**VOLUME 9; CHAPTER 25 - THE PREACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**THE LOOKING OF JESUS by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

*And He entered into Jerusalem, into the temple; and when He had looked round about upon all things, it being now eventide, He went out unto Bethany with the twelve.*

*Mark 11:11*

THIS WAS THE FINAL INCIDENT IN A WONDERFUL DAY, AND IT was as remarkably suggestive as anything that happened on that day. In the morning Jesus had ridden toward the city amid the plaudits of the multitudes. On the way He had paused, and beholding the city, had wept over it and had pronounced its doom. Then He had entered the city and at last had come to its very heart and center, the temple itself. There He "… looked round about upon all things, …" and departed. That looking of Jesus arrests our attention. The word which the evangelist employed to describe it is a compound word and our translators, in order to convey its significance, have become almost redundant in their use of words; "… he had looked round about upon, ..." and the four words constitute the translation of one Greek word. The prefix of the Greek word suggests a looking everywhere and all round everything, and the idea is expressed by our words round about upon. The base of the word suggests thoroughness in looking. It does not indicate the gaze of wonder. There is such a word in our Greek New Testament - looking with wide-open eyes as does a child - but that is not the word of my text. Neither - and this I would enforce even more carefully - does it suggest the inspection of one not familiar with what he is looking at; it is not the inspection of one who desires to discover. There is a word in our Greek New Testament which stands for exactly that kind of looking, but this is not that word. This word suggests, rather, the voluntary contemplation of what is already known. The idea is that of looking thoroughly at the whole of the facts before His eyes, the kind of looking which suggests thought.

What did He see as at that eventide He looked round about upon all things? What did He think as He looked? The answer to both inquiries may be gathered from His subsequent actions. He came to the temple again, certainly twice, probably three times. I am going to take it for granted that He came three times and if the third coming is not established, at least we shall see that on the occasion to which I shall refer His mind and heart were there. What we shall find Him doing will reveal to us what He saw when He looked round about upon all things, and what He thought as the result of what He saw. He came the next day and cleansed the temple and for a few brief hours guarded it against all defilement and intrusion. He came the day after and spent the whole day there, judging the rulers, condemning them, and as He left He prophesied the doom of the temple, declaring that not one stone should be left upon another of all the great and glorious building. He came again, as I believe, on Passover night. When in the midst of the paschal discourse He said: "… arise, let us go hence," I think He led the disciples back toward the temple, and there at its most glorious entrance, under the shadow of the golden vine, He uttered His teaching concerning the vine and offered His great intercessory prayer. In the light of these facts therefore, let us answer our questions; what did He see? What did He think?

What then did Jesus see? That is our first question. Let me give an answer from the three incidents briefly, before dwelling upon them at greater length. He saw a den of robbers. He saw a destructive force already at work which would never end its operations until the whole temple was demolished. He saw the Divine victory beyond the demolition.

He saw a den of robbers. He came back on the following day into the temple, cleansed and guarded it and proceeded to teach, giving reasons for His strange and wonderful action in these words: "… It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer: but ye have made it a den of robbers." In these words of Jesus His conception of what the temple ought to be is revealed; "… My house shall be called the house of prayer: …" The emphasis was not so much upon the fact that it was to be called the house of prayer, as upon the fact that it was to be the house of prayer for all the nations. He was by no means concerned to defend the temple as a peculiar place of worship for the Hebrew people. He was making His protest against that very misconception. Part of the defilement of the temple lay in the fact that men looked upon it only as a place where Hebrews might worship. Let it be distinctly remembered that what Jesus saw as He looked round about was that a traffic was being carried on within the temple courts but not within the holy places. This traffic was prosecuted in the courts which in the Divine provision had been set apart for the gathering of the Gentiles, the men of other nations who desired to worship the God of the Hebrews. The inner courts into which went the priests or the Hebrews bringing sacrifices were held sacred against the profanation of Gentile feet. The courts appointed for the Gentiles were filled with traffickers. They were making religion easy for the Hebrews. They were setting the Hebrew free from the responsibility of selecting his offering of a lamb or turtle dove. The moment men begin to make religion easy, they cut its nerve.

