**THINGS THAT MATTER MOST - DEVOTIONAL PAPERS BY JOHN H. JOWETT**

**34. THE COMING OF THE KINGDOM by JOHN H. JOWETT**

I WANT to lead the meditations of my readers to a very familiar supplication in the Lord's Prayer: "Thy will be done." And with what better comment upon the words can I begin than this from John Calvin: "The substance of the prayer is that God would enlighten the world by the light of His Word, would form the hearts of men by the influence of His Spirit, and would restore to order, by the gracious exercise of His power, all the disorder that exists in the world." John Calvin thus brings us to a very definite conception as to what the prayer implies. The Kingdom comes just as God's thought and Spirit become dominant--His grace pervading human affection, His counsel illumining human judgment, His purpose fashioning human desire, His will controlling human movement. The Kingdom comes when His throne is revered, and when "the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne" constrains our wills in glad and spontaneous obedience. The Kingdom comes just as human relationships are shaped and beautified by the character of God, His righteousness expressed in our rectitude, His grace flowering in our graciousness, and His love finding a witness in everything lovely and of good report. The Kingdom comes when the King is honoured and when His statutes become our songs.

We must offer the prayer as seers. Our souls must be possessed by the glorious vision of a world held in the majestic yet gracious sovereignty of God. The beautiful land must be ours in holy vision and dream. Even while we pray, the poet within us must be at work, that mystic architect and builder in the soul who completes his temples and palaces before the first material stone has been laid and before the first sod has been turned. It is characteristic of the poet that he abides in the vision of the finished city while yet there is only a shanty on the ground. He sees the shining minarets and towers while yet lot stands in the first rude clearing of the desert waste. He feels the quiet of the haven while he is in the midst of the stormy seas, and he hears the pipes of peace in the very clash and combat of war. The poet's soul dwells not so much in the temple when it is building as in the temple built. He is the seer, he carries the vision, and he reveals to us the goal of life and love and duty.

Now, the manner of the poet has always been a manner of the true apostles and saints. They have borne in their souls the vision of the finished work. It was even so with the Master Himself. "I beheld Satan as the lightning fall from heaven." It was the vision of a triumph not yet fully accomplished. It was the manner of the Apostle Paul. He looked "not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen." He pressed "toward the mark for the prize of the high calling." It was also the manner of the Apostle John. "I, John, saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God." And yet when he had the vision of the city how little of the city had been built! In place of a spiritual Kingdom he was confronted by mighty Rome, with her diseased pomp, and her festering luxuriousness, and her callous sensationalism, and her brutal pride. Instead of a sovereign Jesus he was face to face with a triumphant Nero! And yet he carried the vision of the finished work, and he saw "a new heaven and a new earth."

And we also are to pray as seers, holding in our souls the vision of the perfected man, the perfected city, the perfected State. And I will give two reasons for this. First, there is always a peril of our forgetting the glory of the goal in the distractions of the immediate tasks. If we lose the vision, we spoil the task. If we lose the vision of the end, the means become enthroned as the end. "Coming to church" becomes the end instead of communion with God. And, secondly, we must pray as seers because of the vast inspiration which is born of the vision of finished achievement. We perhaps more readily see the operation of this principle in the contemplation of finished disaster. If a man keeps his eye steadily fixed on probable defeat he will squander his resources all along the road. To constantly anticipate defeat is to almost make certain of it. The anticipation of triumph is one of the secrets of victory. Now, this is a most important truth in Christian Science. Amid much which is erroneous and perilous and foolish it proclaims a vital truth. Christian Science counsels all its disciples to keep their minds fixed on finished achievement. If they want to possess or to recover health they must contemplate themselves in the possession of health. They must steadily foresee the condition at which they want to arrive. And the principle prevails in the highest sphere. When we pray for the coming of the Kingdom our souls must rest in the vision of a moral and spiritual glory of which that Kingdom consists. We must "see the holy city ... coming down out of heaven from God." We must offer the prayer as seers.

And, secondly, we must offer the prayer as labourers. Perhaps I want a stronger word than that; crusaders might serve the purpose better. The seer mist be a soldier. The vision must get into the mind as thought, it must get into the soul as desire, it must get into the body as the energy of surrendered limbs. We must have vision, but we must not be visionaries; we must be suppliants, but not cloistered and seclusive. We must labour to build the Kingdom for which we pray. This was characteristic of the Apostle John. He was a seer, but he was also a soldier. "I, John, your brother, and companion in tribulation, was in the isle which is called Patmos, for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ." This is surely worth noting. The bright vision came to the captive; the place of travail became the very door of hope. A more radiant apprehension of the heavenly city was the reward of fidelity to truth. John laboured in the building of the city for which he prayed. And may we not reverently say that this was also true of the Master? He carried the holy vision and He laboured for its fulfilment. "My father worketh hitherto, and I work." "I must work the works of Him that sent Me."

And where shall we work for the building of the city? First, in our own calling. We must carry the vision there, and build a bit of the Kingdom in the sphere where we earn our daily bread. We must cherish the very highest ideal of our own vocation. We must set it in the light of the Kingdom. We must array it. in the colours of the Kingdom. We must depict it in the excellences of the Kingdom. And then we must set our idealized employment in its place, in the finished and perfected Kingdom of God. And then, in the second, place, we must hold ourselves sacredly responsible to the highest we have seen, and diligently, and if need be prayerfully, seek to incarnate it in a flesh-and-blood creation. We must hold fast to the ideal, and make it visible in work and in worker, in matter and in manner, and in every ministry of relation between ourselves and our fellow-men. Difficult? Of course it is difficult, but why are we men except to confront the difficult thing, and bend it in obeisance to a pure and sovereign will?

And what we are to do with our own calling we are to do with our wider vocations as corporate members of the city and the State. No one can worthily say "Thy Kingdom come" and give no consecrated strength to the travail that makes the Kingdom come. In every city there are many crooked things needing to be made straight. There are many bitter pools needing to be made sweet. There are many galling yokes waiting to be shared. There are little children needing guidance, there are old people needing heartening, there are captives craving freedom. Is it nothing to you, all ye that do pray, "Thy Kingdom come"? We must come as seers to the need, and give our blood to remove it.

And, lastly, we must offer the prayer as watchmen. We must watch for the coming of the Kingdom, and we must proclaim the breaking day. I think, perhaps, we say too much about the night and too little about the morning; too much about the fastnesses of darkness, or, at any rate, too little about the growing splendours of the day. I sometimes think we could do with a society whose one work should be to watch the dawn and record the signs of advancing day. Its glad and privileged duty would be to watch for signs of the Kingdom, and wherever they were visible to make them known. Its symbol would be the morning star, and its motto, "Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong!" It would be a society of scouts for observing and recording sunbeams, and the members would engirdle the earth in quest of good news. Daily papers would be diligently searched, not for news of strife, but for the great and winsome things which tell that the Lord is marching on. And it is marvellous what we may find in one day's newspaper if we scour it for signs of the Kingdom. And this must be the zealous quest of the suppliants of the Kingdom. We must let people know that the Kingdom is coming, and we must give them the proofs. "O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion, get thee up into the high mountains. O thou that tellest good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up thy voice with strength, lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God."