

AN EASTER DEED BEFORE EASTER DAY

The International Sunday School Lesson For April 8 Is, "Jesus Raises Lazarus From the Dead."—John 11:17-44

By William T. Ellis

It was a group of seventeenth century Spanish sepulchres, seen yesterday beneath bearded live oaks of Georgia, and made of "tappy," that curious oyster-shell concrete, which set my mind to raving over the grave of earth as I have seen them. They are everywhere—the metal, bath-tub-like sarcophagi which I saw the Arabs excavating from the pyramids in Babylon, at old Asshur, Assyria; the huge stone graves of Phoenicia; the mighty mausoleums of Egypt; the hill-tombs which mortgage so much of China's landscapes; the ancient graveyards of Europe—what a succession of them throng to mind! Each brought some minds face to face with their oldest riddle: Does the highway of life end in a grave?

At some time or other this question is of supreme interest to everybody. The death records of the newspapers mean more to some readers than the most startling news on the first page. This Easter is the most solemn of all the days of the year, for it is the multitude of human hearts, for it brings them squarely up to the problem of immortality, interpreted in terms of the dead dead. So with the Resurrection theme, as it is set forth for us in the raising of Lazarus from the dead, the assigned Sunday school lesson.

A Home for a Lonely Heart
One of the few advantages of being a stranger in a great city, which is the completest form of loneliness, is that thereby one enters somewhat into an appreciation of what was the normal lot of Jesus of Nazareth. The lonely Christ moves our hearts. He went about among incomprehending and unsympathetic people. Apparently, the one refuge which he enjoyed during his public ministry was the home of Martha, Mary and Lazarus, well-to-do friends who dwelt a short distance out of Jerusalem, in the village of Bethany, on the Mount of Olives, just a little way beyond the Garden of Gethsemane.

Some homes are like that, a haven for heavy hearts. Always a woman makes them so, and we know all that it is necessary to learn concerning the qualities of Martha and Mary, from the simple fact that they made the sort of home that Jesus loved, for its rest and refreshment and sympathy. To create such a home as that is a greater career for a woman than to achieve any public success thinkable. It was the strong ties of friendship, knit, as may always best be done, under a roof-tree, that made possible this great story of the Easter that preceded Easter. There was a brother in the family, and that all three must have been the real "good society" of the neighborhood is clear from the record that Jesus loved them all.

When the Dread Telegram Comes
Some homes never receive a telegram without dread that they may contain the message which comes so often by wire that every day hundreds of them are handled by the telegraph companies. One day the ancient oriental equivalent of a telegram, a swift messenger, sought out Jesus beyond the Jordan, to tell Him that His friend Lazarus was sick unto death. Yes, friend of the heavy heart, who saw life's brightness seem to disappear in a yellow telegram, Jesus went through that experience also. He was "touched with a feeling of our infirmities."

Yet the prayer of the sorrowing sisters was not answered as they expected. The Friend did not mount the fastest speed in Perea and make all possible haste over the hilly road to Jerusalem. He deliberately waited, to the surprise of His disciples, who knew the depth of the Master's affection for that Bethany family. He had larger plans for them all than they could know. Dimly, we now perceive how the raising of Lazarus was an essential part of the plan of Christ, being the antecedent cause of the Triumphal Entry, and the occasion for precipitating the climax that led to Calvary. But all this was unknown to the family and to the disciples to us it is not given to see the heaven side of the divine designs.

"This sickness is . . . for the glory of God," said Jesus. So Lazarus had a part, all unrealized by himself and those closest to him, in working out the inscrutable will of God. And this is the last word that can be said in comfort to all who grieve below. We cannot explain, we cannot understand, but we know that the Father whose wisdom is equaled by His love, is carrying out purposes which are born in a Father heart. Some time we shall understand. Meanwhile, we rest upon the word of Jesus, that sickness and sorrow and even death may be for the glory of God, and to glorify God is the chief end of man. Our attitude may wisely be that which is inscribed on the tomb of a distinguished soldier and statesman of the commonwealth: "Awaiting further orders."

The Doubter Who Was a Hero
Up in Jerusalem stones awaited Jesus, should He comply with the request of the sisters, as His disciples were quick to remind him. Yet, after waiting two days, He announced that, although Lazarus was now dead, He would go to him. Thereupon Thomas, whom history has written down as the doubter, spoke up like a brave and loyal soul. "Let us also go, that we may die with him." Who should we not remember Thomas always as at his best, ready to make the supreme proof of friendship?

