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

**LUKE-033**. **CHRIST TO JAIRUS by ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

*"When Jesus heard it, He answered, saying, Fear not: believe only, and she shall be made whole."*

*Luke 8:60*

The calm leisureliness of conscious power shines out very brilliantly from this story of the raising of Jairus's daughter. The father had come to Jesus, in an agony of impatience, and besought Him to heal his child, who lay at the point of death. Not a moment was to be lost. Our Lord sets out with him, but on the road pauses to attend to another sufferer, the woman who laid her wasted finger on the hem of Christ's robe. How Jairus must have chafed at the delay, and thought every moment an eternity; and perhaps said hard things In his heart about Christ's apparent indifference! Delay seemed to be fatal, for before Christ had finished speaking to the woman, the messenger comes with a word which appears to me to have in it a touch of bitterness and of blame. Trouble not the Mastersounds as if the speaker hinted that the Master was thinking it a trouble, and had not put Himself much about to meet the necessity. But one's gain shall not be another's loss, and Christ does not let any applicant to Him suffer whilst He attends to any other. Each has an equal claim on His heart. So He turns to the father with the words that I have read for my text.

They are the first of three sayings of our Lord round which this whole narrative is remarkably grouped. I have read the first, but I mean to speak about all three. There is a word of encouragement which sustains a feeble faith: there is a word of revelation which smooths the grimness of death; She is not dead but sleepeth; and there is a word of power which goes into the darkness, and brings back the child; Maiden, arise!Now, I think if we take these three, we get the significance of this whole incident.

**I. First, then, the word of cheer which sustains a staggering faith.**

When Jesus heard this, He said unto him, Fear not, believe only, and she shall be made whole. How preposterous this rekindling of hope must have seemed to Jairus when the storm had blown out the last flickering spark! How irrelevant, if it were not cruel, the Fear not!must have sounded when the last possible blow had fallen. And yet, because of the word in the middle, embedded between the obligation to hope and the prohibition to fear, neither the one nor the other is preposterous, Only believe. That is in the centre; and on the one side, Fear not!--a command ridiculous without it; and on the other side, Hope!an injunction impossible apart from faith.

Jesus Christ is saying the very same things to us. His fundamental commandment is Only believe, and there effloresce from it the two things, courage that never trembles, and hope that never despairs. Only believe--usually He made the outflow of His miraculous power contingent upon the faith, either of the sufferer himself or of some others. There was no necessity for the connection. We have instances in His life of miracles wrought without faith, without asking, simply at the bidding of His own irrepressible pity. But the rule in regard to His miracles is that faith was the condition that drew out the miraculous energy. The connection between our faith and our experience of His supernatural, sustaining, cleansing, gladdening, enlightening power is closer than that. For without our trust in Him, He can do no mighty works upon us, and there must be confidence, on our part, before there is in our experience the reception into our lives of His highest blessings; just because they are greater and deeper, and belong to a more inward sphere than these outward and inferior miracles of bodily healing. Therefore the connection between our faith and His gifts to us is inevitable, and constant, and the commandment Only believe, assumes a more imperative stringency, in regard to our spiritual experience, than it ever did in regard to those who felt the power of His miracle-working hand. So it stands for us, as the one central appeal and exhortation which Christ, by His life, by the record of His love, by His Cross and Passion, by His dealings and pleadings with us through His Spirit, and His providence to-day, is making to us all. Only believe--the one act that vitally knits the soul to Christ, and makes it capable of receiving unto itself the fullness of His loftiest blessings.

But we must note the two clauses which stand on either side of this central commandment. They deal with two issues of faith. One forbids fear, the other gives fuel for the fire of hope. On the one hand, the exhortation, Fear not, which is the most futile that can be spoken if the speaker does not touch the cause of the fear, comes from His lips with a gracious power. Faith is the one counterpoise of fear. There is none other for the deepest dreads that lie cold and paralysing, though often dormant, in every human spirit; and that ought to lie there. If a man has not faith in God, in Christ, he ought to have fear. For there rise before him, solitary, helpless, inextricably caught into the meshes of this mysterious and awful system of things--a whole host of possible, or probable, or certain calamities, and what is he to do? stand there in the open, with the pelting of the pitiless storm coming down upon him? The man is an idiot if he is not afraid. And what is to calm those rational fears, the fear of wrath, of life, of death, of what lies beyond death? You cannot whistle them away. You cannot ignore them always. You cannot grapple with them in your own strength. Only believe, says the Comforter and the Courage-bringer. The attitude of trust banishes dread, and nothing else will effectually and reasonably do it. I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear. Him who can slay and who judges. You have, and you cannot break, a connection with God. He ought to be one of two things--your ghastliest dread or your absolute trust. Only believe then, fear not. Believe not, then be afraid; for you have reason to be.

