

SUNDAY SERMON

A Scholarly Discourse By Rev. Dr. S. S. Roche

Brooklyn, N. Y.—At St. Mark's P. E. Church, the Rev. Dr. Spencer Sumner Roche, the rector, preached Sunday on "Lessons From Elijah's Life." The text was from I. Kings, xix:2. "And he came thither, unto a cave."

The lessons present quite fully the life of that grand old prophet Elijah the Tishbite. From a sublime scene in his life I shall attempt to draw such lessons as may fit the hour. Let us select the moment when his soul yearned to see an hour of glory with God. Give your thoughts to this statement: "And he came thither, unto a cave."

I shall speak of the coming and of the cavern; of the grief the journey brought to view, and the glory the cavern revealed. Throughout we must remember that we stand in a typical case of Almighty God's dealing with His discouraged servants. What the Lord said and did to Elijah, He would have us believe He says and does to ourselves.

From one of the most striking situations in history we are to see Elijah hurried in an instant. The occasion of his fall was one of the slightest of incidents, as when an avalanche which carries down the side of a mountain is started by the waves of the air aroused by a bird's flight. Alas, talked with his wife, we have soon greatness of character in reticence, as when the numerous interrogatories of Phile the Son of Man "answered him never a word."

So meanness, cowardice are seen often in that easy flow of words which lets out everything. A wife may tell her husband what he has no business to know; a man may make himself contemptible blabbing everything to his wife. "Abah told Jezebel all that Elijah had done and withal how he had slain the prophets with the sword." I do not wonder that he spoke in wrath or malice; quite the contrary; he knew he had a thigress to deal with, and used all the net his lean wit could summon. He was afraid to tell her that he himself had abandoned the sinking cause of the prophets. He divulged his matters, putting the small things first; last of all he beloved ministers of falsehood and fraud were slain. The thigress rolled her angry eyes and showed her cruel teeth. She sent this message to Elijah: "The gods do so to me and to my life as if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to-morrow about this time." Jezebel's hood was up. "He arose and went for his life." The man who had confronted the king and his armed retainers fled terrified from a woman.

There is a lesson for all. Life's vicissitudes only lift us to new battlements. One of Elijah's mistakes was his supposition that all would go well if he ever resulted favorably. He succeeded beyond his will; at it means only to find his real rest and rest to begin. So we regard the office to which we hope to be elected, the partnership we are anxious to form, the fifty or hundred thousand we are striving for. When the great achievement is won we are simply like the army landed on a hostile shore, under the guns of the fleet. Shut up for weeks in narrow quarters, tossed by the sea, fed on ship's fare, the men long for the land with its fruit and forage. The joy of the landing is quickly exchanged for the sense of insecurity and the fear of sudden attack.

A day or so after Carmel, Elijah was at Beersheba. Even there he was full of alarm. He fled into deeper solitude. The further he fled the lower sank his spirits. See his awful consternation in his inconsistency with regard to life. He had run away to safety. Unless the juniper tree he begged it might be taken. So low is Elijah fallen! No for the second stage of the journey. The prophet is broken down. He thinks the end has come. See how God showed His disconsolate servant. First He took the words of the prophet. The prophet was fatigued, famished, spent. Natural law carrying out divine purpose caused the pining and sighing to bring similes. The discouraged Christian can often do worse than to give up. When the world is too much for us, when the strain and worry seem as if they would never cease, when the disappointment is bitter, when the letter comes destroying our hopes, when by bewavering leaves the heart desolate, heaven guides the afflicted soul to calm and quiet, and the peace of submission. "So He giveth His beloved sleep."

