

SERVICE OF THANKS WELL ATTENDED

REV. J. N. MACLEAN—DELIVERS INSPIRING SERMON AT M. E. CHURCH.

To accord the honor due and to render thanks to God for the privileges and bounties bestowed upon his people, a large proportion of Missoula residents gathered together under the roof of the First Methodist church yesterday morning. The service of thanks was devoutly expressed in a splendid song service and festival of uplifting and inspiring words. Rev. J. N. Maclean, D. D. of the First Presbyterian church, preached an eloquent sermon on the needs and reasons of thankfulness. Rev. J. W. Bennett, pastor of the Methodist church, Rev. C. B. Allen, Jr., D. D. of the Immanuel Baptist church, Rev. E. E. Burtner of the Congregational church, Rev. G. H. Gibbs of the South Methodist church, and several other pastors of local evangelical denominations, aided in the union service. Especially fine and appropriate music was supplied by the Methodist choruses and the auxiliaries assisted by Miss Hope Whitaker. The musical program follows: Chorus, "Make a Joyful Noise," (Simper), choir. Special, "Song of Triumph," (Gabriel), ladies' octette. Violin solo, "Berceuse," (Goddard), Miss Hope Whitaker. Mrs. J. C. Orr presided at the organ.

Following is the sermon delivered by Dr. J. N. Maclean:

Thanksgiving.

"It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto Thy name, O most high; to show forth Thy loving kindness in the morning, and Thy faithfulness every night."—Psalm 137:1-2.

"In the providence of God we are come to another Thanksgiving day. We are summoned to its observance by the president of the United States, and by the governor of this commonwealth. And it is to be hoped that we are also moved thereto by our own feelings of gratitude to Almighty God for all his favors to us as individuals and as a nation. We cannot forget that we are sharing in this service with the most devout and thoughtful people in the land, rich and poor, learned and illiterate, Protestant and Catholic, Gentile and Jew, and that we are following a long established, and peculiarly American custom as we celebrate this day.

First Thanksgiving.

"The first public thanksgiving service of this character was held in the Plymouth colony in obedience to Governor Bradford's proclamation, made

for December 31, 1621, nearly 300 years ago. After months of toil and prayer, planting and building, the Pilgrims gathered their first harvest. It consisted of the produce of 20 acres of Indian corn and six of barley and peas. And when the harvest was gathered in, such as it was, these great hearted men and women kept Thanksgiving day.

"That is the origin of the service to which, as a mighty nation, we are summoned today and in which we here present are permitted to have a humble share.

National Observance.

"Then followed the colonial period of American history, ended and glorified with the successful struggle for national independence. The war being over, the constitution being adopted, the nation being organized and established and set forth upon its great career, George Washington, then president, appointed the last Thursday of November, 1789, as a day of thanksgiving and prayer, and summoned the people to observe the same.

"That is the origin of the appointment of the last Thursday of November as our national thanksgiving day.

"In the years following, various governors issued thanksgiving proclamations, but no national custom was established for an annual thanksgiving service until 1863. Then with the great civil war coming to a close, the immortal Lincoln made proclamation that the last Thursday of November of that year should be observed as a day of national thanksgiving and prayer. Since then no year has passed without the president's proclamation of a national thanksgiving day; since then no last Thursday of November has passed without a national observance of prayer and praise.

"So we are in the company of a great host, visible and invisible and in the line of a great succession, when we are gathered together in this service today.

Thanksgiving Texts.

"There is no trouble in getting a text for a Thanksgiving sermon. The Bible is full of them, because it is full of thanksgiving and praise. That fact should teach us that the more genuine our religion is, the more does it express itself in gratitude to God for his grace and favors.

"My text this morning is from the first two verses of the 93d Psalm. Thus it reads:

"It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto Thy name, O most high; to show forth Thy loving kindness in the morning.

And thy faithfulness every night."

"That is a good text for any day, but especially for Thanksgiving day.

"Notice in the first place that thanksgiving is a good thing. The text says so, and that is a strong presumption in its favor.

It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praise unto Thy name, O most high. Let us see how it is, as the text affirms.

"It is a good thing to express our

appreciation of the benefits received, whether they be from God or from our fellow man, because it is a becoming thing. "Thank you," is the language of good manners, and good manners and good manners are closely related. To receive good from another without making acknowledgment is a certain sign of ill-breeding, and of a surly, selfish spirit.

