

WHEN TREASON SAT WITH HEROISM

The International Sunday School Lesson For June 9 "Jesus Faces Betrayal and Denial" — Mark 14:10-72.

By WILLIAM T. ELLIS

These are trying times for persons who cannot see things in the large. They behold pettiness and strife and self-seeking, and real treason, abroad in the land, and forget the glory and grandeur of the patriotism and self-sacrifice that are really rampant. Some minds are so constituted that they dwell upon Judas and forget Jesus. They are familiar with the traitor, but ignorant of the Saviour.

Now comes the old Bible story, for present study, reminding us that, even as at the present time, treason sat alongside of loyalty and sublimity in history's supreme hour. There was a Judas for a Jesus. Black disloyalty and avarice, were able to re-

act even the influence of the personal presence of Christ himself. How can any one be a traitor to his country in such an hour as the present? Look at Judas. As it was, so it is, and will be. Perfidy—black, inexcusable perfidy—is one of the facts of life. Only the existence of an arch-enemy of light and truth can account for its existence. Before there could be a Judas, there had to be a devil.

There is a brighter side which needs to be stirred to-day. It is that despite the worst that Judas and his allies could do—despite all the vested and leagued might of worldly wisdom and influence and power and wealth—Jesus triumphed, as truth always triumphs. Victory is still with the right.

"For right is right, since God is God. And right the day must win; To doubt would be disloyalty, To falter would be sin."

Ministry and Memorial

How often, as I went to and fro with the army, did I recall that scene in the upper room, where the King of Heaven, the Son of God himself, took a towel and a basin and did the menial work of a slave? For religion amid the troops is expressed in terms of ministry. This magnificent enterprise of the Y. M. C. A. which goes with the men from training camp to trench, is almost wholly an accumulation of lowly ministry. The humblest of services are done for the men. Preachers and professors and men of affairs spend themselves in merely providing the soldiers comforts and conveniences and entertainment. They have discovered, what Jesus taught at the apex of His mission, that religion consists in ministry.

A vital part of His ministry is the providing of facilities for correspondence. The soldiers keep home in their hearts, and want to be kept in the memory of loved ones. This passion to be remembered and to be loved, is one of the basic instincts of life. It has reared the pyramids and countless other monuments. And it has given the church the sacrament which means far more to the soldiers than it ever did to them as civilians.

There is one memorial, the most widely known and observed in the world, which has persisted through-

two thousand years, and is better understood to-day, and more generally recognized, than ever before. This is that monument which is called the Lord's Supper, or the Holy Communion, or the Eucharist or the Holy Sacrament. Many significances has this ceremony, but it is primarily a memorial to its Founder, Jesus wanted to be remembered. His heart coveted the faithful and fadeless affection of His friends. "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." And He wanted them so to love Him. The thought of passing away and being forgotten is repugnant to every one of us; this is the last assertion of our identity as individuals—we want to be remembered.

No man knows another's heart; but in His own words we have the evidence that Jesus shrank from being forgotten. He was the prince of friends. Love meant more to him than to others. Therefore He prized, with a passion which baser spirits cannot comprehend, the constancy of this little band of disciples. Therein is the point of "This do in remembrance of Me. With desire have I desired to eat this passover with you." Jesus yearned for a friendship that would last.

The way this trust has been kept inspires the imagination. Through long centuries, many of them dark, constant friends, whose hearts have responded to the soul-cry of the Man of Nazareth as He was about to go forth to His death, have met with Him at the sacramental table, showing forth their remembrance of Him. The mystic significance of this simple feast to lives which never reveal their deeper emotions may be inferred from their actions. Consider the communion services to which each of us have knowledge, personal or indirect. Before my mind as I write, is a picture of a company of boyish soldiers, looking forward to the battlefield, rising at dawn and kneeling on a rough pine board before an improvised altar to receive from their chaplain the token of their Master's dying thought of them. Again I recall the scene in the mountains of the New West, distant from a railroad, in a little chapel which could not afford communion vessels, where the Minister himself seemed to sit as a guest at the table when the missionary broke the bread. Still again there is before me a picture of a gathering of Christians in the remote interior of Japan, and as the bread and wine were being passed I saw the wondering, curious faces of dark-skinned "heathen" children and men and women peeping in through doors and windows. All around the earth loyal hearts are keeping this memorial of an unforgotten Lord.