Next God fed Elijah. "An angel touched him and said, 'Arise and eat.' And behold there was at his head a cake baked on the coals and a cup of water." Our Lord's intensely physical has at times fed the multitude before He instructed them. A full stomach is not always the sign of a pure heart, but who doubts that if we could give one good meal to the wretched creature, instead of the bread of life, we might begin to see the world as it really is. Elijah slept and ate, and slept and ate again. The repose was natural, the rest supernatural, but the lessons are universally applicable. Calmed and strengthened, his body spirit reasserted itself. He would now heed the Meint of God.

the mistakes of good men think of the miserably narrowness of those who talk against missions to the heathen and refuse to contribute; or the coldness of those who discourage under the term "missionary effort" by Christian people to fight the devil in his own strongholds of the brothel and the rammer, Elijah, though a good man, made some mistakes. So far has he turned aside that we are tempted to think his estimate is just that he can henceforth be of no service to his Lord. But we shall see that heaven can make abundant use of even cross-grained energy, so only it have a good heart. See His method with this devout, heroic, but misguided saint.

God showed Elijah the impotence of the Carnal. There is no reproach, "Go forth and stand on the mount before the Lord." There came sweeping down the granite crags of Sinai a gust and then a blast and then a hurricane that uprooted the ancient trees, and rolled the loose fragments of rock against one another, and the rocks in pieces like millstones subjected to too swift revolution. The appalled saint knelt breathless, and as the tornado spent its force he lifted his eyes for a nearer view of God. "But the Lord was not in the wind." The earth rumbled, the crags were split, the mount itself rocked, the ground opened great fissures, the day of the dissolution of nature itself appeared to have come. He looked again. "But the Lord was not in the earthquake." The lightning darted out of the terrible splendor of Oriental tempests till the atmosphere seemed charged with continuous flame, and Mount Sinai and the cave and the fragment itself seemed ablaze. Again he strained his vision to discern in the silent gloom. One year more glorious. "But the Lord was not in the fire." As has been finely said Elijah had conceived God simply as power. His own achievements had been wrought by power. He is now made to recognize the futility of mere force. This is a wonderful discovery for us. Especially for the world's great ones. The man who in finance or industry has won the greatest success is speedily convinced of the impotence of that which men ordinarily consider victory. When God teaches us this is good. Failure, disappointment, sadness, such as a blessing in disguise if it is not of ourselves and makes us feel that with all the world can give there is something else needed.

He showed Elijah the infinitude, the inexhaustible power and goodness and glory of the divine. The cyclone was still, the lightning spent, the lightnings burned out and yet God came. "Then on perturbed and tormented nature a silence rested as when the lashed galley slave is permitted to rest, as when the Atlantic roaring for days ends in a calm." The cave, in its deep, dark, gloom, was penetrated with the spirit of stillness and peace. The seer felt an awe, not less, but greater than before, when there came a voice, mysterious, thrilling his heart and asking the old question. The old answer was given, we must believe, with a new meaning, for the great lesson of time and eternity had been taught.

In the cave of Horeb the fundamental truth of the Christian religion is revealed, a truth every mission, however humble, every church, however adorned, every individual, however magnificent, must illustrate. Not earthquake, cyclone, jelly-bury, but the still small voice. Here is the secret of God. Not the startling, but the pleading; not the violent, but the tender; not the noisy, but the still; not the fiery, but the gentle; not the mighty, but the lowly; not the My spirit, with the Lord. God is love. Not an unseen God, but a saving Christ. "He came to Horeb a voice, he left it an infant man," says J. N. P. "From the living of the Christian to his dying, the close of every good life has dignity like unto 'charlots of fire and horses of fire.' Not the lightning runs on immeasurably beyond death. St. James tells that Elijah was a man of like passions with us. Then our infinitude, thank God, allows us the life that does not end with us. The thought of All Saints is of the steadily accumulating honors and joys of redeemed souls. We see Elijah go. But it is not the last of him. Malachi said, 'He will come back on a cloud.' Centuries later the world asked, 'When the Baptist did he see Elijah?' Some believed Jesus must be. On the day of Transfiguration, Elijah for a moment was with us, at once on earth and in glory.

