

The Lord's Ministry in Galilee

"And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people."

- Matthew 4:23

Isaiah 55

Matthew 3

Psalm 34, pp.105-106

New Book of Worship, Psalm 34, pp.53-54

The Gospels are the record of the Lord's life among men. That life was the Divine Life itself seeking men. "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." And it is written, "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name."

The beloved disciple John begins his first Epistle with the words, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life... declare we unto you." John had been one of the Lord's most faithful disciples. He had been with the Lord on the sea, had heard Him teaching on the mountain, had been with Him when He blessed the little children, healed the sick, fed the multitude, stilled the storm, and liberated the poor demoniac, had seen the Lord transfigured. He remembered also those last days in Jerusalem, the awful tragedy of the crucifixion, and the jeers of the people. And after the Lord had risen from the dead and was present with new and greater power, and His Gospel was being carried by the disciples to all parts of the world, the same John was granted in vision to see Him as one "like unto the Son of man" with every attribute of Divine power and glory, and multitudes filling the heavens and saying, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."

Let us make sure that our souls honor and grasp this essential fact that the Lord Jesus Christ is God seeking us. It is Divine Love and Wisdom clothed with our nature, veiling their infinite splendors, accommodating themselves to our human conditions, meeting us, appealing to us face to face. There is no story so wonderful as this coming of God to men - the Perfect Life giving itself for the life of the world, the Word made flesh and dwelling among us.

For thirty years this Divine life dwelt among men, unnoticed and unmarked by them. Then, when preparation had been made by John the Baptist, the time arrived for His active ministry. His life was not as the lives of others. Its purpose was different. Its purpose was not to gain glory but to give itself in service. John was baptizing in Jordan, and when He who was to prove Himself to be the Redeemer of the world went forth to enter upon His ministry, He came to John to be baptized of him, as if to say, "My place is here, here in the midst of men who are confessing their sins." John, perceiving who it was that came to be baptized, remonstrated, but the Lord quieted him with the words, "Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." Then, as a sign that His nature should be stainless, He was baptized in the waters of Jordan.

What does this mean? It means that Christ the Lord, our Redeemer, has ranged Himself with human nature. He has said by a sign - the same sign with which we baptize our children in token that they may be regenerated - "I shall not try to escape the way of human life. I shall meet temptation as you must try to meet it. I shall be perfect as you ought to try to be perfect."

We cannot frame words which will adequately express the Lord's purposes. The most perfect assertion of His purpose is found in His own words which He uttered in prayer: "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." He was expressing the wish of His soul that in His own Divinely Human Person He should be so perfect in holiness as to be the means of grace, the source of inspiration and regenerating power to all men. He would not simply point out the true way to live or teach the truth; He would be the Way, the Truth, and the Life. He would do more than throw light on the world's problems; He would be the Light of the world.

His purpose was to become the Savior of men. So, as He came forth into the world to stand with others, He received the sign of purification. To each one therefore baptism should mean "Create in me a clean heart, O God"; and happy are they who attain to this with even moderate success. To the Lord it meant, "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified." He received the sign of baptism that He might be the source of truth and love and grace and life to the world.

Our Lord's ministry covered a period of approximately three years. After His baptism He went to Galilee. There He found His first disciples, Andrew and Peter, James and John. They had good hearts and sound minds. In Judea there were those who tried to discredit Him, but in Galilee the people received Him gladly. It is in Galilee, the land which symbolizes our everyday life, that we feel our most immediate need of the Lord and His counsel, and are most willing to recognize and follow Him. The beauty of the Galilean ministry is this, that, judging Him by His life among them, multitudes were drawn to Him. Among these people came the Apostles, whose affection for Him and reverence for Him made it possible for them afterward to serve as the beginning out of which the Christian Church was formed. The Galilean ministry represents an outward ministry, the bringing of the outward life into harmony and order. The Lord went about all Galilee teaching and preaching and healing. The Galileans listened to His words which, simple as they seemed, carried a depth of wisdom undreamed of before. They saw His deeds, wonderful, helpful, always manifesting power, yet intent on bestowing blessings more vital than those of the body. They followed Him about from place to place and found that, in a way unlooked for, He was become to them their Way, their Truth, and their Life.

The scribes and Pharisees had judged Him by their books and their traditions, and they said with scorn, "He is not the Christ." But the Galileans saw Him as He was, and more and more surely they felt that "In him was life; and the life was the light of men."

Those were wonderful days in Galilee, compassing a period of nineteen months, days lived by the sea, in the mountains, in humble dwellings, the days during which most of the deeds of miracle and grace of which we have the record were performed, days when the Lord was received, days of belief and acceptance, days in which the life of the

Son of man was proving itself to be the very life of God upon the earth.

And the lesson that seems to shine out from this Galilean ministry is this fact of the Personal Lord, the actual Love and Wisdom of God ministering to human needs, sharing our experiences, opening up a way of life so true, so sure, so beautiful - and yet so plain that no wayfaring man need err therein, putting forth a power to which we may still appeal to heal our infirmities, to remove tormenting evils, to smooth out storms of passion. To this personal Lord all those with teachable minds and souls that were hūngering and thirsting after righteousness turned with wonder and gladness.

With this material He began the upbuilding of His Church on earth. And the true Church of Christ today is formed of that same material, the people who are teachable in spirit, who want to live the life that leads to heaven. Such people - not the modern scribes and Pharisees - are drawn by the invitation, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Such and such only are moved by the high call, "Follow me."

Amen