First Martha and then Mary met Jesus on the way, as he went to Bethany. Both accosted Him with a remark that was a rebuke: "If thou hadst been here our brother had not died." All the "ifs" and the "buts" that we hurl at God! Consider what God bears from mortals, of impatience, querulousness, chiding and unbelief. Even such an exquisite saint as Mary could not let the Master be master. We worship God, and then refuse to Him the least of the perquisites of God. Calling Christ Lord, we deny Him the right to be lord of our lives.

The Shortest Verse's Long Meaning
Spurgeon used to say that he could forgive the translators of the King James version all the ill they had done to the sacred text by butchering it up into text-paragraphs, because they had left the one sentence standing alone, "Jesus wept." Children learn this as the shortest verse in the Bible. It stands alone, not only on the page of Scripture, but also in all literature. Where else will you find any religious teacher, from Zoroaster to Mohammed, weeping in human sympathy and love, over the sorrows of his friends?

The greatest truth in the Bible is wrapped up in this shortest verse. It visualizes the Man of Sorrows in the completeness of His comprehending, compassionate love for man. Before ever we come to the great central truth of Easter, we have this picture of the Lord of life as a comrade of hearts that mourn. Despite all that He knew about death, and the needlessness of grief, He did not disdain the tears of earth, even as mother shares the infant sorrows of her child, although she knows full well their needlessness and futility. By every Christian grave, Christ, the bringer of joy and victory out of death, yet stands weeping with those who need

to accept God in all His declared goodness as "too good to be true."

Then Jesus opened the grave with prayer. He knew the dramatic character of that hour. Not a single hand's span of the gathering clouds of hate was hidden from His eyes. This crowning miracle, which He contemplated, was to bring to a climax all the plots of His foes. None bet less, with a simple, son-like prayer to the Father in heaven, He stooped down and cried, "Lazarus, come forth!"

Yes, the dead obey Him. Christ is lord of life and death. His voice reached across the mysterious boundaries, and brought back the spirit of His friend once more into its earthly habitation. There are no words that can make the wonder simple. At the command of Jesus the gates of death swung open, outward. Lazarus, an instant before a corpse, came back to walk once more with his loved ones the familiar haunts. He was to sit again at the breaking of bread with his Lord.

Christendom has heard this tale of Lazarus so often that the edge of the marvel has gone from it. To all who beheld it, this was the supreme act of the ministry of Jesus. Even though some disbelieved,—for seeing is not believing, for the perverse heart—the raising of Lazarus meant nothing less than the complete vindication of the claims of Jesus to the Messiahship. He plainly shared God's prerogative of controlling life.

What Did Lazarus Know?
Browning has a poem about Lazarus, back from the realm beyond the grave. The idea is an alluring one. What secrets were hidden in this man's soul, as he returned for a time to be as other men? We cannot know, of course. Nobody has ever imagined heaven. Countless poets have tried. I like that modern and daring bit of poetry by Nicholas Vassell Lindsay, "General Booth Enters Heaven:"

Booth led boldly with his big bass drum,
"Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?"
The saints smiled gravely, and they said, "He's come."
"Are you washed in the blood of

the Lamb?"
Walking lepers followed, rank on rank,
Lurching bravos from the ditches dank;
Drabs from the alleyways, and drug-friends pale—
Minds still passion-ridden—soul powers frail!
Vermil-caten saints, with moldy breath,
"Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?"

Every slum had sent its half a score
The round world o'er—Booth had groaned for more.
Every banner that the wide world flies
Bloomed with glory and transcendent dyes;
Big-voiced lassies made their banjos bang!
Pranced, fanatical, they shrieked and sang,
"Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?"

Hallelujahs! It was queer to see
Bull-necked convicts with that land make free!
Loons with bazos blowing blare, blare, blare,
On, on, upward through the golden air.
"Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?"

Booth died blind, and still by faith he trod,
Eyes still dazzled by the ways of God.
Booth led boldly, and he looked the chief:
Eagle countenance in sharp relief,
Beard a-flying, air of high command,
Unabated in that holy land.