"It is said that there is no word in various Indian dialects to express thanks. If that is so, it is hard on the Indian. The explanation would be that there is no feeling of gratitude in the savage breast. He has not risen sufficiently in the scale of good feeling to be thankful. To withhold thanksgiving, as he does, is to be boorish and barbarous and undeveloped in good feelings and good taste. It is a good thing to give thanks, because it is good manners, and good manners are good manners, if nothing else.

"By the same token, it is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord. There is etiquette in religion as well as in faith and morals. There is beauty in holiness as well as in nature and art. There is politeness to be practiced toward God as well as toward our fellow men. Shall we receive good from our heavenly Father, and make no becoming response? That would be contrary to the eternal fitness of things." Our own good feelings expressing that eternal fitness should protect us against such spiritual barbarity. If it is a good thing to teach our children to say thank you, and the little barbarians are not always apt pupils; it is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto Thy name, O most high.

"Second. Again, it is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, because the effect upon ourselves is good. The thankful are the thoughtful. "Thank" and "think" are from the same root word. The thinking which intelligent thanksgiving presupposes, enlarges the heart, enriches the understanding, strengthens faith in God, enriches our feelings, and otherwise ministers to the larger life of the soul and to the larger life of the world. To think great thoughts about God, and his wonderful dealings with us and our nation, is to make ourselves greater and more Godlike, and to give us nobler visions of life and duty and destiny.

"When one sits down to consider the loving kindness of God, visited upon him in the year past, or in any time past, he is put into a worshipful mood, is made to face the great moral and spiritual realities, and is drawn nearer to God. And when, as a nation, we take account of ourselves before God, as Thanksgiving day gives us occasion to do, and consider His great and manifold favors to us, we are led to a closer moral reckoning with ourselves, and to a closer appreciation of our national privileges and problems and responsibilities. That is something good, and in these stirring, clamorous, materialistic times it is tremendously worth while.

Moral and Spiritual.

"And not only is Thanksgiving becoming and proper and productive of good to us, but it grows out of a right moral and spiritual demand. It is part of the homage we owe to our

heavenly Father. It is the glad heart of God's child responding to His goodness, and giving itself to Him in grateful worship. And with such service God is well pleased. He is always well pleased with the service that does good to His children and does honor to His name, and He has promised "Them that honor Me I will honor." If the nations that forget God shall be turned into destruction, as the Bible says they shall, the nations that remember Him shall be established forever.

"So it is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto Thy name, O most high.

"The things for which we should give thanks are many. When we speak of them they are more than can be numbered. A few general considerations must suffice, and perhaps will answer our purpose better than any amount of details. The purpose of a sermon on an occasion like this, as I conceive it, is to stimulate thoughtfulness, and thereby thankfulness.

"First I would say we should be thankful for what we are. We are the crown of God's creation. His last best work is man.

"We belong to the natural order of the world, and have kinship with its creature life. The anatomist will tell us how many and how striking are the resemblances between us and the beasts of the field. He has the proofs to show that we were made in the same workshop as they. Well, let him have his way; we are more than man. There are mighty and magnificent differences between us and all the beasts of the field, for which we should be forever thankful to the great God and Father of our spirits.

"The Greek word for man is *Anthropos*, which literally means, the upward-looking one. Tenyson says, what matters it how much a man knows and does, if he keeps not a reverential looking upward? He is only the subtlest beast of the field. It is our glory, as members of the human race, that we have the upper works of spiritual beings, and are in the image of God.

"We belong to an order of being above the so-called natural order of the world. We have a moral nature that seems responsive to the throbbings of a mighty moral order that interpenetrates and over-arches the life of the world; that has a voice of its own, and laws of its own, and penalties and approvals of its own. We have a spiritual nature kindred to God, subsisting in God, capable of knowing Him, and sharing with Him the tasks of the present world and the triumph of the world to come.

"What is man? asks the Psalmist, that thou art mindful of him, and the Son of Man, that thou shouldst visit him? Then He answers, "Thou hast made him to be wanting only a little of God; thou hast crowned him with glory and honor and didst set him over the works of thine hands." Yea, Lord, Thou didst it, and we are Thy children. It is when we take account of what we are as the children of God, that the wonderful gospel of the grace of God is creditable, and all God's providential

dealings with us probable. God so loved the world, the race of men, that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. We may well thank God for what we are, and His consequent dealings with us in providence and redemption.

World's Noonday.

"Then again, we should be thankful for what we are. We are living in the world's noonday, in these foremost files of time."

