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

**MATTHEW-072**. **CHRIST'S STRANGE THANKSGIVING by ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

*"I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes."*

*Matthew 11:25*

When Jesus was about to cure one dumb man, He lifted up His eyes to heaven and sighed. Sorrow filled His soul in the act of working deliverance. The thought of the depth of the miseries He had come to heal, and of the ocean of them which He was then diminishing but by one poor drop, saddened Him. When Jesus thought of the woes that had fallen on the impenitent Sodom, and of the worse that still remained to be revealed at the day of judgment, He rejoiced in spirit. Strange! and yet all in harmony with His depth of love. This once, and this once only, do we read that His heart filled with joy. Did He lift up His solemn thanksgiving to God, for the woes that had fallen on Chorazin? Oh no! For the blinding of the wise and prudent? Oh no! For the revelation to babes? Yes, and not only for that, but for that full and universal offer and possibility of salvation, which forms the reason for both the revelation to babes and the hiding from the wise. If we attend to the connection of this passage we get light on its force. It begins with a clear prophecy of endless woe and sorrow upon the rejecters. Then comes my text, alleviating the terror of that thought of destruction by showing the principles on which the reception and rejection are especially based, the sort of people who receive and who reject. Then follows the reason why the wise are shut out and the babes let in. That reason is not only God's inscrutable decree, but something in the very nature of the Gospel. God is hidden from all human sight. There is one divine Revealer apart from whom all is darkness. Neither doth any man know the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him. That is the characteristic which shuts out the wise and lets in the simple.

Then follows the great call to all to come to Him. The practical issue of all these solemn thoughts is that the Gospel is a Gospel for all the world, and that the one qualification for coming within the terms of its offer is to be weary and heavy laden. Thus all ends in the broad universality of the message, in its adaptation to all, in its offer to all; and thus it is shown that every apparent exclusion of any is but the result of its free offer to all, and that to say Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudentis but to say, Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters. Well then might joy fill the heart of the Man of Sorrows. Well might He lift up His solemn thanksgiving to God and say, I thank Thee, Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth.

Consider--

**I. The Great Characteristics of the Gospel.**

We shall only understand the ground of the revealing and of the hiding if we understand what it is which is offered. It is of such a nature as necessarily to involve a twofold effect, caused by a twofold attitude towards it.

**(a)** The Gospel addresses itself to all men--man as man--not to what is sectional or accidental, not to classes, not to schools, not to the é¬©te. It is broad and universal. It speaks no dialect of a province, but the universal language. It is addressed to Man as Man. We have all of us one human heart. It appeals to the noble and the peasant, to the beggar on the dunghill and to the prince on his throne, in precisely the same fashion. It is equal as the providence of God, impartial as the light, universal as the air which reddens equally the blood that flows in long-descended veins and that of the foundling on the streets. In its sublime universality there are no distinctions. Death and the Gospel know no ranks. In both, the rich and the poor meet together, the Lord is the Maker of them all. In Christ Jesus there is neither circumcision nor uncircumcision. The blue sky which bends above all alike is like that great word.

**(b)** It treats all as utterly helpless.

**(c)** It offers to all Redemption as their most pressing want. Consequently, in substance it is the gift not of culture, but deliverance, and in form it is not a theory but a fact, not a system of credenda but an action, not an -ology but a power.

**(d)** It demands from all submission and trust.

These being the characteristics, consider--

**II. The qualifications for reception as necessarily resulting from the characteristics.**

The persons who receive must be those who consent to take the station which the Gospel assigns. They must be babes, by which is meant not such as are innocent, but such as are reliant on a higher Power, self-distrustful, willing to obey.

These qualifications are all moral. The organ for reception of the Gospel is the heart, not the head. To receive it by faith is a spiritual, not an intellectual process. Ignorance is no qualification nor no disqualification. Ignorance or knowledge is immaterial. The one condition is to be willing to accept.

**III. The disqualification of the wise as necessarily resulting from the qualification.**

The organ for the reception is not the head but the heart. Therefore, wisdom is a barrier only in this way, that it has nothing to do in the matter. Its presence or its absence is quite indifferent here as in many other spheres of experience. The joys of the affections, the joys of common emotions, the joys of bodily life--all these are utterly independent of the culture of the understanding.

Hence wisdombecomes a barrier, because its possessors are accustomed to think it the master key. Not intellect, but the pride of intellect, trusting in it, glorying in wisdom is the disqualification.

It is not true that there is any discord between religion and cultivated thought. The loftier the soul, the loftier all its attributes, the nobler should be, may be, its religion. It is not true that there is any natural affinity between ignorance and religion, between narrow understandings and deep faith. That is not the Bible truth. The religion of Christ is not like owls that love the twilight, but like eagles that purge their sight at the very fountain itself of heavenly radiance.

Take history: the great names--an Augustine and a Luther, a Dante and a Milton, a Bacon and a Pascal--are enough to show that there is no antagonism. On the other hand, names enough rise to show that there is no alliance. The inference is that the intellect has little to do with a man's attitude towards the Revelation of God in Christ, but that the moral is all.

Let me close with the repetition of the thought that the apparent exclusion is the result of the universality, and that Come unto Meis Christ's commentary on my text. Well then may we rejoice when we think of a gospel for the world. Whatever you are, it is for you if you are a man. However foolish, though you cannot read a letter and know nothing, it is for you. If you be enriched with all knowledge, you must come on the same terms as that beggar at your side. That is a healthy discipline. You are more than a student, than a scholar, than a thinker; you are a man, you are a sinful man. There is a deeper chamber in your heart than any into which knowledge can penetrate. Christ brings a gospel for all. When we think of it, with its sublime disregard of all peculiarities, we may well rejoice with him who said, Ye see your calling, brethren, and with Him, the loftiest, the incarnate, Wisdom who said, I thank Thee, Father. For if you rightly grasp the bearing of this text, and mark what follows it in our Lord's heart and thoughts, you will see these deep eyes of solemn joy turned from the heaven to you, filmy with compassion, and those hands, then lifted in rapt devotion, stretched out to beckon you and all the world to His breast, and hear the voice that rose in that burst of thanksgiving melting into tenderness as it woos you, be you wise or ignorant, to come to Him and rest.