

J. W. Sperling - Tyler

Substance of Sermon preached by our Pastor

on September 15 1974. Sunday Afternoon.

Lesson. Isaiah 26.

Text. St. Luke 24. vv. 13-15.

We shall endeavour to follow the sorrowful disciples on the Emmaus road and trust, as it is so often in the journey of life for the Lord's saints, their absolute experience, that we shall know heavenly bliss and sweet sunshine flow into our souls as Jesus Himself draws near and goes with us. I will make an initial inquiry. Why did the two go out on this walk together, - seven miles, - and reason, talk together and commune? Why did they proceed to take this sorrowful walk together? I believe Mr Hart provides a good answer in his notable hymn of dialogue between a believer and his soul. He says in the first verse;

"Speak, and let the worst be known;
Speaking may relieve thee." (780)

It is wonderful to have a gracious companion. It is a divine favour to have a friend; one in sweet union and harmony of spirit with you; and so God has often in the course of history, and of the history of His Church provided for sorrowful people a special companion. As we view ^{Christ} in the Holy Scriptures, as Naomi, who was so cast down and so depleted and stripped of all earthly joys. God had torn them from her. There was a tearing, a complete rent in her life and in her heart. Her heart was so torn, it is obvious from her language that she had little hope of restoration or healing. It seems to me as we read the terms she used, - the hand of the Lord had gone out against her, and so on, her one aim in returning to Bethlehem was to get back and mourn and die. She would spend her few remaining days in mourning, and then die. My friends, it is not altogether unique that the people of God come into these paths. I do not think perhaps 50% or 75% in the congregation know the path, but a small minority do. If you have a tender, loving heart it is capable of agony, and it comes in the place where you feel it most of all. The preacher knows it.

In the agony of her soul the Lord was gracious to Naomi. He gave her that sweet, devoted, loving, faithful, tender-hearted soul, Ruth. They communed together in spirit: so sorrowful was Naomi that she did not know how to enter into a dialogue with Ruth on the way back, but they communed in spirit; they were one in heart. They were always happy together; perfectly free. They knew the sweet comfort of one another, and union together in Christ as members of His mystical Body. There was no reservation, no bondage: they were companions in sorrow and later in joy. How good the Lord is, and I would underline it, to give a poor sorrowful saint a sweet companion so they commune together. During the time of his life, Jonathan and David were knit together; their spirits were interlace a wonderful blessing. Here were two. I judge from the language of our own apostle Paul, he enjoyed much communion with his spiritual son Timothy. "For I have no man likeminded," said he, "who will naturally care for your state."

So the two have begun their sorrowful walk to a village that goes down in the annals of the Church's history as one of the most sacred places where there were two entertainments: where the two erstwhile sorrowful men entertained Christ, and in so doing He entertained them. Lyte's beautiful hymn, "Abide with me; fast falls the eventide;" is a perfect sermon on the subject. You never think of it in one way, as if you were saying it to the Lord relative to yourself; you are saying it to the Lord relative to Himself. There are two entertainments. "Lord, let us entertain Thee." and they had a blissful entertainment themselves.

Let us think further on blessed companionship and friendship,- the unit of the Spirit in the bond of peace, and I say there will be a time when we have not an earthly ear to speak to. You go to Mother now: the day will come when you will never be able to speak to her again. You go to your parents if they are in spiritual union. The time will come when they will be unable to listen to you; they will be in the grave. You have had choice friends you have communed with. In my time here some of those I walked with perhaps forty-five years ago have gone,- Thomas Field; George Stevens; a whole list. Wonderful was their love, friendship, and communion, and this does not detract from the godly here. But you find you have lost your closest friends, and you deeply feel it. The younger

friends will come into it. There is always a Friend; there is One who draws near and goes with you. Wonderful favour, is it not? You may look round on the earth and think; "Who can I speak to?" Often an old saint finds a younger one the Lord has united them to. You look on some young people, and say they were never young; their companions were always aged saints; they have never been young. They have known what it is to commune with old saints. It is a wonderful favour, and if you find a Naomi you will surely find a Ruth. If you have David I think you will find Jonathan. I say this to you unexpectedly; I remind you of what I have quoted recent. You can come to Chapel, my friends, with a special love to one in the Church. The Lord uses it; your love is to Him. He uses it, and you will say; "Blessed Lord, Thou knowest the oneness of heart I have with that godly man, or woman. Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me." I remember in those days before my baptism, feeling real joy,- and I say it prudently and impartially,- I remember feeling real joy when certain names were called at the Prayer Meeting, and you will be like this. Some get into your heart and walk in your path, and you are hand in hand in the path in Zion. It is sweet to you; there is communion. You see it is the purpose of the Lord. The Lord completed it: here was a trio. All prejudice and barriers are broken down when Christ draws near. I remember a stranger coming here on a Lord's Day, and I felt loath to entertain him, knowing nothing of him, and this is something to be ashamed of. As he began to open his heart there was a breaking down of all barriers. This is how you want your heart to be, emptied of all that is foreign to a Christian spirit. There was communion, and hardly before we knew it, we had arrived at Emmaus. Jesus was there. It is only like five minutes, and you will be there.

Jesus 'made as though he would have gone further'. How you wonder why, because you have the same type of experience as in the Scripture. Their hearts were burning, 'and he made as though he would have gone further'. That is the way for affections to grow fonder,- to stimulate faith and

every grace. You get your heart drawn out, and Christ makes as though He would go further. Your heart grows fonder: your Beloved is going on, and faith is stimulated to the maximum. That is what the Lord does. He draws near, and you think, now, and it is as if He is going, and all the powers of your soul are stimulated. It was so in wrestling with Jacob. "Let me go, for the day breaketh." But he had not received the blessing. "And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me... And he blessed him there." Do you understand the language? do you get near enough to the Lord to understand? He will stimulate the power He gives you; make you vehement. So it is wonderful to know friendship and communion.

