. The fields around about it white with three flocks of sheep lying down waiting for the watering. I hear their bleating coming from the flocks and the laughter of young men and maidens indulging in rustic repartee. I look off, and I see other flocks of sheep coming. Meanwhile Jacob, a stranger, on an interesting errand of looking for a wife, comes to the well. A beautiful shepherdess comes to the same well. I see her approaching followed by her father's flock of sheep. It was a memorable meeting. Jacob married the shepherdess. The Bible account of it is, "Jacob kissed Rachel and lifted up his voice and wept." It has always been a mystery to me what he found to cry about. But before that scene occurred Jacob accused the shepherds and asks them why they postpone the elating of the thirst of these sheep and why they did not immediately proceed to water them. The shepherds reply to the effect: "We are all good and honest and a matter of courtesy we wait until all the sheep of the neighborhood come up. Besides that, this stone on the well's mouth is somewhat heavy, and we push it aside, and the buckets and the troughs are filled, and the sheep are satisfied. We cannot until all the flocks are gathered together and till they roll the stone from the well's mouth; then we water the sheep."

Oh, this is a thirsty world! Hot for the head and blistering for the feet and parching for the tongue. The world's great want is not for food, but for water. We wander around, and we find the cistern empty. Long and tedious drought has dried up the world's fountain, but centuries ago a shepherd, with crook in the shape of a cross and a staff in the shape of a cross, explored the desert passages of this world, and one day came across a well a thousand feet deep, bubbling and bright and opalescent, and looked to the north and the south and the east and the west and cried out with a voice strong and musical that rang through the ages, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters!"

Now, a great flock of sheep to-day gather around this gospel well. There are a great many thirsty souls. I wonder why the flocks of all nations do not gather—why so many stay thirsty—and while I am wondering about it my text breaks forth in the explanation, saying, "We cannot until all the flocks be gathered together and till they roll the stone from the well's mouth; then we water the sheep."

If a herd of swine come to a well, they angrily jostle each other for the precedence; if a drove of cattle come to a well they look each other back and forth, but when a flock of sheep come, though a hundred of them shall be disappointed, they only express it by sad bleating, they come together peacefully. We want a great number of sheep to-day around the gospel well. I know there are those who do not like a crowd; they think a crowd is vulgar. If they are oppressed or in church, it makes them positively impatient and belligerent. We have had people permanently leave church because so many people come to it. Not so did these Oriental shepherds. They wait until all the flocks are gathered, and the more flocks that came the better they liked it. And so we ought to be anxious that all the people should come. Go out into the highways and the hedges and compel them to come in, go to the rich and tell them they are indigent without the gospel of Jesus; go to the poor and tell them the affluence there is in Christ; go to the blind and tell them of the touch that gives eternal vision; go to the lame and tell them of the joy that will make the lame man leap like a hart. Gather all the sheep off all the mountains; none so torn of the dogs, none so sick, none so worried, none so grieved, none so hated. Why not gather a great flock? All this city in a flock; all New York in a flock; all London in a flock; all the world in a flock.

This well of the gospel is deep enough to put out the burning thirst of the 1,600,000,000 of the race. Do not let the church by a spirit of exclusiveness keep the world out of the well. Let down all the bars, swing open all the gates, scatter all the invitations, "Whosoever will let him come." Come, white and black. Come, red men of the forest. Come, Laplander out of the snows of Patagonia, and of the south. Come in furs. Come ranting under palm leaves. Come one. Come all. Come now. As at this well of Mesopotamia Jacob and Rachel were betrothed, so this morning, when you are gathered, Christ, our Shepherd, will meet you coming up with your long flocks of cares and anxieties, and He will stretch out His hand in pledge of His affection while all the heaven will cry out, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh! Go ye out to meet Him."

You notice that this well of Mesopotamia had a stone on it, which must be removed before the sheep could be watered, and I find on the well of salvation to-day impediments and obstacles which must be removed in order that you may obtain the refreshment of the life of this gospel. In your case the impediment is pride of heart. You cannot bear to come to so democratic a fountain. You do not want to come with so many others. It is as though you were thirsty and you were invited to slake your thirst at the town pump instead of sitting in a parlor sipping out of a chased chalice which has just been lifted from a silver salver. Not so many publicans and sinners. You want to get to heaven, but you must be in a special car, with your feet on a Turkish ottoman and a band of music on board the train. You do not want to be in company with rustic Jacob and Rachel and to be drinking out of the fountain where 10,000 sheep have been drinking before you. You will have to remove the obstacle of pride, or never find your way to the water of life.

You will take the water of eternal life in any way and at any hand and in any kind of pitcher, crying out: "O Lord Jesus, I am dying of thirst! Give me the water of eternal life, whether in trough or bucket. Give me the water of life. I care not in what it comes to me." Away with all your hindrances of pride from the well's mouth! Here is another man who is kept back from this water of life by the stone of an obdurate heart, which lies over the mouth of the well. You have no more feeling upon this subject than if God had yet to do you the first kindness or you had to do God the first wrong. Seated on His lap all these years, His everlasting arms sheltering you, where is your gratitude? Where is your morning and evening prayer? Where are your consecrated lips? I say to you, as Daniel said to Belshazzar, "The God in whose hand thy breath is and all thy way thou hast not glorified." If you treated anybody as badly as you have treated God, you would have made 500 apologies—yes, your whole life would have been an apology. Three times a day you have been permitted to study the story of Jacob and Rachel at the well.

has appropriately appeared you. Your health from Him, your companions from Him, your children from Him, your home from Him, all the bright surroundings of your life from Him.