"Time was in the history of our race, when man lived in dens and caves of the earth, without cities or sunlit dwelling places, at war with the forces of nature, and cowering in perpetual fear before them, feeding on roots and berries and raw flesh, without clothing, without comfort, without culture, without the knowledge of God—a Canaan of the wilderness. We should thank God for giving us existence in a different age, and in different circumstances of life.

"Time was when a few lordly folk ruled the world, and held the multitude in slavery and poverty and ignorance, and wreaked upon them injuries and cruelties unspeakable. We should thank God that it is not so among us, that lords appear only at Newport in the hunting season.

"Time was when freedom had no vogue, and conscience no voice that could be heard, and justice no balance between man and man. That is not the time in which we live, and we should be thankful.

"Time was when men were hunted into the dens and caves of the earth, and hurried across the seas, and done unto death, because, forsaking their parents, they wanted to worship God according to the dictates of their own consciences. Thank God that the times into which we have come are far different.

"Time was when rival religious organizations beugled each other with holy glee, and hated one another with pure hearts fervently. Behold, as against that, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity, and brotherly kindness, and religious love, as we do show forth this day.

"The time that now is is better than any time past. The age of the primitive man is passed away. The age of the tyrant, the age of the slave master, the age of the persecutor, the age of the bigot, the age of the big stick, are all of yesterday, and are passed beyond recognition. The age of the brotherhood of man is coming to its noon. There is much yet to do before the millennium comes; there is much left for us to do; there are mighty problems for us to face and solve; there are mighty tasks for us to perform. We should thank God for that.

"But we are the heirs of all the ages, and the inheritors of privileges that have been won for us in age-long conflict. The world is throbbing with a new sense of unity, with a new sense of opportunity. The time that now is is fuller of joy, fuller of peace, fuller of plenty, fuller of privileges, fuller of knowledge, fuller of love, than any time preceding in all the history of the world.

"Let us thank God for what we are.

Upper Side of World.

"And once again let us thank God for where we are. Not in Africa, with its tangled jungles and black-skinned, black souled denizens; not in India, with its dying faiths and falling fame and foreign rulers; not in Japan, with its mushroom modernism growing out of the dry hill of antiquated faiths and customs and laws; not in Russia, with its czar and serfs; not in England, with its lords and little folk; but in this glorious land, this magnificent continent on the upper side of the world. There is no other place in all the world where the comforts of life are more profuse, where the privileges of life are more prodigal, where the opportunities of life are more common and uncommon. To have a home in America in this splendid age is cause enough for Te Deums not once a year, but every day in every year.

Fitness of Service.

"It is well enough that we should gather together once a year as we do today in a formal service of thanksgiving and praise for all these benefits. The fitness and the value of such a service have been already indicated. But there is something more; an even better way to show forth all our praise; and we should know and follow the better way. The best return we can make for all the blessings and benefits which our God bestows upon us, is to accept them as his own gifts to us, and, as his trustees, use them to his glory.

"What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?" asks the psalmist. Then he answers, "I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. That means, I will take the cup, brimful of blessings, from the hand of the Lord, as from the hand of mine host, and drink it to his honor, as he intends I should do." According to that pregnant view, the best return we can make to God for all his benefits toward us, is to take them in full appreciation of whence they come, and use them as he would have us do.

"The great moral and spiritual attributes of which I spoke a while ago, which attest our kinship with God and make us candidates for an immortal destiny, we should accept as God's gift to us, and should put them to the use God designed them for. Spiritual life is a great trust. What are we going to do with it? The gift of such high moral and spiritual possibilities as we have received should be used according to the will of the giver. We should live as the children of God, and the heirs of the grace of life. That would be thanksgiving indeed.

"And whatever benefits we have from the circumstances of the times in which we live, and the land in which we live, should be regarded as gifts from God and used as instruments of service to mankind. They are not for selfish enjoyment, nor self-aggrandizement. We have them in trust to be used for the higher life of the world. That is the divine intention.

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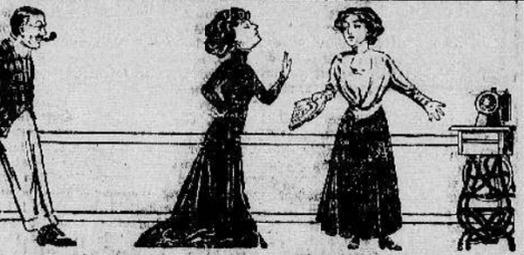
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