**THE SILVER LINING - MESSAGES OF HOPE AND CHEER BY JOHN H. JOWETT**

**24. NEW STRENGTH FOR COMMON TASKS by JOHN H. JOWETT**

*"And immediately she arose and ministered unto them."*

*Luke 4:39*

THIS woman used her new strength to return to her old duties. She employed her divinely restored health in homely ministries about the house. The first evidence of her restoration was found in her own home. "Immediately she arose and ministered unto them." She did not even make her way to the synagogue to offer public praise to the Lord. Nor did she retire to her chamber, that she might place upon the altar some secret thanksgiving to the King. She just took up her duties with a new strength, and found her joy in immediate ministration to those who were round about her.

It is beautiful to think that one of those to whom she ministered was the Lord Himself. The Lord of all glory sat down to her table, and the once helpless and fever-stricken woman used her new-found strength in ministering to His needs. The mother went on with her motherly work.

Now this is one of the Lord's miracles, but, like all the Lord's miracles, it is full of parabolic suggestion. We read His miracles amiss unless we regard them as vestures of deeper wonders and profounder truths. And I want now to regard this particular act of healing, and the beautiful ministry that followed, as portraying larger workings in which we may all find a share. Here, then, are some of the teachings which I think may be justly inferred from this beautiful story:--

Health is imparted at the touch of the Lord. Our Lord is the health-centre for the race. "In Him was life." It is not that some life, in certain degree and quality, was found in Him, but that life of every kind finds in Him its source. "With Thee is the fountain of life." We cannot find that anywhere else. We can no more find healthy life apart from the King than we can find heat independent of the sun. "It pleased God that in Him should all fullness dwell." Now this Life-source can communicate its treasures to others, and they are communicated through the ministry of contagion. We come into touch with our Lord, and by the touch the health-force is conveyed. Let us mark the analogies in the material sphere. Here is the leper, bearing his loathsome disease, and banned from the society of his fellows. He draws near to the health-centre. "And Jesus touched him," and by that touch the forces of health routed the regiments of disease, and the leper became clean as a little child.

It was even so with the blind man. "And Jesus anointed his eyes." By that wonderful communion the ministry of the Godhead drove away the impeding scales from the eyes and the man received his sight. It is the same in the incident before us. Here is the woman fever-stricken and helpless. "And Jesus touched her," and before the power of that fellowship the fever left her. Sometimes the initiative appears to be taken by the children of need. Here is a woman bent and broken, threading her way through the dense and indifferent crowd. Now she is borne nearer to the Master, and now carried further away. But at one favourable drift of the crowd she comes near enough to the Lord to stretch out her hand and touch Him. "Who touched Me?" The disciples were amazed at the simplicity of the question, knowing that the multitude was pressing about Him on every side. But Jesus knew that a touch had been given which had tapped the fountain! "Virtue hath gone out of Me!" Through the channels of that communion the woman had received invigoration which enabled her to stand erect and to walk with ease.

Now this contact comprises a twofold approach, the human and the Divine. It implies the grasp of two hands, the Healer and the healed. It necessitates the union of two wills, the man's and his Lord's. Here, again, the material analogies will help our thought. "Lord, if Thou wilt!" There is the projection of the human will, the approach from the side of man. "I will!" And here is the Divine approach, the marvellous condescension of our God. "What wilt thou have Me to do unto thee?" That is the approach of the Lord. "Lord, that I might receive my sight"; that is the approach of the man that is blind. And so, I say, the contact is composed of the unifying of two wills, the will of faith and the will of the redeeming Lord. Our spiritual health begins with the same contact.

"We touch Him in life's throng and press,

And we are whole again."

No matter what our disease may be, and how deep and established it be, through the power of this union it is driven away. "I will restore health unto thee." When we move our will toward the Lord we may have perfect confidence that. He is inclined toward us, and through the mysterious union we become "partakers of the Divine nature."

Health is sustained in the channels of service. When our health has been restored how shall we maintain it? No life can preserve its spiritual health which in any way seeks to be independent of the Lord. Those to whom the Lord imparts, health are still dependent upon the Lord. But the health forces will flow to us from our Lord through the channels of service. That is so, I think, in the glory-land, among those who live in the immediate presence of God. Their holiness is maintained in service. "They serve Him, day and night." It is not all singing and harping in heaven! And I think that even the harping and the singing will be so arranged as to be ministers to communion. You can depend upon it, we shall need one another there, only it will not be a painful need, and everybody will find their delight and health in serving one another. The "spirits of just men made perfect" are kept in their perfection through mutual ministry.