Men say, Oh! keep your courage up; and they contribute no means to keep it up: Christ says Fear not; only believe, and gives to faith the courage which He enjoins. Like a child that never dreams of any mischief being able to reach it when the mother's breast is beneath its head, and the mother's arms are round its little body, each of us may rest on Christ's breast, and feel His arm round about us. Then we may smile at all that men call evils; and whether they are possible, or probable, or certain, we can look at them all and say, Ah! I have circumvented you. All things work together for good to them thattrust Christ. Fear not; only believe.

But on the other hand, from that simple faith will spring up also hope that cannot despair. She shall be made whole. Irreversible disasters have no place in Christian experience. There are no irrevocable losses to him who trusts. There are no wounds that cannot be stanched, when we go to Him who has the balm and the bandage. Although it is true that dead faces do not smile again upon us until we get beyond earth's darkness, it is also true that bonds broken may be knit in a finer fashion, if faith instead of sense weaves them together; and that in the great future we shall find that the true healing of those that went before was not by deliverance from, but by passing through, the death that emancipates from the long disease of earthly life.

Brethren! if we trust Christ we may hope perfectly. If we do not trust Him our firmest hopes are as spiderswebs that are swept away by a besom; and our deepest desires remain unfulfilled. Only believe, then, on the one side, Fear not, and on the other side Hope ever.

**II. We have here a word of revelation which softens the grimness of death.**

Our Lord reaches the house of affliction, and finds it a house of hubbub and noise. The hired mourners, with their shrill shrieks, were there already, bewailing the child. The tumult jarred upon His calmness, and He says Weep not; she is not dead but sleepeth. One wonders how some people have read those words as if they declared that the apparent physical death was only a swoon or a faint, or some kind of coma, and that so there was no miracle at all in the case. They laughed Him to scorn; knowing that she was dead. You can measure the hollowness of their grief by its change into scornful laughter when a promise of consolation began to open before them. And you can measure their worth as witnesses to the child's resurrection by their absolute certainty of her death.

But notice that our Lord never forbids weeping unless He takes away its cause. Weep not, is another of the futile forms of words with which men try to encourage and comfort one another. There is nothing more cruel than to forbid tears to the sad heart. Jesus Christ never did that except when He was able to bring that which took away occasion for weeping. He lets grief have its way. He means us to run rivers of waters down our cheeks when He sends us sorrows. We shall never get the blessing of these till we have felt the bitterness of them. We shall never profit by them if we stoically choke back the manifestations of our grief, and think that it is submissive to be dumb. Let sorrow have way. Tears purge the heart from which their streams come. But Jesus Christ says to us all, Weep not, because He comes to us all with that which, if I may so say, puts a rainbow into the tear-drops, and makes it possible that the great paradox should be fulfilled in our hearts, As sorrowful yet always rejoicing. Weep not; or if you weep, let the tears have thankfulness as well as grief in them. It is a difficult commandment, but it is possible when His lips tell us not to weep, and we have obeyed the central exhortation, Only believe.

Note, further, in this second of our Lord's words, how He smooths away the grimness of death. I do not claim for Him anything like a monopoly of that most obvious and natural symbolism which regards death as a sleep. It must have occurred to all who ever looked upon a corpse. But I do claim that when He used the metaphor, and by His use of it modified the whole conception of death in the thoughts of His disciples, He put altogether different ideas into it from that which it contained on the lips of others. He meant to suggest the idea of repose--

Sleep, full of rest from head to foot.