Let us go to another branch: it is this. I hesitate ~~xxxx~~ to say much about it, but it comes to the diaconate, and the union of Pastor and people. There is this communion and walking together. It is very beautiful. You come to Chapel, or to the place of divine worship where the Lord leads you. You go to the House of God, and I know your thoughts if you are exercised. You see the minister for the first time, and you say; "Lord, will this man come where I am so we walk together?" and you see, if a minister of God comes presently where you are, you never lose it. It remains through life and through eternity. It does not matter who it is: you will know when a man who is ordained of God comes where you are and God speaks to you. Blessed be God for this! it is wonderful. In this dear land, although in a deteriorated state, there are still many who fear God and preach His truth; far more than you realise, and God's Word in their mouth is truth, and I thank God and pray for them and esteem them. So the sacred reality and blessing of the Christian faith runs through the economy of salvation.

So we have the two, and they reached a terminus. This is the process of life. You only know what the Lord has taught you; you only see so far as the Lord has revealed to you. Try to evaluate your own case: there are things you know and things you do not know. They knew concerning Christ, His Person and Deity; 'a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people.' He was crucified. They did not know of His resurrection; they were ignorant of it. There are things we know, and things we do not know, because they have not been revealed to us. "That which I see not teach thou me." There is much more to learn; much more to be revealed.

They were His disciples, close to Him, yet they did not know of His resurrection. You go to Eastbourne by rail and you come to a terminus; it is the end. That is how it is with us: we get to a terminus. We cannot see any further. "They communed together and reasoned," It was a terminus it was the grave, and they could not see beyond it. Some of you are in it: if you keep on reasoning you will end up in the grave; you cannot see beyond it. Everything is so complicated and contrary and difficult, you will end up in a grave; you cannot see beyond it. You are tormented night and day: you know nothing of the resurrection. I suggest this to you: try to discern, if you can, as to whether you have been led to the truth of His glorious resurrection. If your answer is in the affirmative, go further, and say; "What proof can I give that the Lord has led me in it?" You will be vague completely unless you know the other side,- the grave. In bitter trials in life, and all seems to end in the grave, you will know what it is to need a revelation and application of His resurrection. You come into it by divine teaching. You say; "As far as possible, break it up for us." I will. Say the Lord has given you a sweet, blessed promise, and you rejoiced in it, full of glory and as if the thing were already done. There were a few early, favourable signs, and you thought you would soon embrace the blessing, and you start to go in the trial of it, and it leads you steeply down. This is not something that is superficial or slight: you end up in the grave with it. I cannot give you details, but you know if you come into it. The sweetest things in life have gone straight down; the exact opposite to what you thought. God will perform His promise, but you have got to a terminus, and things look so black and so bad, you are tempted all hope to resign. You are bound up with it as well.

"Can a part be sent to hell,
And the whole in Zion dwell?" (626)

I have said before, and it is true; if God has bound up your soul and life with another, it is as if the devil drags them to the pit, you will go too. If a part goes, the whole goes. It is bitter; it is black: it will make a good Christian of you. You will have a few experiences that will stabilise and establish you. These are stern realities. What has so amazed me is, it is the choicest things, the best of all, that have gone

into the heaviest trials, and you never thought it possible. You will see others pass by, and it will be as though a trumpet is blown: everything is favourable, and you are just the opposite. I have a word for you. When the Lord brings you out of the furnace He will give you twice as much as before. It is a sign that you are one of His dear children and you are going through it.

There are two hearts, and they wish to unburden their hearts to each other. "Speaking may relieve thee." They must get to a quiet place. I can almost visualise them: they wish to unburden their minds by speaking. "And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned," They were absolutely of one mind. They loved the Lord because He loved them, but they could not see beyond the sepulchre. The point concerning it is this, if you evaluate and try to see in their hearts and thoughts; if Christ was dead and buried, if He had remained in the sepulchre, everything was lost; there was nothing left. I do not know how low you get, - whether you get in a place to feel the same. If Christ remained there all was lost. That is where they were. They communed together and reasoned. I would judge they ^{had} acute minds, capable of considerable reasoning. Difficult problems and mysteries will sharpen the acuteness of your mind. One of the great difficulties I find is, my mind is hardly ever able to relax. Your mind is activated day and night, and you reason. It would appear with the disciples, though they believed in Him, in His Person, and knew a little of Him as the Messiah, yet it was greatly hidden from them concerning the work of Atonement, and they were looking for the setting up of a kingdom here. He did set up a spiritual Kingdom. But they thought as a nation they would be delivered from their overlord, Caesar. They were under the power of Rome, and they thought Christ would restore again the kingdom to Israel. They were completely mystified that He had died and was buried, as they thought. They reasoned, - and you go on with it, poor soul, and you will get so tied up, and in a dilemma, you will not know which way to go. It is of course, true, as relates to the Atonement of Christ and your path; "Bow down, sense and reason, faith only reign here." You will prove that the just shall live and walk by faith: there is no other way.

"Jesus himself drew near." He was able to draw near because He is God.

He is able to draw near because He is incarnate God. He knows your path. He is omniscient and omnipresent, and because He walked it Himself, but rougher, darker, deeper than you, He is able to draw near; not just physically. You could have one draw near and touch you and be as though they were a thousand miles away. He was not only near in His sweet Person but spiritually. He was able to draw near in a sympathising way in His loving heart because He had felt the same. He had cried; "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" "Jesus himself drew near, and went with them. Amen.