

IS LIFE WORTH LIVING?

Rev. Dr. Talmage Answers the Question.

To Enjoy the Journey Man Must Endeavor to Do What is Right—This Life is But the Beginning of Another.

The latest sermon from the popular Washington divine is devoted to the problem of life and concerns the happiness of all people. His text was James 4: 14: "What is your life?"

If we leave to the evolutionists to guess where we came from and to the theologians to prophesy where we are going to, we still have left for consideration the important fact that we are here. There may be some doubt about where the river rises, and some doubt about where the river empties, but there can be no doubt about the fact that we are sailing on it. So I am not surprised that everybody asks the question, "Is life worth living?"

Solomon, in his unhappy moments, says it is not. "Vanity," " vexation of spirit," "no good," are his estimate. The fact is that Solomon was at one time a polygamist, and that soured his disposition. One wife makes a man happy; more than one makes him wretched. But Solomon was converted from polygamy to monogamy, and the last words he ever wrote, as far as we can read them, were the words "Mountains of spices." But Jeremiah says life is worth living. In a book supposed to be doleful, and lugubrious, and sepulchral, and entitled "Lamentations," he plainly intimates that the blessing of merely living is so great and grand a blessing that though a man have piled on him all misfortunes and disasters he has no right to complain.

A diversity of opinion in our time as well as in olden time. Here is a young man of light hair and blue eyes and sound digestion, and generous salary, and happily affianced, and on the way to become a partner in a commercial firm of which he is an important clerk. Ask him whether life is worth living. He will laugh in your face and say: "Yes, yes, yes." Here is a man who has come to the forties. He is at the tip-top of the hill of life. Every step has been a stumble and a bruise. The people he trusted have turned out deserters, and the money he has honestly made he has been cheated out of. His nerves are out of tune. He has poor appetite, and the food he does eat does not assimilate. Forty miles climbing up the hill of life have been to him like climbing the Matterhorn, and there are 40 miles yet to go down, and descent is always more dangerous than ascent. Ask him whether life is worth living, and he will draw out in shivering and lugubrious and appalling negative, "No, no, no!"

How are we to decide this matter rightly and intelligently. The answer I shall give you will be different from either, and yet will commend itself to all who hear me this day as the right answer. If you ask me, "Is life worth living?" I answer, it all depends upon the kind of life you live.

In the first place, I remark that a life of mere money getting is always a failure, because you never get as much as you want. The poorest people in this country are the millionaires. There is not a scissor grinder on the streets of New York or Brooklyn who is so anxious to make money as these men who have piled up fortunes year after year in storehouses, in government securities, in tenement houses, in whole city blocks. You ought to see them jump when they hear the fire bell ring. You ought to see them in their excitement when a bank explodes. You ought to see their agitation when there is proposed a reformation in the tariff. Their nerves tremble like harp strings, but no music in the vibration. They read the reports from Wall street in the morning with a concernment that threatens paralysis or apoplexy, or, more probably, they have a telegraph or a telephone in their own house, so they catch every breath of change in the money market. The disease of accumulation has eaten into them—eaten into their heart, into their lungs, into their spleen, into their liver, into their bones.

And then you must take into consideration that the vast majority of those who make the dominant idea of life money getting, falling far short of affluence. It is estimated that only about two out of a hundred business men have anything worthy the name of success. A man who spends his life with the one dominant idea of financial accumulation spends a life not worth living.

So the idea of worldly approval. If that be dominant in a man's life he is miserable. Every four years the two most unfortunate men in this country are the two men nominated for the presidency. The reservoirs of abuse, and diatribe, and malediction gradually fill up, gallon above gallon, hog-head above hoghead, and about midsummer these two reservoirs will be brimming full, and a hose will be attached to each one, and it will play away on these nominees, and they will have to stand it, and take the abuse, and the falsehood, and the caricature, and the anathemas, and the caterwauling, and the fifth, and they will be rolled in it and rolled over and over in it until they are choked, and submerged, and strangled, and at every sign of returning consciousness they will be barked at by all the hounds of political parties from ocean to ocean. And yet, there are a hundred men today who are struggling for that privilege, and there are thousands of men who are helping them in the struggle. Now, that is not a life worth living. You can get slandered and abused cheaper than that! Take it on a smaller scale. Do not be so ambitious to have a whole reservoir rolled over on you.