Oh, man, what dost thou with that hard heart? Canst thou not thank God with gratitude toward the God that made you and the Christ who came to redeem you and the Holy Ghost who has all these years been impregnating you?

If I could gather all the griefs of all save from these crowded streets and could put them in one scroll, neither man nor angel could endure the recitation. Well, what do you want? Would you like to have your property back again? "No, no, you are as a Christian man, 'I was becoming arrogant, and I think that is why the Lord took it away. I don't want to have my property back again.' Well, you have my property back again? Well, you have my property back again? 'No,' you say, 'I couldn't take the responsibility of bringing them from a tearless realm to a realm of tears. I couldn't do it.' Well, then, what do you want? 'Comfort! Give us comfort!' For that reason I have rolled away the stone from the well's mouth. Come, all ye wounded of the flock pursued by the Lord's sick and bereft ones have come. 'Ah,' says some one, 'you are not old enough to understand my sorrows. You are young in the world as long as you have, and you can't talk to me about my misfortunes in the time of old age.' Well, I may not have lived as long as you, but I have been a great deal among old people, and I know how they feel about their declining health and about their departed friends and about the loneliness that sometimes strikes through their souls. After two persons have lived together for forty or fifty years, and one of them is taken away, what desolation!

I shall not forget the cry of Dr. De Witt, of New York, when he stood by the open grave of his beloved wife, and he said, 'I have ended by looking down into the open place and said: 'Farewell, my honored, faithful and beloved wife. The bond that bound us is severed. Thou art in glory, and I am here on earth, and I shall meet you again, Farewell!' To lean on a prop for fifty years and then have it break under you! There were only two years' difference between the death of my father and mother. After my father was taken, I went to go around as though looking for something. He would often get up from one room without any seeming reason and go to another room, and then he would take his hat and start out, and some one would say, 'Father, where are you going?' And he would answer, 'I don't know exactly where I am going. Always looking for something. Though he was a hearty and a hearty man I never saw him cry but once, and that was at the burial of my mother. After sixty years' living together it was hard to part. And there are aged people who are feeling just as I do, and I want to tell them there is perfect enchantment in the promises of this gospel, and I come to them and offer them my arm, or I take their arm and I bring them to this gospel well. Sit down, father or mother; sit down. See if there is anything at the well for you. Come, David, the psalmist, have you anything encouraging to offer them? 'Yes,' says the psalmist; 'they shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing to show that the Lord is upright. He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.' Come, Isaiah, the prophet; they shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing to show that the Lord is upright. He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him. Come, Isaiah, the prophet; they shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing to show that the Lord is upright. He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.

Well, if the Lord is going to carry you, you need not worry much about your ailing eyesight and failing limbs. You get a little worried for fear that some time you will come to want, do you? Yes, children and grandchildren, a little sharp to you because of your ailments. The Lord will not speak sharp. Do you think you will come to want? What do you think the Lord will do? His granaries empty? Will He feed the raven and the rabbit and the lion in the desert and forget you? Why, naturalists tell us that the porpoise will not forsake its wounded and sick mate. And you suppose the Lord of heaven and earth has not as much sympathy as the fish of the sea? But you say, 'I am so near worn out, and I am of no use to God any more.' I think the Lord knows whether you are of any more use or not. If you were of no more use He would have taken you before this. Do you think God has forgotten you because He has taken care of you seventy or eighty years? He thinks more of you than you think of Him. He did because you think more of Him. May the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and Paul the aged be your God forever. But I gather all the promises to-day in a group and ask the shepherds to water their flocks of lambs and sheep up to the sparkling supply. 'Behold, happy is the man who God correcteth.' Though He causes grief, yet will He have compassion. 'Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all.' 'Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.' I am determined that no one shall go out of this house uncomforted.

So I come to your timid and shrinking soul to-day and compel you to come out in the presence of the Divine Physician. He has not hurt you. He has healed your wounds for many years, and He will give you gentle and omnipotent medication. But people, when they have trouble, go anywhere rather than to God. De Quincey took opium to get rid of his pain. Charles Lamb took to punch. Theodore Hook took to something stronger, Edwin Forrest took to theatrical dissipation, and men have run all around the earth, hoping in the quick transit to get away from their misfortunes. It has been a dead failure. There is only one well that can slake the thirst of an afflicted spirit, and that is the deep and inexhaustible well of the gospel.

But some one in the audience says, 'Notwithstanding all you have said this morning, I find no alleviation for my troubles. Well, I am not through yet. I have left the most potent consolation for the last. I am going to soothe you with the thought of heaven. However talkative we may be, there will come a time when the stoutest and most emphatic interrogation will evoke from you no answer. As soon as we have closed our lips for the final silence no power on earth can break that taciturnity. But where, O Christian, will be your spirit? In a scene of infinite gladness, the spring morning of heaven waving its blossoms in the bright air; victors fresh from battle showing their scars; the rain of earthly sorrow steaming through with the rainbow of eternal joy; in one group God and angels and the redeemed—Paul and Silas, Latimer and Ridley, Isaiah and Jeremiah, Payson and John Milton, Gabriel and Michael, the archangel; long lines of sinners reaching across the hills; seas of joy dashing to the white beach; conquerors marching from gate to gate, you among them. Oh, what a great flock God will gather around the celestial well! No stone on the well's mouth while the shepherd waters the sheep. There Jacob will recognize Rachel, the shepherdess. And, standing on one side of the well of eternal rapture your children and standing on the other side of eternal rapture your Christian ancestry, you will be bounded on a time when the stoutest and most emphatic interrogation will evoke from you no answer. 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