

THE TRANSFIGURATION.

Luke 9:28-36.

I would not try to explain the mystery of Christ's transfiguration. All we can do is to give the description of that glorious event as seen by eye-witnesses. His garments--and they were coarse and plain--so coarse and hard that the poorest laborer in our day would probably be humiliated to wear them. But in that moment they became white and dazzling as the sun. His face--a face that had often been wet with tears, a face that had known sorrow and was acquainted with grief. A face strong enough to bear the sorrows of the whole world, but not too grave to lighten up at the mirth of a little child. A very human face it was. But in that moment of glory it shined like the sun. If you asked Peter, James, and John to explain this great mystery, to give you a theory that would enable you to understand the phenomenon, of course they could not have done it. All they could do was to tell you what they saw and heard. But its beauty and wonder followed these men to the end of their lives. Men might say that the things they had seen were impossible, that the whole vision was unscientific and impracticable. But such arguments would have made but little impression on their hearts.

But couldn't we say this, in explanation of the mystery. Couldn't we say that here, on this lonely mountain top, far from the strife and discord of human life the two great realms of life met. That here the great realm of the spiritual life met with the physical and the two be-

came blended into one harmonious whole. For a short time here the life of Jesus of Nazareth became so deeply spiritualized that it broke through his mortal and physical garments and dazzled the eyes of men with its beauty.

We know there are two great realms of life, the physical and the spiritual. Some say there are three, the physical, the mental, and the spiritual. The emblem of the Y.M.C.A. is a triangle with these three words on the border, BODY, MIND, SPIRIT. This emblem tells us that this great organization is dedicated to ministering to every realm of human life. But could not what we know as the mental realm of life be a combination of the other two? In the rainbow we see seven beautiful colors. But on a closer analysis of the spectrum we find there are only three. Four of the colors we see with the eye are mere combinations of these three primary colors of light. When we learn more of the science of human life we may find that the mental is only a combination of the physical and spiritual.

But we know there are two great realms of life, the physical and the spiritual. The physical realm of life lies all about us. It beats against our natural senses. Its existence cannot be ignored or denied, except by a system of reasoning that, to most of us, seems fantastical and unreal. Some systems of philosophy like Brahmanism and Christian Science seem to deny the existence of the physical realm of life. But to most of us the physical life is very real. We see it, we feel it, we hear it, we taste it. Its ugliness jars on our senses, its beauty

thrills us with delight. Its discord and clamor beat loudly against our ears, its harmony and rhythm fills our hearts with song. Part of it pleases us, part of it angers us. It gives us pain or it gives us pleasure. But we cannot deny its existence. Whether it gives us pain or pleasure it is very real.

The spiritual realm of life is just as real as the physical. But it is much easier to shut it out. It is just as real to those who have eyes to see and ears to hear as the physical. It beats against our spiritual senses as strongly as the other does our natural ones. It demands a hearing, it thunders a warning in our spiritual ears, it whispers sweet promises to our spiritual senses. But if we choose to do so we can close these senses and go all our life as ignorant of the spiritual life as if it did not exist. How often Jesus bemoaned this deadness of men's spiritual perceptions. He seemed more concerned over the spiritual deadness of men at times than He did over their wickedness. "These men have eyes, but they cannot see, they have ears, but they cannot hear."

It scatters beauty and fragrance all along life's pathway but we know it not. We are like a blind man walking through a beautiful rose garden. We are even more dead to the beauties of the spiritual realm of life than the blind man is to the beauties of the rose garden. The blind man would have his other senses alive. He would catch the fragrance of the roses. He might even form some idea of their matchless beauty by feeling of their velvet petals,

by pressing the tender buds to his cheek and lips. In this way, though denied the joy of sight, he might drink in some of the matchless beauties of the rose garden. But the man with all his spiritual senses dead might march through all the way through the rose garden of spiritual life and never know it was there. He might even deny its existence, when a man at his side, gloriously sensible of its fragrance and beauty, tried to make him see and feel its beauty.

A man who goes through life with his spiritual senses closed is cheating only himself. He may be so blind as to deny all existence of a spiritual realm of life. But he can no more rob others of its joys and beauties than a man with dull ears can rob a great musician of the glorious strains of a great melody. He may ask for material evidence of the spiritual realm of life, but this cannot be given him. All the material evidence of human life that scientists have ever been able to analyze is worth one dollar ninety-eight cents on the market. A big strapping hobo might be worth two twenty-five, but it would strain some of us small fellows to be worth one seventy-five. We can find no material evidence of an immortal soul. Neither can we find any material evidence of thought or memory or love or hate. But we know they are there. The evidence of these hidden mysteries of life cannot be seen, felt, or weighed by any material standards. But they are far mightier forces than any that can.

If we accept nothing but material evidence there is no difference in the life of the laziest hobo and that of

a great statesman. By purely physical standards the life of the laziest hobo in our land might be greater than that of Oliver Cromwell. There is nothing material to account for the amazing intellect of an Edison or an Einstein. What power was it that thrilled men at the voice and magnetic personality of Sam Jones? What force was it that drew the hearts of millions to Will Rogers? It was a force far above the physical realm of life. All the great deeds of men are evidence of a great spiritual realm of life.

No man ever saw as much in men and women as Jesus saw. No man ever had such a conviction of human greatness. He saw more in the poor ragged beggar than we see in lords, princes and kings. He did not deceive Himself or others. He did not pretend that men are better than they are, He made no maudlin excuses for their sins or weaknesses. But possibilities He saw in men and women were truly amazing. It was because He saw so vividly the spiritual realm of life that He saw such boundless possibilities in frail human lives. He saw the hidden powers of human lives, and these are far more powerful than the visible.

But He was no dreamer of fancies. He had no desire to live in a spirit world away from all the infirmities of the physical life. No man ever lived on this earth that made himself any more a part of the common life of men. He did not ignore the ugly facts of physical life. He did not scoff at human pain or suffering, or tell them that a few magic words repeated in a certain vein would make them forget. He did not tell men their hunger was only imagination and

their sufferings a mental delusion. He fed them when they were hungry, He healed them when they sick. And when He could not relieve all their sorrows He wept with them. He was a part of all life around him and never shunned its pain or ugliness.

When the disciples found themselves lifted bodily into the great spiritual realm of life they wanted to stay there forever. This was only human. It was paradise where they were. Down below there was sickness, pain, sorrow, hunger, and death. Down below there was strife and discord, scorn and hate. Why go back to such a place when you could live in an eternal realm of light and love? The fact that Jesus refused their request shows the strongest and noblest heart that ever lived. It took poise, it took courage, it took a love stronger than death to turn His back on that eternal realm of light and come back to comfort poor sorrowing men and women.