But what you see in the matter of high political preferment you see in every community in the struggle for what is called social position. Tens of thousands of people trying to get into that realm, and they are under terrible

tenion. What is social position? It is a difficult thing to define, but we all know what it is. Good morals and intelligence are not necessary, but wealth, or a show of wealth, is absolutely indispensable. There are men to-day as notorious for their libertinism as the night is famous for its darkness who move in what is called high social position. There are hundreds of out-and-out rakes in American society whose names are mentioned among the distinguished guests at the great levees. They have annexed all the known vices and are longing for other worlds of diabolism to conquer. Good morals are not necessary in many of the exalted circles of society.

Neither is intelligence necessary. You find in that realm men who would not know an adverb from an adjective if they met it a hundred times in a day, and who could not write a letter of acceptance or regrets without the aid of a secretary. They buy their libraries by the square yard, only anxious to have the binding sublime. Their ignorance is positively sublime, making English grammar almost disreputable. And yet the finest parlors open before them. Good morals and intelligence are not necessary, but wealth or a show of wealth, is positively indispensable. It does not make any difference how you got your wealth, if you only got it. The best way for you to get into social position is for you to buy a large amount on credit, then put your property in your wife's name, have a few preferred creditors, and then make an assignment. Then disappear from the community until the breeze is over, and come back and start in the same business. Do you not see how beautifully that will put out all the people who are in competition with you and trying to make an honest living? How quickly it will get you into high social position? What is the use of toiling with 40 or 50 years of hard work when you can by two or three bright strokes make a great fortune? Ah! my friends, when you really lose your money how quickly they will let you drop, and the higher you get the harder you will drop.

A life of sin, a life of pride, a life of indulgence, a life of worldliness, a life devoted to the world, the flesh, and the devil is a failure, a dead failure, an infinite failure. I care not how many presents you send to that erudite, or how many garlands you send to that grave, you need to put right under the name on the tombstone this inscription: "Better for that man if he had never been born."

But I shall show you a life that is worth living. A young man says: "I am here. I am not responsible for my ancestry; others decide that. I am not responsible for my temperament; God gave me that. But here I am, in the evening of the nineteenth century, at 20 years of age. I am here, and I must take an account of stock. Here I have a body which is a divinely constructed engine. I must put it to the very best uses, and I must allow nothing to damage this rarest of machinery. Two feet, and they mean locomotion. Two eyes, and they mean capacity to peep out my own way. Two ears, and they are the telephones of communication with all the outside world, and they mean capacity to catch sweetest music and the voices of friendship—the very best music. A tongue, with almost infinity of articulation. Yes, hands with which to welcome, or resist, or lift, or smite, or wave, or bless—hands to help myself and help others.

Here is a world which after 6,000 years of battling with tempest and accident is still grander than any architect, human or angelic, could have drafted. I have two lamps to light me—a golden lamp and a silver lamp—a golden lamp set on the sapphire mantle of the day, a silver lamp set on the jet mantle of the night. Yes, I have that at 20 years of age which defies all inventory of valuables—a soul, with capacity to choose or reject, to rejoice or suffer, to love or to hate. Plato says it is immortal. Seneca says it is immortal. Confucius says it is immortal. An old book among the family relics—a book with leathers cover almost worn out, and pages almost obliterated by oft perusal, joins the other books in saying I am immortal. I have 80 years for a lifetime, 60 years yet to live. I may not live an hour, but then I must lay out my plans intelligently and for a long life. Sixty years added to the 20 I have already lived, that will bring me to 80. I must remember that these 80 years are only a brief preface to the five hundred thousand millions of quintillions of years which will be my chief residence and existence.