Whether or not this be the principle prevalent in heaven, it is certainly the principle by which health is preserved on earth. "He that would be great among you let him be your minister." And what did Jesus mean by "great"? Certainly He did not suggest the exalted and highly placed. Contacts like these never entered the Master's interpretation of greatness. To be "great" in Jesus' usage of the word is to be morally and spiritually whole. I think, therefore, we may justly transpose His words, and read them in this wise--"He that would be healthy and robust among you let him be your minister." That is how we are to sustain our health; we are to find our strength in service. I think that here we come upon the most conspicuous blot in the character of Christian in the Pilgrim's Progress. Everybody is serving him; he is rarely serving anybody. He is not the happiest man, nor does he walk with perfect assurance and triumph. Melancholy often sits upon his shoulders, and he does not walk like a man in exuberant health. I think it is because he is not commonly found in the paths of service. Now Faithful is a healthier man because a more helpful man. He did not see the hobgoblins, nor hear the shrieking spirits that menaced and shouted in the ears of Christian. He was a healthier man, and these things did not come his way. The healthy life is a life of ministration, and the sooner we take to it the better.

"Immediately she arose and ministered unto them." A man once came into my vestry who had just been won from the world, and regenerated by the grace of Christ. I pointed out to him that he must engage in a little service for the King. "Yes," he said, "but I must just feed for a time!" That is a very commonly accepted way, but it is not the appointed way. We get by giving, we feed by feeding. "I have meat to eat that ye know not of." Where had the Master found that food? He had been feeding the poor, fallen woman at the well, and while He fed her soul His own was restored. "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren," and while thou art strengthening thy brother thine own strength shall be preserved. "She arose and ministered unto them."

Our field of service must first be sought in the need that is most immediate. Peter's wife's mother began with the humdrum work of the home. Now the first temptation in the converted life is to despise the commonplace. The devil may say to you, now that you are re-born, "You must be a missionary," while all the time the Lord is pointing to a bit of needy work at your own feet. The devil gets your mind set upon Africa, and you ignore your own town you look for a big sphere, and you ignore your own house. There is nothing more insidious than the temptation to take our eyes away from the immediate need and to wait for an imaginary one. The woman of my text began her ministry in her own house, and that is where we must begin. Is there nothing to sweeten there, to illumine there, to beautify there? We are for ever "seeking for some great thing to do," and there is a bit of duty lying at our feet which needs to be burnished into acceptable brightness.

How is it in your workshop? Is there a Jesus-finish about your work? Is there a Jesus-fragrance about your relationships with your fellow workers? You say you wish to go to the foreign field suppose your workshop were a bit of India, how are you getting ready for the work? Have you the love-girdle on? Or is the devil saying to you, "You will not want the love-girdle until you are in India"? "Arise and minister." I know a woman who was brought out of darkness into light, and out of bondage into the liberty of the Lord. She lived in one of the poorest courts of our city. And when she was converted she said to herself, "Now I must tidy things up a bit. I must have a Jesus-house, a Martha-and-Mary kind of home. My house must be the tidiest, cleanest, and sweetest house in the court." And such it became. Was not this a bit of real ministry for the King?

We are all so ambitious to be stars. while our Saviour wants us to be street-lamps. And after all, on the muddy, heavy roads at night, and to the trudging, tired wayfarer, the lamp is more useful than the star. "Let your light so shine." We would all like to stand in royal palaces and be cup-bearers to the King, but all the time the King is saying, "Give a cup of cold water in My name!" I am waiting for a great sermon to come my way, and I have waited for years. I want some golden goblet, that I can offer to the critical crowd; and the Lord is quietly saying to me, "Take a plain cup and give My people to drink!" Some of you young men may be trying to write an eloquent sermon, or some convincing essay on Christian evidences; perhaps, after all, you will serve your Lord better if you will just write home to your mother a little more frequently! Oh, if we would only begin with the intermediate task, and beautify the commonplace road, we should preserve our own spiritual health, and we should bring vigour and grace to others.