They were doing more, they were making religion difficult for the Gentiles who ought to have occupied that particular court. The temple courts were being used as a short cut from one part of the city to another. These people were going to and fro through the courts, carrying vessels and merchandise, thus making religion easy for the Jews and difficult for the Gentiles. These were the surface things, but the things upon the surface tell the story of the things that underlie them. As our Lord looked out upon that scene, He knew that the rulers of the temple were guilty in that they encouraged the traffic and permitted this crossing of the courts in order to reach a place in the city more easily; and He knew that the people who employed the method were guilty also. It was not only that they were wronging the Gentiles, in the wronging of the Gentiles they were wronging the God Who was the God of the Gentiles as surely as He was the God of the Jews. He went into the temple, and He looked round about upon all things and He saw the temple as a den of robbers.

Further, He saw a destructive force at work. When, next day, He came to the temple, He challenged the rulers while the rulers thought they were challenging Him; He tried the rulers while the rulers thought they were trying Him; He found a verdict against the rulers while they were trying to find a verdict against Him; He sentenced the rulers and the nation while they thought they were passing sentence on Him. By parabolic method of investigation and denunciation, He compelled these men to find verdicts against themselves and pass sentences upon themselves. Again eventide came and as He was leaving the temple, His disciples drew His attention to the beauty of the building. He looked at them as one who should say: "You need not show Me the beauty of the building, I know it well; Do you see it? Not One stone shall be left upon another, that shall not be thrown down." I need not stay to dwell upon the literal and absolute fulfilment of that prophecy within a generation when the armies of Titus surrounded Jerusalem and not a single stone was left upon another of that temple. That is not the point now but rather what Jesus saw. He saw what Isaiah saw. He saw the whole city, the whole temple, and the whole audience therein, enwrapped in fire, the fire of the immediate nearness of Deity, the slowly burning but surely destructive fire which destroys only that which is perishable, and purifies, ennobles, and beautifies that which is in itself noble, high, and true. We remember Isaiah's great passage: "The sinners in Zion are afraid; trembling hath seized the godless ones: …." Why? "… Who among us can dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us can dwell with ever- lasting burnings?" In the prophet's question there was no reference to the hell that lies beyond. There was reference rather to the very conditions in the midst of which they were living. The prophet saw that God forgotten was not God distanced; God disobeyed was not God defeated. He saw that God was there as the slowly burning fire of which there is a parabolic illustration in all nature. Scientists tell us of the eremacausis, a slowly burning fire in nature which oxidizes iron or steel if we leave it out in the dew, and paints the trees with their autumnal tints, as it destroys the effete for the perfecting of that which really lives. Jesus saw this fire everywhere. He saw the inevitable end therefore. He knew that the symbol, the temple, must be destroyed when its meaning was denied. Material strength and beauty were doomed when they were not the vehicle of spiritual interpretation and moral appeal. Therefore, as He looked round about upon all things He saw, not only the den of robbers, the desecration of the Divine ideal; He saw also doom and destruction, because God is not mocked, neither can He be distanced from human affairs.