Now I understand my opportunities and my responsibilities. If there is any being in the universe all wise and all beneficent, who can help a man in such a juncture, I want him. The old book found among the family relics tells me there is a God, and that for the sake of his son, one Jesus, he will give help to a man. To Him I appeal. God help me! Here, I have 60 years yet to do for myself and to do for others. I must develop this body by all industries, by all gymnastics, by all sunshine, by all fresh air, by all good habits. And this soul I must have swept and garnished, and illumined, and glorified by all that I can do for it and all that I can get God to do for it. It shall be a Luxembourg of fine pictures. It shall be an orchestra of grand harmonies. It shall be a palace for God and righteousness to reign in. I wonder how many kind words I can utter in the next sixty years? I will try. I wonder how many good deeds I can do in the next sixty years? I will try. God help me!

That young man enters life. He is buffeted, he is tried, he is perplexed. A grave opens on that side and a grave opens on that side. He falls, but he rises again. He gets into a hard battle, but he gets the victory. The main course of his life is in the right direction. He blesses everybody he comes in contact with. God forgives his mistakes, and makes everlasting record of his holy endeavors, and at the close of it, God says to him: "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter into the joy of thy Lord." My brother, my sister, I

do not care whether that man dies at 30, 40, 50, 60, 70 or 80 years of age, you can chisel right under his name on the tombstone these words: "His life was worth living."

Amid the hills of New Hampshire, in olden times, there sits a mother. There are six children in the household—four boys and two girls. Small farm. Very rough, hard work to coax a living out of it. Mighty tug to make the two ends of the year meet. The boys go to school in winter and work the farm in summer. Mother is the chief provisioning spirit. With her hands she knits all the stockings for the little feet, and she is the mantuamaker for the boys, and she is the milliner for the girls. There is only one musical instrument in the house—the spinning wheel. The food is very plain, but is always well provided. The winters are very cold, but are kept out by the blankets she quilted. On Sunday, when she appears in the village church, her children around her, the minister looks down, and is reminded of the Bible description of a good housewife: "Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her."

Some years go by, and the two eldest boys want a collegiate education, and the household economies are severer, and the calculations are closer, and until those two boys get their education there is a hard battle for bread. One of these boys enters the university, stands in a pulpit widely influential, and preaches righteousness, judgment, and temperance, and thousands during his ministry are blessed. The other lad who got the collegiate education goes into the law, and thence into the legislative halls, and after awhile he commands listening senates as he makes a plea for the downtrodden, and the outcast. One of the younger boys becomes a merchant, starting at the foot of the ladder, but climbing on up until his success and his philanthropies are recognized all over the land. The other son stays at home because he prefers farming life, and then he thinks he will be able to take care of father and mother when they get old.

Of the two daughters: when the war broke out one went through the hospitals of Pittsburg Landing and Fortress Monroe, cheering up the dying and the homesick, and taking the last message to kindred far away, so that every time Christ thought of her He said, as of old, "The same is my sister and mother." The other daughter has a bright home of her own, and in the afternoon—the forenoon having been devoted to her household—she goes forth to hunt up the sick and to encourage the discouraged, leaving smiles and benedictions all along the way.

But one day there start five telegrams from the village for these five absent ones, saying: "Come, mother is dangerously ill." But before they can be ready to start, they receive another telegram, saying, "Come, mother is dead." The old neighbors gather in the old farm house to do the last offices of respect. But as that farming son, and the clergyman, and the senator, and the merchant, and the two daughters stand by the casket of the dead mother taking the last look, or lifting their little children to see once more the face of dear old grandma, I want to ask that group around the casket one question: "Do you really think her life was worth living?" A life for God, a life for others, a life of unselfishness, a useful life, a Christian life, is always worth living.