We can trust those dear departed ones, who memorials cluster around us, with the Lord God of Elijah. Spiritual Exercise. The best forms of physical exercise bring delight and satisfaction to the body. Muscles, nerves and tissues are called to new health and enjoyment. The best forms of mental exercise send the mind returns to the thinker whose mental faculties are stimulated and quickened to larger powers of attention and enjoyment by a steady, healthy and honest exercise. So the true worshiper, as he closes his faculties to the outer world and draws near to God, spiritually, finds a peace, a satisfaction, an exhilaration and an approaching ecstasy, as he realizes God's presence, and becomes filled with the fullness of God.—Herald and Preacher.

What Life Is. Life is what we are alive to. It is not length but breadth. To be alive only to appetite, pleasure, pride, money making, and not to goodness and kindness, purity and love, history, poetry, music, flowers, stars, God and eternal hope, is to be dead.—Scottish Reformer.

City's Dignity Hurt. The R. D. Wood company of Philadelphia is in danger of losing a contract with the "city" of McKeesport worth thousands of dollars annually because of the unappreciated humor of a clerk. The city controller received a letter from the firm addressed "Village of McKeesport," containing a receipt for pipes and casting bought by the water department.

Mayor George Falckenstein and the controller were highly incensed, and they sent back a letter that may cause that clerk to lose his place. The officials say that a repetition of the offense will cost the company McKeesport's contract. McKeesport has a population of 50,000.—New York Herald.

Money in Turkey Raising. Mrs. Phoebe Collette of Hinesburg, Vt., last spring set 200 turkey eggs, from which she hatched 162 turkeys, which she brought to market for \$250 dollars. They also set 100 eggs, from which they obtained 600 chickens, of which they sold 275 live and were sold.

EPWORTH LEAGUE LESSONS

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 11.

The Freedmen's Aid and Southern Education Society and Its Work. Matt. 25: 31-46.

February 12 is the birthday of Abraham Lincoln. What more fitting remembrance of it could be suggested than the consideration of this noblest of all characters in the South, which is so effectively containing Lincoln's work?

The Freedmen's Aid and Southern Education Society is the Methodist Episcopal Church at work among two classes of people in the South—the white people who would otherwise have no opportunity for education, and the black people, of whom the same thing is true, but whose need is, if anything, more urgent.

All the Southern states, with a population of some thirty million people, of whom nine million are colored, are included in the scope of the Society's operations. There are forty-four academies, colleges, and universities, and twenty-three among the States. These schools had last year an enrollment of over eleven thousand students.

In these states forty-seven per cent. of the colored population is illiterate, and eleven per cent. of the white population. In some sections these percentages run much higher. What a wonderful work this is among a population which is American-born, with from five to ten generations of American ancestry behind it, the figures have a menacing eloquence. For illiteracy among native Americans in the North has practically disappeared. That a whole section of the country should be ignorant to such a degree is an excellent portent, for ignorance is accompanied by other problems which are a direct threat against the nation's peace.

But there is hope, and much. Through such work as that done by the Freedmen's Aid and Southern Education Society illiteracy is on the decrease, and with the advance of education, hand in hand with religion, the evils which follow in the train of ignorance are also growing less. The work of the Society is threefold, training the hand, the head, and the heart. It was at work forty years ago, and thirty years ago began its splendid record of industrial work, before the industrial education had become a popular thing in other schools.

CHRISTIAN ENDEAVOR NOTES

FEBRUARY ELEVENTH.

How to Conquer Temptation.—Matt. 26:41; I Cor. 10:12, 13; Jas. 4:7; Heb. 2:18; 4:14-16; 12:14. Watching against temptation is not enough, we must watch and pray. God hides an escape in every temptation; as, if you are tempted to miserliness, give with unusual liberality.