Jesus came from out the Court House door,
Stretched His hands above the passing poor;
Booth saw not, but led his queer ones
Round and round the mighty Court House Square.
Yet in an instant all that bear review
Marched on spotless, clad in raiment

new.
The lame were straightened, withered limbs uncurled
And blind eyes opened on a new, sweet world.
Drabs and vixens in a flash made whole!
Gone was the weasel-head, the snout, the jowl;
Sages and sibyls now, and athletes clean,
Rulers of empires and of forests green.

The hosts were sanded and their wings were fire—
"Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?"
But their noise played havoc with the angel choir!
"Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?"
Oh, shout salvation! It was good to see
Kings and princes by the Lamb set free.

The banjos rattled, and the tambourines
Jing-jing-jingled in the hands of queens!
And when Booth halted by the curb for prayer
He saw his Master through the flag-filled air.
Christ came gently, with a robe and crown
For Booth the soldier, while the throng knelt down.

He saw King Jesus—they were face to face,
And he knelt a-weeping in that holy place.
"Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?"

Lazarus was one of the few on earth to whom it was not left to imagine the nature of the life beyond the grave. There is room within the theme, since John set us the example, for the exercise of all our gifts of imagination, sure that the reality far transcends our most daring thought.
After all, the uttermost that we know concerning the mystery of life and death is told us by Jesus. What inspired Paul wrote in the majestic

fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians, should also be read in any consideration of this theme. We know that Jesus gave definite, unequivocal assurance of personal immortality. His word to Martha comprehends all that we have been trying to say upon the subject: "I am the resurrection, and the life; he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die."
There is but one sure and adequate warrant for the Easter message of

hope, and that is in the word and life of Jesus Christ, who lived and died and rose again.
MAY INTERNE' AMERICANS
The Hague, April 6.—A frontier correspondent asserts that he understands General von Bissing, the German Governor General in Belgium, intends to order the internment of all Americans between the ages of 17 and 45 living in Belgium. The correspondent adds that they will be sent to Western Germany, probably to Aix-la-Chapelle.

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 - Champlin's Liquid Pearl . . . 39c
 - Laird's Bloom of Youth . . . 39c
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 - DeMeridol Beauty Powder, liq. . . 29c
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 - Hagan's Magnolia Balm . . . 59c
 - Hoyt's Cologne, 25c, 50c . . . 15c, 30c
 - Mum . . . 15c
 - Spiro Powder . . . 15c
 - Odo-Ro-No . . . 17c, 34c
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 - Crown Lavender Salts . . . 19c
 - Parker's Prays Rosaline . . . 15c
 - Parker's Prays Ongoline . . . 29c
 - Parker's Prays Nail Enamel . . . 15c
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- King's New Discovery . . . 59c
- Kondon's Catarrhal Jelly . . . 15c

- Sloan's Liniment . . . 29c
- Sargol . . . 55c
- S. S. S. (Swift's Specific) . . . 55c
- Stern's Wine of Cod Liver Oil . . . 59c
- St. Jacob's Oil . . . 29c
- Stuart's Dyspepsia Tablets . . . 59c
- Stuart's Calcium Wafers . . . 29c
- California Syrup of Figs . . . 29c
- Tiz . . . 15c
- Tonsiline . . . 29c
- Usoiline Oil, pts. . . 27c
- Vapo Cresoline . . . 29c
- Vernas Lotion . . . 29c
- Wampole's Cod Liver Oil . . . 55c
- Weber's Alpine Tea . . . 7c
- William's Pink Pills . . . 30c
- Wright's Ind. Veg. Liver Pills . . . 16c
- Wyeth's Eff. Phos. Soda . . . 29c
- Wyeth's Glycerine Suppositories . . . 18c
- Wyeth's 5-grain Lithia Tablets . . . 27c
- Wendell's Ambition Pills . . . 29c
- Zhongiva . . . 34c
- Musterole . . . 19c
- Nature's Remedy . . . 15c
- Nulfy Tablets . . . 29c
- Nuxated Iron Tablets . . . 59c
- Omega Oil . . . 15c
- Palmer's Skin Success . . . 14c
- Parmint . . . 49c
- Pape's Cold Tablets . . . 15c
- Peruna . . . 59c
- Perry Davis Pain Killer . . . 15c
- Peterman's Discovery . . . 17c
- Peterman's Roach Food . . . 17c
- Phelp's Rheumatic Elixir . . . 57c

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 - Pond's Extract Tooth Paste . . . 17c
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 - Sozodont Paste . . . 19c
 - Mennen's Paste . . . 19c
 - Arnica Tooth Soap . . . 15c
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