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

**MARK-059**. **GOD'S LAST ARROW by ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

*"Having yet therefore one son, his well-beloved, he sent him also last unto them."*

*Mark 12:6*

Reference to Isaiah 5. There are differences in detail here which need not trouble us.

Isaiah's parable is a review of the theocratic history of Israel, and clearly the messengers are the prophets; here Christ speaks of Himself and His own mission to Israel, and goes on to tell of His death as already accomplished.

**I. The Son who follows and surpasses the servants.**

Our Lord here places Himself in the line of the prophets as coming for a similar purpose. The mission to Israel was the same. The mission of His life was the same.

The last words of the lawgiver certainly point to a person (Deut. 18:18): A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you like unto me. Him shall ye hear. How ridiculous the cool superciliousness with which modern historical criticism pooh-poohsthat interpretation! But the contrast is quite as prominent as the resemblance. This saying is one which occurs in all the Synoptics, and is as full a declaration of Sonship as any in John's Gospel. It reposes on the scene at the baptism (Matt. 3.): This is My beloved Son! Such a saying was well enough understood by the Jews to mean more than the Messiah. It clearly involves kindred to the divine in a far other and higher sense than any prophet ever had it. It involves pre-existence. It asserts that He was the special object of the divine love, the heir.

You cannot relieve the New Testament Christ of the responsibility of having made such assertions. There they are! He did deliberately declare that He was, in a unique sense, the Sonon whom the love and complacency of the Father rested continually.

**II. The aggravation of men's sins as tending to the enhancement of the divine efforts.**

The terrible Nemesis of evil is that it ever tends to reproduce itself in aggravated forms. Think of the influence of habit; the searing of conscience, so that we become able to do things that we would have shrunk from at an earlier stage. Remember how impunity leads to greater sin. So here the first servant is merely sent away empty, the second is wounded and disgraced, the third is killed. All evil is an inclined plane, a steady, downward progress. How beautifully the opposite principle of the divine love and patience is represented as striving with the increasing hate and resistance! According to Matthew, the householder sent other servants more than the first, and the climax was that he sent his son. Mightier forces are brought to bear. This attraction increases as the square of the distance. The blacker the cloud, the brighter the sun; the thicker the ice, the hotter the flame; the harder the soil, the stronger the ploughshare. Note, too, the undertone of sacrifice and of yearning for the son which may be discerned in the householder'swords. The son is his dearest treasure, his mightiest gift, than which is nothing higher.

The mission of Christ is the ultimate appeal of God to men.

In the primary sense of the parable Jesus does close the history of the divine strivings with Israel. After Christ, the last of the prophets, the divine voice ceases; after the blaze of that light all is dark. There is nothing more remarkable in the whole history of the world than that cessation in an instant, as it were, of the long, august series of divine efforts for Israel. Henceforward there is an awful silence. Forsaken Israel wanders lone.

And the principle involved for us is the same.

* Christ crucifiedis more than Christ miracle-working. That morewe have, as the Jews had. But if that avails not, then nothing else will.
* He is last because highest, strongest, and all-sufficient.
* He is last inasmuch as all since are but echoes of His voice and proclaimers of His grace.
* He is lastas the eternal and the permanent, the same for ever(Heb. 13:8). There are to be no new powers for the world; no new forces to draw men to God. God's quiver is empty, His last bolt shot, His most tender appeal made.

**III. The unwearied divine charity.**

They will reverence My Son. May we not say this is a divine hope? It is not worth while to make a difficulty of the bold representation. It is but parallel to all the dealings of God with men; and it sets forth the possibility that He might have won Israel back to God and to obedience. It suggests the good faith and the earnestness with which God sent Him, and He came, to bring Israel back to God. But we are not to suppose that this divine hope excluded the divine purpose of His death or was inconsistent with that, for He goes on to speak of His death as if it were past (verse 8). This shows how distinctly He foreknew it.

Its highest aspect is not here, for it was not needed for the parable. With wicked hands ye have crucified, etc., is true, as well as I lay it down of Myself.

Let us lay to heart the solemn love which warns by prophesying, tells what men are going to do in order that they may not do it (and what He will do in order that He may not have to do it). And let us yield ourselves to the power of Christ's death as God's magnet for drawing us all back to Him; and as certain to bring about at last the satisfaction of the Father's long-frustrated hope: They will reverence my Son, and the fulfilment of the Son's long-unaccomplished prediction: I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me.