

WAITING FOR YOU.

Heaven Is Much Closer Than Some People Think.

The Distance From Earth Is Only A Flash—A Chair Beside Your Loved Ones Is Vacant and Waiting—Sermon by Rev. T. DeWitt Talmage, D. D.

Dr. Talmage preached Sunday at Oskaloosa, Ia. His text was taken from Luke xv, 7: "Likewise joy shall be in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance."

A lost sheep! Nothing can be more thoroughly lost. I look through the window of a shepherd's house at night. The candles are lighted. The shepherd has just placed his staff against the mantle. He has taken off his coat, shaken out of it the dust and hung it up. I see by the candle light that there are neighbors who have come in. The shepherd fagged out with the long tramp, sits down on a bench, and the wife and children and the neighbors say to him: "Come, now, tell us how you found the poor thing." "Well," he says, "this morning I went out to the yard to look at the flock. No sooner had I looked over the fence than I saw something wrong. The fact was they did not count right. Ninety-five, ninety-six, ninety-seven, ninety-eight, ninety-nine—only ninety-nine. McDonald, you know we had a hundred. And I wondered which one was gone, and I began again, and I counted ninety-five, ninety-six, ninety-seven, ninety-eight, ninety-nine. Well, I whistled up the dogs and I started on the fields and across the bridges, and I tracked the Moores, and I leaped the gullies, but no bleating of the poor thing did I hear. I said to myself: 'The lamb must have fallen into a ditch, or a pack of wolves from the mountains must have torn it to pieces and sucked its life out.' But I could not give up. You see it was a pet lamb. It was that one with the black spot on the right shoulder that used to come and lick my hand as I crossed the field, and somehow I could not give it up. So I went on and on until after awhile I heard the dogs bark, and I said: 'What's that?' Then I hastened to the top of the hill, and I looked down, and there I saw the poor lamb. It had fallen into the ditch, and as I came where it was and bent over the ditch, and stooped down to lift the poor thing out, I wish you could have seen the loving and imploring and tender way it looked at me. I lifted it out, and it was all covered with the slush and the mud. It was an awful thing to do, but I lifted it out, and it was so lame and so weak it could not walk alone, so I threw it over my shoulders and I started homeward, and the condition of that lamb you may judge of from the coat which I have just hung up. But I tramped on and on until it is safe in the yard, poor thing! Thank God, thank God!" Then the shepherd's wife spread the table and brought out the best fare that the cabin could afford, and they sat up very late that night, and they talked, and they laughed, and they sang, and they ate, and they drank, and they danced, and told over and over and over again the story of the lost sheep that was found.

With such tenderness and rusticity of illustration does Christ represent the soul's going off and the soul's coming back, when He says: "Likewise there is joy in Heaven among the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth more than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance." To repent is to feel that you are bad, and to be sorry about it, and to turn over a new leaf, and to pray for forgiveness and help. Just as soon as a man does that, they hear right away of it in Heaven. There are no gossips in glory going around to chatter and laugh when a man falls; but there are many souls in glory who are glad to run about and tell it when a man is saved. The news goes very quick from gate to gate, and from north wall to south wall, and from east wall to west wall, and in three minutes every citizen of Heaven has heard of it: for "there is joy in Heaven among the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

I can very easily understand how there should be joy in Heaven over a Pentecost with 3,000 souls saved in one day—no mystery about that; I can understand how there should be joy in Heaven over the Parish of Schoots, when four hundred souls were saved under one sermon of Mr. Livingston; I can understand how there should be joy in Heaven over the great awakening in the time of Harland Page, when in one year 473,000 souls were brought to God in the United States; I can understand very easily how there should be joy in Heaven over 500,000 souls converted in 1857 in this country; but mark you, my text announces there is joy in Heaven among the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.