Every yielding to the devil weakens us; every resisting makes it easier to conquer him next time. There are two uses of "temptation" in the Bible: one is Satan's snare, the other is God's testing. If we never lead ourselves into temptation, we shall be in very little danger. One of the best safeguards against our temptations is to keep ourselves out of them. We are not safe from a sin while we long to commit it. Temptation is a magnet, the nearer you get to it, the more it pulls you. To see how close one can go to a temptation and not fall into it is as foolish with a sin as with Niagara Falls. Sometimes God permits His best servants to suffer the fiercest temptations, as the most valued metals are worked in the hottest fires. Are you avoiding temptation as well as praying against it? Do you hate all sin? Are you fighting temptation in your own strength? Only those temptations which we encounter in the path of duty do we Lord promise we should conquer.—Philip Brooks.

There is a venerable old riddle, so venerable that it may have gone round the globe and become young again, which asks: "When do you get a vegetable tempter?" The smart man who knows it all or was expected to answer: "When I get a turnip"—turnip being at one time facetious for a watch that wouldn't go. The correct answer is: "When I get up at 8 o'clock." Say that aloud and you will recognize a pun that would blush to blazon into print.

Now it appears that in Borneo there is a plant which is known as the clockplant, and which in a rough sort of way registers the time of day. It has leaves of two sizes, one of which acts in the capacity of a minute hand, which keeps moving until 4 o'clock p. m. and the other keeps going until morning. The larger leaves act as the hour hand. Starting in a position when all the leaves lie close to the stem, with the points hanging down, they rise gradually until they turn toward the top, and then they drop to their former position. It takes the smaller leaves about one minute to go through this performance, and the longer leaves just about one hour.—The Sunday Magazine.

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

INTERNATIONAL LESSON COMMENTS FOR FEBRUARY 11.

Subject: Jesus Calling Fishermen, Luke 5: 1-11—Golden Text, Eph. 5: 1—Memory Verse, 5: 64—Topic: Laws of Soul Winning—Commentary.

1. Jesus teaching the people (vs. 1-3). "The people pressed." Leaving Nazareth our Lord went to Capernaum and perhaps the house of Peter. The power of His preaching drew crowds, which pressed upon Him as He was walking along the white beach which forms the margin of Lake Gennesaret. "To hear." There was a good prospect for a glorious revival in the hearts of the people in the life of our Lord when thousands were anxious to hear Him, for the common people heard Him gladly. "Lake of Gennesaret." The most sacred sheet of water which this earth contains. Called also the Sea of Galilee, it is a clear lake about twelve miles long and five broad, with the Jordan River flowing through it. This was the region of the early labors of our Lord.

2. "Two ships." Fishing boats. They must have been small. This is clear from the record given of them. A few men could handle one and a single large draught of fishes endangered them. "Standing by." Anchored, or drawn up upon the beach. "The fishermen," Peter, Andrew, James and John. "Washing their nets." They were busy before the dawn of day, and now they were clearing the fish of the sea from the threads of the nets and mending any defective or broken parts. It is interesting to notice how often Christ appeared to men while they were busy with their temporal affairs. 2. The calling of the disciples. The ship of James and John appeared to be at some distance away; this one belonged to Simon Peter and to his brother Andrew. See Mark 1:16. "Prayed him." Asked him, Jesus in a familiar manner takes possession of Peter's boat and makes it His abode.

3. The draught of fishes (vs. 4-7). 4. "Launch out." Christ forgot His own weariness and only seemed to remember the disappointment of His followers in toiling all night in vain. This verse has often been used to illustrate the fact that Christ would have us leave the shore of selfishness, worldliness and sin and launch out into the depth of His love and fitness. "For a draught." Let down your nets for the taking of fish. 5. "Master." This is the first time that the word here translated "Lord" is used in the New Testament, and it is used only by Luke. The other evangelists called Him Rabbi or Lord. This is not the word usually rendered master, but is a title of respect. Note how familiarly Peter addressed Jesus. "Toiled all the night." "Toiled" is used in the same sense that they would catch anything. The night was the best time for catching certain kinds of fish and if they had caught nothing then they could not expect to catch any in the daytime. 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