I would not find it hard to persuade you that the poor lad, Peter Cooper, making glue for a living, and then amassing a great fortune until he could build a philanthropy which has had its echo in 10,000 philanthropies all over the country—I would not find it hard to persuade you that his life was worth living. Neither would I find it hard to persuade you that the life of Susannah Wesley was worth living. She sent out one son to organize Methodism and the other son to ring his anthems all through the ages. I would not find it hard work to persuade you that the life of Frances Leche was worth living, as she established in England a school for the scientific nursing of the sick, and then when the war broke out between France and Germany went to the front, and with their own hands scraped the mud off the bodies of the soldiers dying in the trenches, and with her weak arm—standing one night in the hospital—pushing back a German soldier to his couch, as all frenzied with his wounds, he rushed to the door, and said: "Let me go, let me go to my liebe mutter"—major generals standing back to let pass this angel of mercy.

Neither would I have hard work to persuade you that Grace Darling lived a life worth living—the heroine of the lifeboat.

But I know the thought in the minds of hundreds of you to-day. You say: "While I know all these lived lives worth living, I don't think my life amounts to much." Ah, my friends, whether you live a life conspicuous or inconspicuous, it is worth living, if you live aright. And I want my next sentence to go down into the depths of all your souls. You are to be rewarded, not according to the greatness of your work, but according to the holy industries with which you employed the talents you really possessed. The majority of the crowns of Heaven will not be given to people with ten talents, for most of them were tempted only to serve themselves. The vast majority of the crowns of Heaven will be given to people who had one talent, but gave it all to God. And remember that our life here is introductory to another. It is the vestibule to a palace; but who despises the door of a Madeleine because there are grander glories within? Your life if rightly lived is the first bar of an eternal oratorio, and who despises the first note of Haydn's symphonies? And the life you live now is all the more worth living because it opens into a life that shall never end, and the last letter of the word "time" is the first letter of the word "eternity!"

BUSY QUEEN VICTORIA.

Very Considerations About Letter Writing. How She Gets the Daily News.

Queen Victoria's private letters number many hundreds every year. She writes to her numerous relatives, forgetting no anniversary or occasion on which a letter might be welcome. The London Chronicle says that to the younger members of the royal family she never fails to send birthday gifts, accompanied by a few loving words of greeting. Every day the birthday book is consulted—not that birthday book in which singers, actors and other personages are asked to write, but that smaller volume reserved for relatives and intimates. Then there are numerous letters of a semi-private nature which are written by the queen herself—letters of condolence, letters of congratulation to brides who have been connected with the court, letters to foreign monarchs. Besides all these epistles, written in the blackest of ink on paper slightly edged with black, there are thousands which are penned by the private secretary and his assistants.

The queen's day begins early and ends late. After breakfast—a meal which she still enjoys eating in the open air when possible—there are the newspapers and private correspondence claiming attention. With regard to the former, portions of The Times and other journals are read aloud to the queen by a lady specially appointed for this purpose. Very rarely does the queen comment on the news, except in the case of a calamity, when her sympathy is quickly expressed in a telegram. Inaccuracy in an important newspaper as to royal matters gives the queen grave annoyance, and The Chronicle's writer has known an official to call and complain of the misstatement and demand a rectification. Not long ago an illustrated London paper gave a picture in which her majesty was represented as holding the arm of her Indian attendant. Within a short space of time a member of the royal household called on the editor to state the absurdity of such an error. "The queen is much annoyed at this mistake on the part of your artist, as it might give grievous offense to important persons in India. She could never take the arm of a servant." This will show how closely she watches even the pictorial press. When a good illustration appears of any state function, it is a common incident for the artist to be requested to visit the queen, very likely to receive a commission.

KEEP HIS WORD.

A Supernatural Voice Was Heard in the Composing Room.

The talk had turned to the supernatural, and a man who has been the foreman of a newspaper composing room for a good many years down in Virginia told the following story in the presence of a reporter: "There used to be a young fellow by the name of Blank, who worked at a case in — office. He was a nimble typesetter and a very nice kind of a boy. But he would wander about the country. That, you know, is a characteristic of the typesetting fraternity. I never liked the habit and never indulged in it to any considerable extent myself. I told him one day that he would come to a bad end.

