

"And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?

"And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great."

- Mark xvi, 3, 4

Isaiah lx

Mark xvi

Psalm 96

New Book of Worship, Psalm 96, p.72

Today we celebrate the resurrection of our Lord. The story of the Resurrection is indeed a marvelous one. The Resurrection took place unseen by mortal eye. It was the completion of the stupendous work into which the Lord had entered, and it brought to a close the era of the world's darkness.

Prophetic of the dawn of this new day Isaiah writes: "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee."

The hope of immortality has ever been a part of the furniture of the human mind. When this hope is lost, life here becomes irrational, our labors vain, there is no harvest of humanity, no ultimate goal of effort. Not only is immortality necessary to the perfection of God's plan of creation and necessary to enable Him to bestow the full measure of His blessings upon us, but the certainty of it is necessary to our life in this world, that we may see life here in its true proportions and go forward surely to a sane end. Life in this world and in the next make one life. Without a knowledge of immortality "We wait for light, but behold obscurity; for brightness, but we walk in darkness... We stumble at noonday as in the night; we are in desolate places as dead men." How dark is the prospect of a world which ends in omnipresent death!

That we might see the whole of life, that we might know the Lord's purposes for us, that we might live in peace and without fear, the Lord came into the world, was crucified, and rose on the third day. It was the power of the gospel of the Resurrection that brought new life to the world. How great is the joy of knowing that our loved ones who have gone before us are still alive! And how deep is the joy to know, when we ourselves leave this world, that the love that binds us to our children will not be broken, but that we shall meet them again in that world where there is no more death. So the Lord said, "I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness."

The desire for immortality is universal. Some psychologists try to tell us that the idea of immortality is a "defense mechanism," a "fear complex." They say that in this world we suffer defeats and undergo tribulation, and so we make believe that after death we shall live forever and be freed from the repressions and limitations that harass us here, and by this thinking we soothe our consciousness and defend our ego from being injured. But our desire for immortality goes far deeper than that. It has manifested itself in every age and in every race, because it is a true desire implanted in man by God Himself. It is not a mere imagining of the human mind. Ordinary common sense should tell us this. In a world where there is no water there would be no creature that thirsted. If there were no air, there would be no wings. An appetite always in-



dicates that there is something to satisfy it. Man would not hunger and thirst after eternal life if there were no eternal home for the spirit.

In the Gospel immortality was brought to view. The power of the Gospel was in the preaching of Christ risen. The longing of the human heart was satisfied. The function of the Gospel was not to tell men how they could improve their economic condition, nor to disclose the laws of eugenics or hygienics. To such use of the Gospel we could say, "All this have I heard from my youth... Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die." And in our modern world we find that even science does not escape the desire for immortality. Psychical research is a branch of scientific investigation devoted to the special purpose of learning about the soul and the inner world of the spirit. Well-known colleges are undertaking this investigation and gathering funds to pursue it. But we in the New Church know that our belief is not based on such efforts.

There are also many who resort to mediums and become spiritists. This is merely a confession of failure to satisfy oneself rationally of the reality of the spiritual world. The testimony of mediums is not authoritative nor reliable. For a medium must be a person of unstable mental stuff. There must be a crack or flaw in the earthen vessel. And mediumship involves a great mental strain which tends to constantly increasing mental instability. It is a form of prostitution to seek solace at the expense of another human being. Even for ethical considerations we should shrink from a visit to the cave of Endor. So we are commanded, "And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead? To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." And to the rich man who asked that some spirit might be sent to his family to tell them of the future life Abraham, in the Lord's parable, replied: "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." The Lord alone can reveal to us the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, and He does so through His Word.

"Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?"

Let us turn back for a moment to the story of that first Easter morn when the two Marys came to see the sepulchre. They did not expect to see their Lord alive. They came bearing oil and spices to anoint His body. They thought of Him as dead and of themselves as separated from Him by something that they of themselves could not move away. The last at the cross and the first at the sepulchre, they went even in fear while it was yet dark to see the sepulchre where the body of their Lord was laid.

The Lord is the Word, the Word made flesh. The Lord sealed in the tomb in which no man was ever laid portrays the truth that within the letter of the Word is hidden the perfect Divine life, the life that the Lord Himself lived, the life that no man could live. It is the life that, flowing forth into human minds and hearts, creates and maintains the life of angels and men. "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth."

We must search for the Lord in His Word, and we must have the desire to know what He teaches. We may indeed confirm the truths of the Word by the facts discovered by men



in this world, but the Word is to be the test of spiritual truth, and not the discoveries of men the test of the Word. "If they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

The stone that seals the sepulchre of the Lord, that hides Him from men, is the letter of the Word. No man can of himself roll that stone away. There are today many who sincerely want to do right and to know God's will, yet they cannot find Him in the Word. They would be glad if someone could tell them, someone in whom they had confidence, whom they could trust. They are really thinking of the Lord as dead and, like the two Marys, would go to anoint Him, grieving that their Lord is parted from them. They want the stone which seals the tomb of knowledge of God and of the future life rolled away. But this cannot be done for them unless they go to the Word and not to the writings of men.

How great the joy of the women when they came to the sepulchre and found the stone already rolled away, the sepulchre opened, and the Lord risen! The Lord is the resurrection and the life. If we go to His Word and look for Him there, learn His ways and keep His commandments, He will declare Himself to us and we shall come to know Him. If we too turn to the Word for light, if we make the journey to the tomb truly seeking Him, we shall find the stone rolled away. We shall meet the living God, and He will declare Himself to us. Our search will then be ended, and the Lord will come in to us and give us peace. This is the deeper meaning of the Resurrection. The Lord wants to open up in us a new realm of thought, activity, and happiness. Therefore He came into the world, lived out our life, underwent the cross, and rose from the dead. Heavenly life is not the prolongation of the life of natural desires. It is a different kind of life. The Lord said, "My kingdom is not of this world."

And in this new age we can know clearly of God and of what heavenly life is. He says to us all, "Come and see." As He put off worldly desires and ambitions and put on a new spirit, so He asks us also to be imbued with a new spirit. As He rose to a fuller and more glorious life, so He asks us to ascend to Him that He may bless us with the riches of the spirit.

As we read in Isaiah: "For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron: I will also make thine officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness."

"Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself; for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended."

Amen