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

**MARK-064**. **A SECRET RENDEZVOUS by ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

*"12.* *And the first day of unleavened bread, when they killed the passover, His disciples said unto Him, Where wilt Thou that we go and prepare that Thou mayest eat the passover? 13. And He sendeth forth two of His disciples, and saith unto them, Go ye into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water: follow him. 14. And wheresoever he shall go in, say ye to the goodman of the house, The Master saith, Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the passover with My disciples? 15. And he will show you a large upper room furnished and prepared: there make ready for us. 16. And His disciples went forth, and came into the city, and found as He had said unto them: and they made ready the passover."*

*Mark 14:12-16*

This is one of the obscurer and less noticed incidents, but perhaps it contains more valuable teaching than appears at first sight.

The first question is--Miracle or Plan? Does the incident mean supernatural knowledge or a preconcerted token, like the provision of the ass at the entry into Jerusalem? I think that there is nothing decisive either way in the narrative. Perhaps the balance of probability lies in favour of the latter theory. A difficulty in its way is that no communication seems to pass between the two disciples and the man by which he could know them to be the persons whom he was to precede to the house. There are advantages in either theory which the other loses; but, on the whole, I incline to believe in a preconcerted signal. If we lose the supernatural, we gain a suggestion of prudence and human adaptation of means to ends which makes the story even more startlingly real to us.

But whichever theory we adopt, the main points and lessons of the narrative remain the same.

**I. The remarkable thing in the story is the picture it gives us of Christ as elaborately adopting precautions to conceal the place.**

They are at Bethany. The disciples ask where the passover is to be eaten. The easy answer would have been to tell the name of the man and his house. That is not given. The deliberate round-aboutness of the answer remains the same whether miracle or plan. The two go away, and the others know nothing of the place. Probably the messengers did not come back, but in the evening Jesus and the ten go straight to the house which only He knew.

All this secrecy is in strong contrast with His usual frank and open appearances.

What is the reason? To baffle the traitor by preventing him from acquiring previous knowledge of the place. He was watching for some quiet hour in Jerusalem to take Jesus. So Christ does not eat the passover at the house of any well-known disciple who had a house in Jerusalem, but goes to some man unknown to the Apostolic circle, and takes steps to prevent the place being known beforehand.

All this looks like the ordinary precautions which a man who knew of the plots against him would take, and might mean simply a wish to save his life. But is that the whole explanation? Why did He wish to baffle the traitor?

**(a)** Because of His desire to eat the passover with the disciples. His loving sympathy.

**(b)** Because of His desire to found the new rite of His kingdom.

**(c)** Because of His desire to bring His death into immediate connection with the Paschal sacrifice. There was no reason of a selfish kind, no shrinking from death itself.

The fact that such precautions only meet us here, and that they stand in strongest contrast with the rest of His conduct, emphasises the purely voluntary nature of His death: how He chose to be betrayed, taken, and to die. They suggest the same thought as do the staggering back of His would-be captors in Gethsemane, at His majestic word, I am He... . Let these go their way. The narrative sets Him forth as the Lord of all circumstances, as free, and arranging all events.

Judas, the priests, Pilate, the soldiers, were swept by a power which they did not know to deeds which they did not understand. The Lord of all gives Himself up in royal freedom to the death to which nothing dragged Him but His own love.

Such seem to be the lessons of this narrative in so far as it bears on our Lord's own thoughts and feelings.

**II. We note also the authoritative claim which He makes.**

One reading is my guest-chamber, and that makes His claim even more emphatic; but apart from that, the language is strong in its expression of a right to this unknown man's upper room. Mark the singular blending here, as in all His earthly life, of poverty and dignity--the lowliness of being obliged to a man for a room; the royal style, The Master saith.

So even now there is the blending of the wonderful fact that He puts Himself in the position of needing anything from us, with the absolute authority which He claims over us and ours.

**III. The answer and blessedness of the unknown disciple.**

**(a)** Jesus knows disciples whom the other disciples know not.

This man was one of the of secretdisciples. There is no excuse for shrinking from confession of His name; but it is blessed to believe that His eye sees many a hidden one. He recognises their faith, and gives them work to do. Add the striking thought that though this man's name is unrecorded by the Evangelist, it is known to Christ, was written in His heart, and, to use the prophetic image, was graven on the palms of His hands.

**(b)** The true blessedness is to be ready for whatever calls He may make on us. These may sometimes be sudden and unlooked for. But the preparation for obeying the most sudden or exacting summons of His is to have our hearts in fellowship with Him.

**(c)** The blessedness of His coming into our hearts, and accepting our service.

How honoured that man felt then! how much more so as years went on! how most of all now!

Our greatest blessedness that He does come into the narrow room of our hearts: If any man open the door, I will sup with him.