He saw more, He saw the Divine victory. If He did not actually come to the temple on Passover night, He was certainly there in spirit. I personally believe He actually came there on that night and that the last great discourse, the allegory of the vine, was uttered there. At Passover time the gates of the temple were open for pilgrims that they might enter and meditate. The main entrance was never closed. Josephus tells us in his "Antiquities" that over the entrance Herod had constructed a thing of infinite beauty, the wonder and amazement of all who looked at it, the golden vine, the vine being the scriptural symbol of the Hebrew people. Under that golden vine then it is probable that Jesus stood with His disciples when He said: "I am the true vine …" What then did He see as He looked round about upon all things? He saw a city without a temple. He saw the realization of the Divine ideal symbolized in the vine which Israel had never succeeded in fulfilling. He saw the vine bearing fruit for the nations. Israel had failed and He must curse and denounce the city. But if it be true that God is not distanced, it is also true that God cannot be defeated. Looking out upon all things in the temple, He saw with great clearness a city wherein there should be no temple. The woman of Samaria had said to Him: "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." Jesus had answered her: "… Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father. ... the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth: …" He saw beyond the doom and destruction of the temple, the glad, glorious, wonderful day, when the temple should be unnecessary in the perfected city of God. John saw that city in Patmos, the city of God with no temple therein. Looking through the darkness, He saw a sanctified life in which worship would no longer be special, occasional, but normal and persistent. Looking round about upon all things, He saw a den of robbers, a destructive force, but a Divine victory.

What, then, let us ask in the second place, did He think as He saw these things? Here again we are instructed by the things that followed. When He saw the house appointed for worship, a house of prayer for all the nations, desecrated, He knew that the Divine ideal must be maintained at all costs. Therefore, He returned on the morrow. He cast out the moneychangers and overthrew their tables, and more, He would not suffer any carrying a vessel to pass through those courts. Look at the scene. How long it lasted I cannot tell, probably some hours. Jesus is seen holding the temple, guarding it against intrusion, and turning it to its rightful uses. First of all, He cleared away abuse; turned men out, overturned tables, halted every man who tried to take a short cut through the courts to some other part of the city. Matthew says that two things were going on during the time He held and guarded the temple. It is a beautiful picture; Jesus the Lord and Master of the temple is seen healing sick folk, and all the while the children are singing round about Him - a musical obligato to Divine healing. For a moment He gave the city and the world for all time to see what a house of prayer is; not a place where we go to ask for things for ourselves, but a place where the halt and maimed are healed while children sing. If man has destroyed the Divine ideal, the Divine ideal must not be lost. He gave us a picture in a flash of what He is still doing and what He will continue to do until He has completed the work of driving out the traffickers and overturning the money tables and guarding men's right of access to God.

But He came again and argued all day long with the rulers and condemned them, and as He left He pronounced the final doom upon the city and declared that not one stone should be left upon another of the temple. What then did He think as He looked round about upon all things?

That the human degradation must be destroyed. That human degradation was complete He knew full well as witness His parables in that long day's teaching. These men would kill, not merely the servants sent unto them, but the very Son Who came out from the Father's heart. Because the degradation was complete, nothing must be left which would be of the nature of false security. There are times when the best thing we can do with a church is to close it. Better abandon a sacrament and close a church than traffic with the church and with the sacrament in an unholy way. The temple must be destroyed because if it remain it becomes a false security and a libel on God. Consequently, we find that the fierce fire of His wrath is kindled by the deeper passion of His heart in mercy. He will destroy all false security that the soul in its nakedness may be driven out toward Himself for help, healing, and blessing.

As He looked round about upon all things, He knew not only that the Divine ideal must be maintained and human degradation destroyed, but that the Divine purpose must be realized in the Divine way. When He came back on Passover night, after He said: "I am the true Vine, ..." He began to pray "… Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that the Son may glorify thee." He was praying for strength for the Cross. As He looked round about upon all things, He knew that in order to the final establishment of the Divine ideal and in order to move toward the Divine purpose in spite of destruction, it was necessary that He should gather up into His heart and life in a mystery utterly beyond the possibility of human analysis, all the sin that had wrought the havoc and quench it in His blood.