"If ever I am in trouble, I will call on you, Frank," he replied generally.

"Well, one day he came to me, and throwing his stick on the imposing stone said that he was going to leave the office and go to Norfolk. I tried to dissuade him, but all to no purpose. He was a headstrong fellow, and that settled it. About a week later I was busy at the forms, getting the inside pages ready to send to the cellar. The clock in the city hall had just struck midnight. Suddenly I heard my name called. I thought it was one of the boys in the office who was calling, and I made no immediate reply. Again I heard some one call in a very distinct voice. This time I recognized it as Blank's voice.

"Blank is out in the street, and he is calling you, Frank," said one of the compositors. "I walked over to the front window, threw up the sash and peered out. The street was silent and deserted. Not a living thing was to be seen. "What do you want, Blank?" I called out.

"There was no reply. I shut the window and went back to the page which I had been making up.

"I thought that I heard Blank's voice," I said to my assistant.

"So you did," he replied. "We all heard him call."

"And so they had. The next day a telegram reached the office saying that Blank had been run over and killed by a train near Norfolk about midnight. Blank had kept his word. He called on me when he was in trouble. He probably died calling for me."—Washington Star.

Delicious Snails of Provence.

The Provencal snails, which feed in a gourmet fashion upon vine leaves, are peculiarly delicious, and there was a murmur of delight from our company as the four women brought to the table four big dishes full of them, and for a while there was only the sound of eager munching, mixed with the clatter on china of the empty shells. To extract them we had the strong thorns, three or four inches long, of the wild acacia, and on these the little brown morsels were carried to the avid mouths and eaten with a bit of bread dipped in the sauce, and then the shell was subjected to a vigorous sucking, that not a drop of sauce lingering within it should be lost. —Thomas A. Janvier in Century.

A Sure Ad.

"Have we had a protest from any one recently?" asked the sultan as he lit a fresh cigarette.

"No, your majesty," replied the grand vizier.

"No nation has dared to cry out against the continuance of the Ottoman empire!" said the sultan, scowling.

"None, your highness."

"Then have some more Armenians killed at once. I will not be neglected in this shameful manner." —London Fun.

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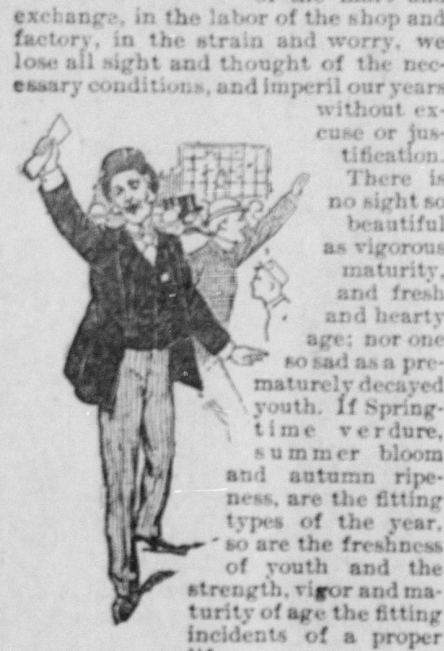
It ought never to be, where healthful conditions have prevailed. Strength and vigor in youth and mature years depend on the care and attention our natural qualifications receive. In the mad rush of business, in the fierce struggle of the mart and exchange, in the labor of the shop and factory, in the strain and worry, we lose all sight and thought of the necessary conditions, and imperil our years without excuse or justification. There is no sight so beautiful as vigorous maturity, and fresh and hearty age; nor one so sad as a prematurely decayed youth. If Spring-time verdure, summer bloom and autumn ripeness, are the fitting types of the year, so are the freshness of youth and the strength, vigor and maturity of age the fitting incidents of a proper life.

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