This simple supper, simpler it could not be—which Jesus instituted on this epochal occasion when His little band of disciples gathered about Him in a room where the hate-filled eyes of the priests could not find them, has a significance which reaches in three directions. It was an adaptation of the Jewish Passover, looking backward to the merciful and protecting providence of Jehovah. It is a reminder of the past. Contained within it were messages of God's gracious dealing. It said "Remember Egypt." To the Christian it adds to this "Remember Calvary." It was fraught with the personality of Jesus. Thoughts of Him make it significant. In Paul's words, it declares, "Remember Jesus Christ." The first purpose of the Lord's Supper is a memorial. It looks backward to Galilee, to Judea, to the upper room, to Calvary, to Joseph's garden.

Brooding over the past, to the neglect of the present and the future, is never wise. Since the Founder of Christianity designed a symmetrical life for His friends, this monument which He established points forward to a goal to be attained. The feast is to be kept until renewed again in the visible presence of Him who first broke the bread and poured the cup. The sacrament is one of anticipation. Within its form is contained the reminder of the blissful fellowship of all the faithful, and association with their Lord himself. In that day there will be no lurking foes to be escaped, no shadow of treason or faithfulness to cloud the occasion, no impending sorrow to sadden hearts. We fail to partake aright of the Lord's Supper if it does not fill our hearts with hope of eating and drinking it anew in the kingdom.

Backward, forward and then inward this celebration points. Various beliefs cluster about this sacrament, and myths count it a cleansing from sin but all agree that it incites the noblest spiritual impulses, and awakens dormant aspirations after the best in life. "Let a man examine himself," is the injunction of Holy Writ concerning the Lord's Supper; and the feast should always lead to profitable introspection. Who's heart is purest of heart in the individual naturally is the surest contribution to the welfare of the whole. So this memorial has served mankind.

A traitor at the Feast An air of mystery envelopes the plans made by Jesus for the keeping of this feast. He wanted to be free, during these last hours with His dearest friends, from the interruptions of His enemies, who hourly grew more bloodthirsty. The needed privacy He had secured by prearrangement with some disciple, possibly Mark. This friend was to meet the two disciples who were to make arrangements for the feast, and they would know him by the pitcher of water upon his shoulder. Without question they were to follow him and ask a certain thing, possibly a sort of code. All this was doubtless to prevent Judas from knowing in advance the exact spot, lest he should give warning to the priests. The tragic undertone of the great story is the black fact of the presence of Judas, the traitor. Among the twelve closest friends, one was false and Jesus knew it. The hatred of the Pharisees, and their murderous plotting with the priests, did not stab Him to the heart like the knowledge that one of His own, who shared with Him the common dish, was willing to sell Him for price.

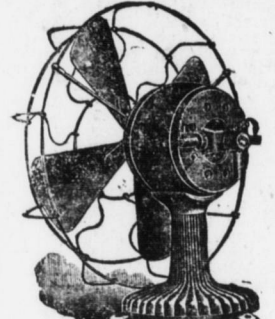
When Hearts Open Every sensitive person knows what it is to be chilled by a hostile presence. We speak colloquially of certain characters "getting on our nerves." There is some deep psychological reason for this. Many fine natures, like flowers, can blossom only in the sunshine of love and appreciation. Few can be at their best in the presence of opposition. Even Jesus seemed under constraint so long as Judas sat at the table. But when the latter had gone forth his heart overflowed in mellow, tender words. Then it was at the close of the regular Passover meal, that He instituted the new memorial Supper for His friends.

There must have been a sob in His voice as He gave them the bread that was to signify His broken body, and poured forth the cup that should forever represent His blood. On this mystical sustenance their spirits were to be sustained, until, faithful to His memory and eager for reunion with Him, they should eat and drink anew with Him in the kingdom where goodness has no enemies and covetousness and hate cannot enter.

