

THE PULPIT.

A BRILLIANT SUNDAY SERMON BY THE REV. EDWARD NILES.

Theme: Systematic Giving.

Brooklyn, N. Y.—Sunday morning the Rev. Edward Niles, pastor of the South Bushwick Reformed Church, preached on "Systematic Giving." The text was from Mark 12:41: "Jesus sat down over against the treasury and beheld how the multitude cast money into the treasury." Mr. Niles said:

The stage setting of this scene is a court of the temple area. Around three sides of its 200 feet square surface ran a raised balcony for the women. Against the wall on the fourth side stood thirteen trumpet-like chests, narrow at the mouth, wide at the bottom. A placard told the purpose for the money deposited in each. One and two received the tribute money of every Israelite which paid the running expenses of the temple, including salaries.

In three and four were deposited the equivalent in coin for the sin offering of animals. The next three provided for the sacrificial wood, incense and furnishing. The labels of the other six showed that they received thank offerings of various kinds. Nearby was a miniature "chamber of the silent" for gifts to educate the children of the poor.

Thus seven of these fourteen treasury boxes were for dues obligatory upon the members of God's visible kingdom. The seven for offerings of gratitude, supported disabled priests and their widows, taught those who could not afford tuition fees, supplied the needy, went for proselyting or mission work.

The time was Tuesday of Holy Week. The characters were a multitude. Every one of them patronized the tithe boxes, many those for charity. The two important characters were:

First—A widow. She had come to pay her dues. All she had were two what were vulgarly called "lepta" or "peelings," the smallest possible of coppers. To drop one into the tithe box meant one-half instead of the prescribed tenth, but to give less was impossible. To support her church was a matter of course, however, and without hesitation she put in. Only a lepton left for her living! Then she looked at the boxes for beneficence. She thought not of her wants, but of her blessings. With joy that at least a lepton was hers to give, she made her offering for the needy.

The chief character was Jesus. He had watched the rivers of gold and silver flowing into the treasury, and it must have been a bright spot in that sad week to note how many gave the free-will offerings. The disciples, glad at the amounts given, knowing the need of widows, orphans, slum workers, said: "The people are very generous to-day, Rabbi." Jesus was interested in the amounts the givers took away, supremely intent upon the mind rather than the money. He had no word to say until the widow made her supreme sacrifice. He felt no pity for her; but pleasure in her as He made the startling statement, "She has cast in more than all they that are casting into the treasury."

We would naturally have expected the Great Teacher to have sat over against the pulpit, watching how some eloquent rabbi expounded and applied the law and how the congregation listened; or in some quiet place of the choir loft beholding how the cantor led and the great choir of Levites rendered the worship of praise and the chorus took it up. Undoubtedly, He noted these things, but the only inspired record of His interest in the temple worship tells of His sitting against the treasury. The concrete result of preaching and praise appealed to Him more than their matter in preparation or their method in delivery.

As He was then, so He is to-day. The essential in our worship is how we cast into God's treasury. That part of the service should be the service's centre. The Communion table is its only fit receptacle. To advertise "No Collection" is to eviscerate worship and turn it into a combination lecture and concert. Money is the tangible evidence of work accomplished. Our work belongs to God, and the more it is consecrated, the more of ourselves we dedicate to Him.

In systematic support of the church this congregation has made rapid progress. The average given by each member, man, woman and child, is larger now than ever before. I said "given." The word is misleading. We don't "give" our taxes to pay for schools, teachers, books and janitors. When we go to a musicale, we don't give our dollar for a seat, nor do we give something to the doctor or the roofer, when we pay their bills.

Taxes for religious instruction in the Sunday school, for church property, repairs and improvements, for music, for a man to spend all his time in the care of souls and thus be as proficient as the man we pay to give all his time to the care of bodies, are obligatory in England, Germany and Russia. They are voluntary here, but no less really the equivalent of value received, the New Testament continuation of the temple dues.

I am beholden to none of you if, as the preacher of the Gospel, I live by the Gospel. You are beholden to me to see that the time I ought to use for my work is not diverted to worrying over my modest bills.

The one mite was the widow's due. Her credit that far was the simple one

of any person who does his duty. Her glory is that because the times were hard she did not omit giving for some one else. Because she put her beneficence on the same basis with her obligations, she is immortalized. To speak of the widow's mite is a misnomer. One important lesson of the story is that of the duplex system taught by the widow's two mites.

The spirit of that double offering is inspiring the laymen of our American churches. During the winter seventy-five men's missionary conventions in the United States consider this question. Already, crowds of business men have come together at twenty places, in numbers never equalled before outside of political conventions. The largest halls were too small to hold the enthusiasts determined to finance the Kingdom of God as they do their own business. Determinedly they have attacked the hoary custom of weekly offerings for self and yearly offerings for unselfishness, and advocated the substitute of which this widow woman was a pioneer.