So He still observes. So He still looks round about upon all things. There are no questions more important for us individually, socially, nationally, ecclesiastically, than those we have been asking in the presence of this old-time story. He looks down upon men wherever they foregather, whether it be a church or in a theatre; whether it be in the halls of commerce or in places of amusement; whether in the capitalist club or the labor church; He looks, He observes, He sees. He looks at the national attitudes and activities and understands them in their profoundest depths, in those depths that no diplomacy will ever discover to statesmen, and yet with which statesmen must deal if nationality is ever to be anything worth the name. He still looks round about upon all things in the church, upon all its worship and upon all its work. We need to remember that when Jesus looks He sees everything thoroughly. He sees the good, and He sees the bad. He sees that which is high, and that which is low. He sees that which is true, and that which is merely formal. He knows whether, when our lips recite the prayer He taught His disciples, we are indulging in the talk of parrots or praying. He sees thoroughly the internal as well as the external, the motive as well as the manner, the aspiration as well as the achievement. If this be a scorching, burning truth, there is yet more comfort in it than in anything else I know. He sees everything. Your neighbor listens to your profession; He knows the truth about you. Your friend knows how you blundered, failed, sinned. He knows why you did it, and how you did not want to do it, and how your aspiration was a great deal better than your achievement. He knows all about you, the fire in the blood, the deadly, dastardly, devilish poison that drives you; He takes it all into account. He sees everything and sees thoroughly.

Remember, in the second place, that when He looks, He measures everything by the Divine standard. He does not measure anything by the standards of human convenience, or selfishness, or by that of vested interests. They had vested interests in the temple, and He hurried them out overturning their tables. He does not measure the drink traffic today by the standard of vested interests. We ought to be filled with shame that we are not taking out of the way of our sons the possibility of temptation and from devilish men and women the chance of tempting them.

Neither does He measure by the standard of our ability. You say, "I am doing the best I can." He does not measure us that way. That is not all the truth of life. Doing the best we can is a poor business. What then are the standards of His measurement? The purpose of God and the power of God as available for every man. It is not enough that I do the best I can. I am to do the best that God and I can do. "I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me" said Paul. He expects, not that I shall do the best I can, but that I shall avail myself of all the power that is at my disposal in God. He measures by Divine standards.

Again, when He looks, He always agrees with God in His destructive judgments. His parable of the barren fig tree teaches this. The hour comes, according to that parable, when the vinedresser after long provocation to fruit bearing has to say with the proprietor: "Cut it down." He ever agrees with God, The building must go even though it be the temple, be it never so ancient, never so strong, never so beautiful. It is leprous, it must go. If that be true of a building, it is much more true of the men who have caused the pollution.

One thing more. I would not have said all I have said if I had not something else to say. When He looks, He pities and He provides a way of escape, even from the pre-determined judgments. That was the goal of all His journeyings and that the explanation of the pathway of His choice, the pathway that led Him ultimately to Calvary. When there was no eye to pity, He pitied. When there was no arm to save, He saved. So mighty was His pity and so profound His compassion that when He had to curse the city, he wept over it. Robert William Dale once said that Dwight Lyman Moody was the one and only man he knew who had any right to preach about hell. When asked what he meant, he said: "Moody never talks of hell except with tears in his voice." Jesus never talked of destruction except with tears in His voice. O man, under the destructive judgment of God because of thy pollution, remember there is pity in His heart, and if thou wilt but avail thyself of His provision, He will deliver thee even from that pre-determined judgment. He looked upon all things with love-lit eyes, eyes illumined, irradiated, by the infinite compassion of His heart.

I will end our meditation by grouping one or two Scriptures together. "… He looked round about upon all things. …" Then in the last picture of Him in the New Testament, I find this sentence: "… His eyes were as a flame of fire." In a letter written by one of His apostles, I find these words: "Each man's work … is revealed in fire; and the fire itself shall prove each man's work, of what sort it is." Then I read again, with new understanding: "… Who among us can dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings?"

Then I come back from the apocalyptic word, the apostolic declaration, and the prophetic inquiry, and standing again in the presence of the One Who looks I hear Him saying: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Then I feel as though I must go, and I hear Him say one other word: "… him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out." Under the scrutiny of those eyes of fire may we hear the sweetness of that voice of love.