Some cathedrals have one tower; some cathedrals have two, three, four towers. Did you ever hear them all ring at once? I am told that the bell in the cathedral of St. Paul rings only on rare occasions, for instance, at the birth or death of a king. Have you seen a cathedral with four towers? and have you heard them all strike into one great chime of gladness? Here is a man who is moral. He is an example to a great many professors of religion in some things; he never did a mean thing in his life; he pays all his debts, and is a good citizen and a good neighbor,

but he says he is not a Christian. Some day the Holy Spirit comes into his heart and he sees that he can not depend upon his morality for salvation. He says: "O Lord God, I have been depending upon my good works. I find I am a sinner, and I want Thy salvation. Lord, for Jesus, sake, have mercy on me, and God pardons him. And immediately one of the towers of Heaven strikes a silver chime, for there are four towers to the heavenly temple. Here is a man who is bad; he knows he is bad, and every body knows he is bad, but he is not an outcast; far from being an outcast. He moves in respectable circles. But one day, by the power of the Holy Ghost, he rouses up to see his sinfulness and says: "O Lord, have mercy. I am a wanderer and without Thee I perish. Have mercy." God hears him, and immediately two of the towers of Heaven strike a silvery chime. But here is an outcast. He was picked up last night out of the gutter and carried to the police station. He has been in the penitentiary three times. He is covered and soaked with loathsomeness and abomination. Arousing from his debauch, he cries out: "O God, have mercy on me. Thou who didst pardon the penitent thief, hear me cry for mercy."

And the Lord listens and pardons, and no sooner is the wretch pardoned than three of the great towers of Heaven strike up a silvery chime. But here is a wail of the street. She passes under the gaslight, and your soul shudders with a great horror. No pity for her. No commiseration for her. As she passes down the street, she hears a song in the midnight mission, and as she listens to that song she hears:

All may come whoever will,
This Man receives poor sinners still.
She puts into that harbor, she kneels by the rough bench near by the door, she says: "O Lord! Thou didst have mercy on Mary Magdalen, take my blistered feet off the red hot pavement of hell." God says: "My daughter, thy sins are forgiven thee; go in peace." Now all the four towers of Heaven strike a silvery chime, and they who pass through the celestial streets say: "What's that? why, the worst sinner must have been saved. Hear all the four towers ring, and ring, and ring." "And there is joy in Heaven among the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

My subject impresses you, I think, with the thought that it is possible for us to augment the happiness of Heaven. People think that souls before the throne are as happy as they can be. I deny it. Look at that mother before the throne of God. When she died she left her son in this world a vagabond. That son repented of his iniquities and came to God. The report of that salvation has reached Heaven. Do you tell me that mother before the throne of God has not her joy richly augmented? There is many a man in this house today who could go out with a torch and kindle a new bonfire of victory on the hills of Heaven. If you would this day repent and come to God, the news of your salvation would reach Heaven, and then, hark! to the shout of the ransomed.

Your little child went away from you into the good land. While she was here you brought her all kinds of beautiful presents. Sometimes you came home at nightfall with your pockets full of gifts for her, and no sooner did you put your night-key into the latch than she began at you, saying, "Father, what have you brought me?" She is now before the throne of God. Can you bring her a gift to-day? You may. Coming to Christ and repenting of sin, the tidings will go up to the throne of God, and your child will hear of it. O, what a gift for my soul to-day! She will skip with new gladness on the everlasting hills when she hears of it.

I was at Sharpsburg during the war, and one day I saw a sergeant dash past on a lathered horse, the blood dripping from the spurs. I said, "That sergeant must be going on a very important message, he must be carrying a very important dispatch, or he wouldn't ride like that." Here are two angels of God flitting through the house, flitting toward the throne on quick dispatch. What is the news? Carry up the story of souls repentant and forgiven, carrying the news to the throne of God, carrying the news to your kindred who are forever saved. O, "there is joy in Heaven among the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." And suppose this whole audience should turn to the Lord? Heaven would be filled with doxologies. O, Heaven, beat with all thy hammers that the rock may break. O, Heaven, strike with all thy gleaming swords that one soul may be free. I was reading of a king who, after gaining a great victory, said to his army: "No, no shouting; let every thing be in quiet; no shouting." But if this hour, your soul should come to God, nothing could stop the shouting of the armies of God before the throne; for "there is joy in Heaven among the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." In some families they keep a vacant chair and a vacant plate for the departed; but if in some of your households you kept a vacant chair and a vacant plate for those who have gone away from you into the next world, the vacant chairs and the vacant plates would outnumber those which are occupied. I once said to you there are no vacant chairs in Heaven; but I recall that. Right beside you loved one in that good land there is a vacant chair, not made vacant by death, for death never enters there; it is a vacant chair for you, will you take it?

