**THE EXPOSITION OF HOLY SCRIPTURE BY ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

**ACTS-080. THE BLESSEDNESS OF GIVING by ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

*"... It is more blessed to give than to receive."*

*Acts 20:35*

How many other things Jesus did and said which are not written in this book! Here is one precious unrecorded word, which was floating down to the ocean of oblivion when Paul drew it to shore and so enriched the world. There is, however, a saying recorded, which is essentially parallel in content though differing in garb, The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister. It is tempting to think that the text gives a glimpse into the deep fountains of the pure blessedness of Jesus Himself, and was a transcript of His own human experience. It helps us to understand how the Man of Sorrows could give as a legacy to His followers My joy, and could speak of it as abiding and full.

**I. The reasons on which this saying rests.**

It is based not only on the fact that the act of giving has in it a sense of power and of superiority, and that the act of receiving may have a painful consciousness of obligation, though a cynic might endorse it on that ground, but on a truth far deeper than these, that there is a pure and godlike joy in making others blessed.

The foundation on which the axiom rests is that giving is the result of love and self-sacrifice. Whenever they are not found, the giving is not the giving which blesses him that gives. If you give with some arriere pensee of what you will get by it, or for the sake of putting some one under obligation, or indifferently as a matter of compulsion or routine, if with your alms there be contempt to which pity is ever near akin, then these are not examples of the giving on which Christ pronounced His benediction. But where the heart is full of deep, real love, and where that love expresses itself by a cheerful act of self-sacrifice, then there is felt a glow of calm blessedness far above the base and greedy joys of self-centred souls who delight only in keeping their possessions, or in using them for themselves. It comes not merely from contemplating the relief or happiness in others of which our gifts may have been the source, but from the working in our own hearts of these two godlike emotions. To be delivered from making myself my great object, and to be delivered from the undue value set upon having and keeping our possessions, are the twin factors of true blessedness. It is heaven on earth to love and to give oneself away.

Then again, the highest joy and noblest use of all our possessions is found in imparting them.

True as to this world's goods. The old epitaph is profoundly true, which puts into the dead lips the declaration: What I kept I lost. What I gave I kept. Better to learn that and act on it while living!

True as to truth, and knowledge.

True as to the Gospel of the grace of God.

**II. The great example in God of the blessedness of giving.**

God gives--gives only--gives always--and He in giving has joy, blessedness. He would not be the ever-blessed God unless He were the giving God. Creation we are perhaps scarcely warranted in affirming to be a necessity to the divine nature, and we run on perilous heights of speculation when we speak of it as contributing to His blessedness; but this at least we may say, that He, in the deep words of the Psalmist, delights in mercy. Before creation was realised in time, the divine Idea of it was eternal, inseparable from His being, and therefore from everlasting He rejoiced in the habitable parts of the earth, and His delights were with the sons of men.

**III. The light and glory thus thrown on His relation to us.**

He gives. He does not exact until He has given. He gives what He requires. The requirement is made in love and is itself a grace given, for it permits to God's creatures, in their relation to Him, some feeble portion and shadow of the blessedness which He possesses, by permitting them to bring offerings to His throne, and so to have the joy of giving to Him what He has given to them. All things come of Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee. Then how this thought puts an end to all manner of slavish notions about God's commands and demands, and about worship, and about merits, or winning heaven by our own works.

Notice that the same emotions which we have found to make the blessedness of giving are those which come into play in the act of receiving spiritual blessings. We receive the Gospel by faith, which assuredly has in it love and self-sacrifice.

Having thus the great Example of all giving in heaven, and the shadow and reflex of that example in our relations to Him on earth, we are thereby fitted for the exemplification of it in our relation to men. To give, not to get, is to be our work, to love, to sacrifice ourselves.

This axiom should regulate Christians' relation to the world, and to each other, in every way. It should shape the Christian use of money. It should shape our use of all which we have.