The weekly envelope has two compartments, one for the tax, one for the gift. The tax goes for church expenses. The object of the gift for each Sunday is plainly printed. Every other week it is for missions, city, national or foreign. The alternate week it goes for some other beneficence.

The only objections I have heard to this plan are:

First—"Its additional expense." In reality 1000 sets of fifty-two duplex envelopes in each, cost but \$16 more than the other kind.

Second—"Its complexity." One use of it will make clear its meaning to the eight-year-old child. The duplex system has no duplicity. It is simple in all but the name.

Third—"Its arbitrary allotments." The church officers have carefully considered all the charities in which our congregation or any considerable part of it are interested, and adjusted their proportionate needs. It is a simple matter for anyone who wishes to give one a larger percentage than thus allotted and a smaller to another cause to write over the one the name of the other. The treasurer will invariably note the change. Only be sure to substitute rather than omit! The most common criticism is that "it robs Peter to pay Paul." The contributor will simply divide into two what formerly he gave to one.

Fourth—I have heard from many churches who have tested the theories here expounded. Not one of them but reports substantial increase in the amount given for the local church. One of the largest congregations of our own denomination, which for ten years found itself with a deficiency each May 1, last year, at the close of its first use of the two-offering envelope, had a balance in the treasury, despite unusual expenses. This is but a sample testimony, the unexceptional rule. It accords with the law of the kingdom, "there is that which withholdeth more than it meet and it tendeth to poverty."

The fifth objection is "possible inability to carry out the promise." Don't dress your charity in widow's weeds unless you are poor as the widow of the two "peelings." If so, give less. Don't stop giving, unless all income stops. With God, the value is not in the quantity, but the quality.

Against these five objections, I would array five of the many benefits:

1. Consecration. At the treasury Christ beheld "how" (not how much) the multitude cast. He wants you to give, not because He needs it, but because you need it. Weekly giving is an antidote vs. covetousness, a weekly reminder of whose we are and whom we serve. The nickel piece for which the poorest of us has a dozen uses means more to Christ than the superfluity of the rich, although written in four figures. With the method now adopted, the minister is relieved from that hateful announcement: "The offering this morning is for our own church support," and from a prayer which is largely over his own salary. With the new giving is the new recognition that our field is the world.

2. Committal. It is committal to a principle. Having once gone through the agony of giving up for a year to "the other man" a certain part of our income, while the convalescence may be slow, the acute pain is over. From that time we are custodians of the Lord's money, our duty being simply to hand it out. With other causes, apparently of equal worth, we have nothing to do, unless our income is suddenly increased. Otherwise we are "immune." Some other person must take care of them. If we have given all we can in the "deacon's fund" compartment, when a hard luck story comes to our door, without a twinge of remorse we can send the applicant to a deacon's care.

3. Comprehension. Every one giving means every one interested. Great causes being more frequently and regularly before you, you will want to know more about your frequent investment. A once a year advertisement is good. A once a week advertisement that your responsibilities and privileges are unbounded makes meaningful your prayer. "Thy kingdom come on earth."

4. Consecutiveness. Annual collections are variable as the weather and the state of the general health. They can be and are annually dodged by otherwise regular worshippers. The double envelope is a faithful reminder to those ill, out of town, or otherwise absent one Sunday that their gifts will be expected by the Great Head of the Church just the same. The sinews for the war against sin should not depend upon the clouds, nor the emotional result from

either a poor presentation of a good cause or a fine presentation of a poor cause.

5. Convenience. Most people are paid monthly or weekly. The woman who could not give \$25 in a lump sum could easily give fifty cents fifty-two times a year. One dollar comes harder than ten cents a week. In a year, it is only one-fifth as much to the cause. If the home church depended upon annual collections for its support it would be dead.

Only the inherent energy of missions keeps missions alive during these weary annual offering years. While the board knows that a church will give, because its "foreign mission Sunday" comes at the end of the year, while foreign mission expenses go on all through the year, good money goes for interest on borrowed capital to supply this deficiency.

Christ confronts every Christian with "send or go! Your money or your life!" Your money is your life's expression. Our rendering head for running expenses is six times that of our gift to God. I have no sarcastic comparisons to make. I but say your own thought. "These things ought not so to be." I announce the adoption of a plan for changing them. I remind you that machinery is no value without power.

YE DID IT UNTO ME.
(Matthew 25:40.)

"What shall I give to Thee, O Lord? The things that came of old Laid safely on Thy cradle rude Their myrrh and gems and gold.

"Thy martyrs gave their hearts' warm blood, Their ashes strewn Thy way; They spurned their lives as dreams and dust To speed Thy coming day.