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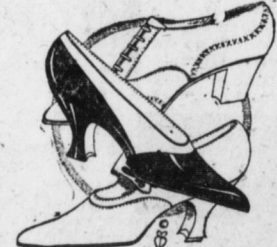
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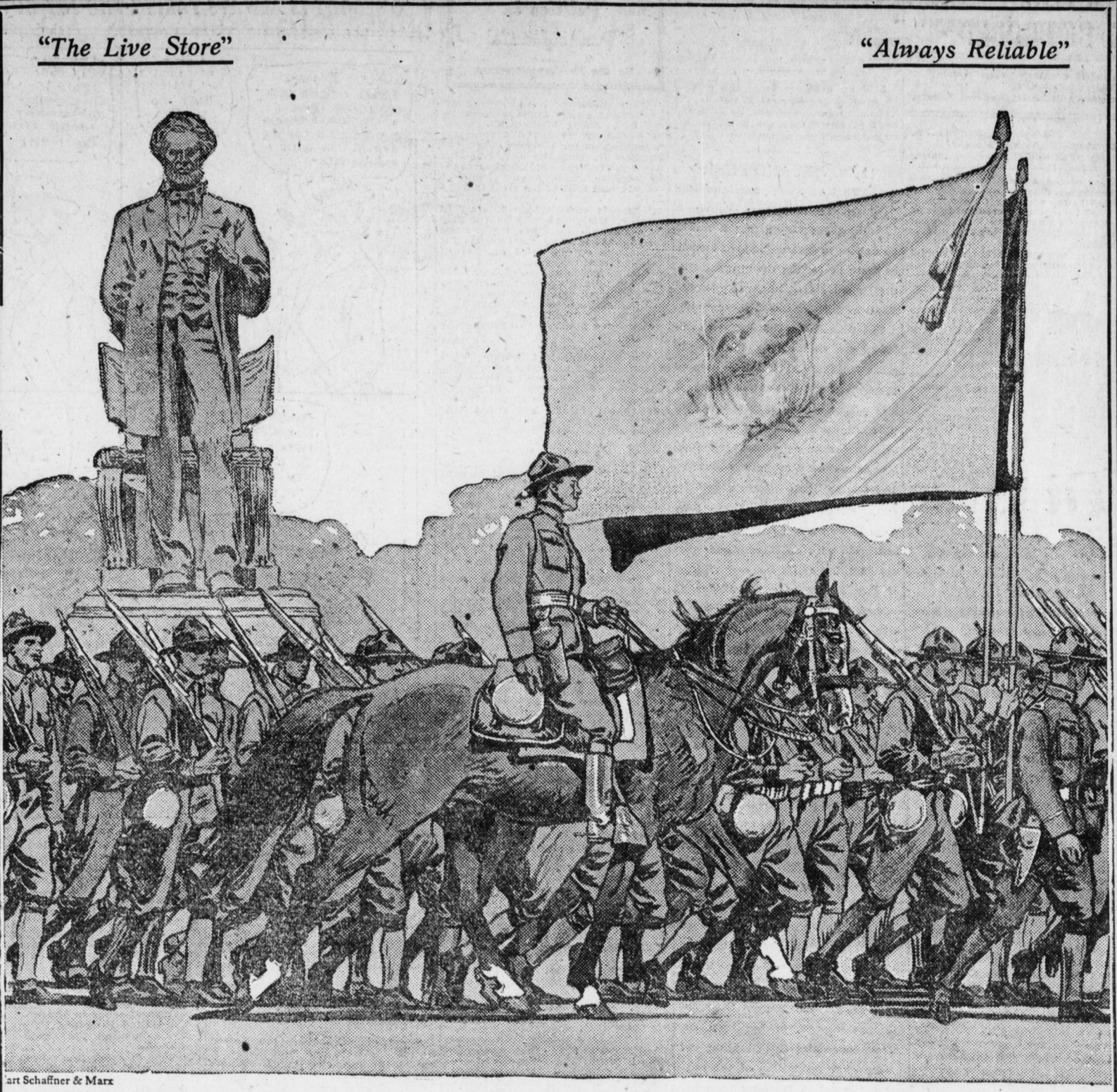
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