The calm immobility of the body so lately racked with pain, or restless in feverish tossings, is but a symbol of the deeper stillness of truer repose which remaineth for the people of God and laps the blessed spirits who sleep in Jesus. He meant to suggest the idea of separation from this material world. He did not mean to suggest the idea of unconsciousness. A man is not unconscious when he is asleep, as dreams testify. He meant, above all, if sleep, then waking.

So the grim fact is smoothed down, not by blinking any of its aspects, but by looking deeper into them. They who, only believing, have lived a life of courage and of hope, and have fronted sorrows, and felt the benediction of tears, pass into the great darkness, and know that they there are rocked to sleep on a loving breast, and, sleeping in Jesus, shall wake with the earliest morning light.

This is a revelation for all His servants. And how deeply these words, and others like them which He spake at the grave of Lazarus and at other times, were dinted into the consciousness of the Christian Church, is manifested by the fact, not only that they are recurrently used by Apostles in their Epistles, but that all through the New Testament you scarcely ever find the physical fact of dissolution designated by the name death, but all sorts of gracious paraphrases, which bring out the attractive and blessed aspects of the thing, are substituted. It is a sleep; it is a putting off the tabernacle; it is a departure; it is a pulling up of the tent-pegs, and a change of place. We do not need the ugly word, and we do not need to dread the thing that men call by it. The Christian idea of death is not the separation of self from its house, of the soul from the body, but the separation of self from God, who is the life.

**III. So, lastly, the life-giving word of power.**

Maiden, arise!All the circumstances of the miracle are marked by the most lovely consideration, on Christ's part, of the timidity of the little girl of twelve years of age. It is because of that that He seeks to raise her in privacy, whereas the son of the widow of Nain and Lazarus were raised amidst a crowd. It is because of that that He selects as His companions in the room only the three chief Apostles as witnesses, and the father and mother of the child. It is because of that that He puts forth His hand and grasps hers, in order that the child's eyes when they open should see only the loving faces of parents, and the not less loving face of the Master; and that her hand, when it began to move again, should clasp, first, His own tender hand. It is for the same reason that the remarkable appendix to the miracle is given--He commanded that they should give her food. Surely that is an inimitable note of truth. No legend-manufacturer would have dared to drop down to such a homely word as that, after such a word as Maiden, arise!An economy of miraculous power is shown here, such as was shown when, after Lazarus came forth, other hands had to untie the grave-clothes which tripped him as he stumbled along. Christ will do by miracle what is needful and not one hairs-breadth more. In His calm majesty He bethinks Himself of the hungry child, and entrusts to others the task of giving her food. That homely touch is, to me, indicative of the simple veracity of the historian.

But the life-giving word itself; what can we say about it? Only this one thing: here Jesus Christ exercises a manifest divine prerogative. It was no more the syllables that He spoke than it was the touch of His hand that raised the child. What was it? The forth-putting of His will, which went away straight into the darkness; and if the disembodied spirit was in a locality, went straight there; and somehow or other, laid hold of the spirit, and somehow or other, reinstated it in its home. Christ's will, like the king's writ, runs through all the universe. He spake, and it was done;--whose prerogative is that? God's; and God manifest in the flesh exercised it. The words of the Incarnate Word have power over physical things.

Here, too, are the prelude and first-fruits of our resurrection. Not that there are not wide differences between the raising of this child, and that future resurrection to which Christian hope looks forward, but that in this one little incident, little, compared with the majestic scale of the latter, there come out these two things--the demonstration that conscious life runs on, irrespective of the accident of its being united with or separated from a bodily organisation; and the other, that Jesus Christ has power over men's spirits, and can fit them at His will to bodies appropriate to their condition. Time is no element in the case. What befalls the particles of the human frame is no element in the case. Thou sowest not the body that shall be. But if that Lord had the power which He showed in that one chamber, with that one child, then, as a little window may show us great matters, so we see through this single incident the time when they that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth.

Brethren! there is a higher lesson still; He that gives and gives again, physical life, does so as a symbol of the highest gift which He can bestow upon us all. If we only believe, then, you hath He quickened which were dead in trespasses and sins ... and for His great love wherewith He loved us.... He hath raised us up together, and made us sit together, in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.