"Thou knowest of sweet and precious things, My store is scant and small, Yet, wert Thou here in want and woe, Lord, I would give Thee all."

There came a voice from heavenly heights: "Unclose thine eyes and see; Gifts to the least of those I love Thou givest unto Me."
—Rose Terry Cooke.

Christ in Us.

It is a great loss in every way that we are accustomed to speak of faith in Christ, forgiveness, and cleansing from sin as they were the crown and climax of Christianity, instead of being its outworks, its outer-courts, the staircases and corridors to its throne-room, its reparative processes preparatory to its essential life and heart. Christianity fails of its chief end in any life that it affects, unless it produces there, so far as may be possible, the life of the Eternal God Himself, as it is resident in Jesus Christ and communicated by the Holy Spirit.

In regeneration, at whatever time it takes place, and under whatever circumstances, the principle of a new life is inserted in the human spirit. As the animal has a higher life than the plant, and as man, in his moral nature, has a higher life than the animal, so the man who has been regenerated by the Spirit of God has become possessed of a life to which the ordinary man can lay no claim. He has become, as the Apostle Peter puts it, "a partaker of the Divine nature." Whatever be our difference as to creed or church, they are comparatively unimportant, so long as we possess within our spirits this Divine life, which is Christ in us, the hope of glory. "Know ye not," said the apostle, as though it were an anomaly, to be ignorant of this primal fact, "that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?"

The whole theme of redemption, the entire work of Jesus Christ, His birth in which He brought the Divine under the condition of the human. His death by which He acquired power to pass it on, His resurrection and ascension through which He bore it regnant and triumphant to the throne. His gift of the Holy Spirit by which He makes it available to all who believe—all tend to this as their flower and fruit, that He should reproduce Himself in us.

And if year by year we are not becoming more pure and strong and Christ-like, we may gravely question whether we have not deceived ourselves in thinking that we have received Him into our nature.—F. B. Meyer.

Criminals and Drink.

Dr. Albert Wilson, the brain specialist, described the results of his recent work in a lecture before the members of the Society for the Study of Inebriety recently.

"Although alcohol is so great a problem in crime, I could fill the platform with criminals who are teetotalers," said Dr. Wilson. "A particularly accomplished criminal told me the other day that he must keep entirely away from drink when planning a crime. Another, however, said that he required a little stimulant just to help him carry out a 'job.'"

Dr. Wilson told a story of Berry, the late executioner. After carrying out five hundred executions he became so sympathetic toward criminals that he gave up hanging and became a temperance missionary. Talking of the magnitude of crime, the lecturer said that a million persons are arrested in this country every year. Three hundred thousand, equal to the population of a large town, are sent to prison, while crime costs us \$6,000,000 a year.—London Daily Mail.

Humility is the First Lesson.

Humility is the first lesson we learn from reflection, and self-distrust is the first proof we give of having obtained a knowledge of ourselves.—Zimmerman.



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ONE CAUSE

of headache is straining the eyes and using them until they feel weak and bleary. If the people could realize the need of proper glasses, there would be less sore eyes and fewer headaches.

I can fit you out with the right thing. Give me a trial.

WM. LUCAS

MOSHANNON, PA.

Temperance Notes.

One of the most encouraging signs of the times is the degree to which in unexpected quarters the idea is prevailing that the liquor trade is no longer to be considered clean and respectable.

In view of the fact that whisky supplies practically all of the criminals that are not made by the gambling fever, would it not be a good idea if the State would supply some refuge for the confirmed drunkard anxious to cure himself?

A man drunk on the egotism of ignorance should not add thereto the intoxication of drink.

The statement is made that over one-half million persons are arrested in this country and Canada for petty crimes and violations of the laws, and fully ninety per cent. of them are alcoholics.

The mortality from surgical operations in the inebriate is larger than in temperance men, and in railroad surgery this fact is always prominent and to be considered. Modern surgical works suggest guarded prognosis where alcohol has been used by the patient.

The Church's Supreme Mission.

To restore man to himself, to his place in nature, to society and to God was the comprehensive mission of the Son of Man, and it is the supreme mission of His church in the twentieth century.

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Enter Not Into Temptation.

A reckless man in a zoological garden once seized a venomous serpent by the nape of the neck and held it up before his companions. The man thought he had the serpent wholly in his power. But it began to coil its long body about his arm and then slowly tighten its grasp till the man in agony was obliged to drop his hold of his neck. Quickly then it turned and bit him, and soon the man was dead.

He thought he was strong enough to play with the serpent, and then thrust it from him when wearied of the play. Many think they are strong enough to play with temptation of any sort, but they find sooner or later that the temptation has mastered them. "Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation," said Christ. It is the entering into temptation which is to be guarded against.
—Morning Star.