My subject also impresses me with the idea that Heaven and earth are in close sympathy. People talk of Heaven as though it were a great way off. They say it is hundreds of thousands of miles before you can reach the first star, and then you go hundreds of thousands of miles before you get to the second star, and then it is millions of miles before your each Heaven. They say Heaven is the center of the universe and we are on rim of the universe. That is not the idea of my text. I think the heart of Heaven beats very close to our world. We measure distances by the time taken to traverse those distances. It used to be a long distance to San Francisco. Many weeks and months were passed before you could reach that city. Now it is six or seven days. It used to be six weeks before you could voyage from here to Liverpool. Now you can go that distance in six or seven days. And so I measure the distance between earth and Heaven, and I find it only a flash. It is one instant here, another instant there. It is very near to-day. Do you not feel the breath of Heaven on your face? Christ says in one place it is not twenty-four hours distance, when He says to the penitent thief: "This day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." It is not a day, it is not an hour, it is not a minute, it is not a second. O! how near Heaven is to earth. By oceanic cable you send a message. As it is expensive you compromise a great deal of meaning in a few words. Sometimes in two words you can put vast meaning. And it seems to me that the angels of God who carry news from earth to Heaven, need to take up this hour, in regard to your soul, only two words in order to kindle with gladness all the redeemed before the throne, only two words: "Father saved," "Mother saved," "Son saved," "Daughter saved." And "there is joy in Heaven among the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

My subject also impresses me with the fact that the salvation of the soul is of vast importance. If you should make \$200,000 this year, do you suppose that news would be carried to Heaven? It would not be of enough importance or significance to be carried heavenward. If at the next quadrennial election you are made president of the United States, do you suppose that news would be carried to Heaven? Do you suppose that the news of a revolution in France or Spain would be carried to Heaven? These things are not of enough importance, but there is one item that is sure to be carried. It is the salvation of your soul; it is your repentance before God. The flying hoofs of God's couriers clash through the gates, and the news goes from gate to mansion, and from mansion to temple, and from temple to throne, and "there is joy in Heaven" among the angels of God over one sinner forgiven. It must be of vast importance to be of any moment in Heaven, your salvation, in that land where gladnesses are the everyday occurrence, in that land where the common stones of the field are jasper and emerald and chrysopterus and carbuncle and sardonyx. And yet, the news of your salvation makes joy before the throne of God.

You remember, years ago, a stage driver, in the White Mountains became very reckless. He had a large number of passengers on the stage, and the stage was drawn by six horses, wild and ungovernable, and he drove near the precipice, and he drove off, the stage with its precious weight rolling down the embankment, and many were slain, but few were saved. I suppose when they wrote home they wrote with congratulation at their rescue. The angels of God look down and they see men driving on the edge of great precipices of ruin and danger, drawn by wild, leaping, foaming and ungovernable perils in this life, and if any shall escape before they capsize, do you not suppose the angels of God rejoice, crying: "Good, good! Saved from sin, saved from death, saved from hell, saved forever?"

The supreme court of the United States does not adjourn for anything trifling. It must be the death of a cabinet minister, or the death of a president, or some matter of very great moment. When I find all Heaven adjourning its other joys for this one joy, I make up my mind it is of very great importance if Heaven can afford to adjourn all other festivities to celebrate this one triumph. Do you wonder that so many of these Christian people have toiled night and day in this work of soul-saving if it is of such vast importance? Do you wonder that Nettleton and Finley, and Bishop Asbury, and John Wesley, and George Whitefield, and Paul, and angels, and Christ, and God stripped themselves for the work? Around that one soul circles the mist, the fire, the darkness, the joy, the anthem, the wailing, the hallelujah, and the woe of God's universe. If the soul is saved, then lip comes to trumpet and fingers to harp and hammer to bell, and "there is joy among the angels of God over that one soul forgiven." For such a soul I plead.

Having found in my own experience that this religion is a comfort and a joy, I stand here to commend it to you. In the days of my infancy I was carried by Christian parents to the house of God, and consecrated in baptism to the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost; but that did not save me.

In after time I was taught to kneel at the Christian altar with father and mother and brother and sisters, the most of them now in glory, but that did not save me. In after time I read Doddridge's "Rise and

Progress," and Baxter's "Call to the Unconverted," and all the religious books around my father's household; but they did not save me. But one day the voice of Christ came into my heart, saying: "Repent, repent; believe, believe;" and I accepted the offer of mercy, and though no doubt there was more joy in Heaven over the conversion of other souls because of their far-reaching influence, I verily believe when I gave my heart to God there was some spirits in Heaven the gladder for the deed. "There is joy in Heaven among the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." Turn this day to the lord who bought you. Let this whole audience surrender themselves to Jesus Christ. If for ten, twenty, fifty years you have not prayed, begin now to pray. "Oh!" you say, "I can't pray." Can you not say, "God be merciful to me a sinner?" "No," you say, "I can't say that." Then can you not look to the throne of mercy? "No," you say, "I can't look up." Can you not then give some signal like that which was given by the lad in the hospital? He was sick and suffering and dying, and wanted speedily to go away from all suffering and pain, and he said to his comrades in the hospital, "It is strange to me that Jesus doesn't see me when he goes through here nights and takes others to himself. He goes through here and He doesn't see me. I must be asleep and he doesn't know I want to go."

"Now, I tell you how I'll arrange it. I'll go to sleep with my hand up, and then, when Jesus comes through the hospital by night He will see my hand lifted, and He will know by that I want to go with Him." So it was done. For that night Jesus went through the hospital and took the suffering lad, and the next morning the nurse passing through the wards of the hospital, saw a dead hand lifted braced on one side against the pillow, and the left hand holding the elbow of the right arm. Jesus had seen the signal and answered it. O! sick soul, wounded soul, dying soul; canst thou not give some signal? Wilt thou not lift one hand or one prayer? God grant that this day there may be joy in Heaven among the angels of God over your soul forgiven!

JAPANESE MYTHS.

Strange Beliefs About Demon Birds and Animals.

No people in the world, civilized or savage, believe in the existence of so many mythical, half-supernatural creatures as do the Japanese. For instance, they think there is a wondrous tiger of more than half human intelligence that lives to be one thousand years old, and turns as white as a polar bear. They also believe in a species of fox, which, if it lives to be fifty years old having been chased by a dog, transforms himself into a beautiful woman. This same fox, if he lives to the age of one hundred years, gains some new powers, among which is that of becoming a wonderful wizard. When he reaches the age of one thousand years he becomes a celestial fox with nine golden-colored tails and has the power of going to Heaven whenever he chooses. They also believe in a multitude of animals distinguished mainly by their monstrous size or by the multiplication of their numbers. Among these are serpents eight hundred feet long and big enough to swallow an elephant; foxes with eight legs; monkeys with four ears; fishes with ten heads attached to one body, the flesh of which is a cure for boils. They also believe in the existence of a crane which, after it has reached the age of six hundred years, has no need of any sustenance except water. Their mythical dragon has the head of a camel, the horns of a deer, the eyes of a demon, the ears of an ox, the body of a serpent, the scales of a fish, and the claws and wings of an eagle.—Chicago News.

Phenomena of Life and Death.

The necrology of the old year is always read by thousands with mournful interest. In perusing these sad records the mind unconsciously reverts to the well-known axioms, which tell us that the average human life is a span of but thirty-three and one-third short years. That one-quarter of all born die before they have seen the opening of their seventh year; one-half before reaching seventeen, so that those who pass their "teens" enjoy a felicity unknown to one-half the human species. In every thousand persons only one reaches the age of 90; in every 100 only six reach to or beyond 65, and not more than one on average in 500 lives to be 50 years old. There is said to be upward of 1,000,000,000 human beings on the globe; of these one-third die every year, 91,834 every day and 3,750 every hour, or sixty every minute. Married men are said to live longer than single ones; tall men longer than short ones. Women have more chances of life in their favor previous to the fiftieth year than men have, but fewer afterward.—St. Louis Republic.

—As thunder without rain does more harm than good, so ministers who preach the terrors of the law, but do not at the same time drop in the dew of Gospel instruction and consolation, are not "wise master-builders;" for they pull down, but build nothing up again.—Luther.

—It was Martin Luther who said, "He who is not handsome at twenty, strong at thirty, educated at forty, and rich at fifty, will never be handsome, strong, educated or rich."

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