

THE PULPIT

A
SUNDAY
SERMON



BY THE REV.
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Subject: The Message of Christ to Capital.

Brooklyn, N. Y.—Speaking at the Irving Square Presbyterian Church on the theme, "The Message of Christ to Capital," the Rev. I. W. Henderson, pastor, took as his text Matthew 7:12, "Therefore, all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." He said:

Labor and capital. The great correlated facts of the economic life of to-day, as throughout all ages they have been, are labor and capital. But though they are correlated, capital is of secondary importance. In a simple society labor is central. In a complex society labor and capital may with reason be allowed to possess an almost equal position of importance in the economic system. But no matter how influential and how powerful capital may become it can never usurp the central, primal, fundamental, ultimate position of labor in the economic affairs of man.

The economic tendency of to-day upon the side of capital is toward centralization, toward combination, toward concentration. With this tendency toward centralization we have the spectacle of immense corporations gifted with a chartered power at the hands of a sovereign people. And these corporations are engaged, many of them, in the exercise of this power in endeavors to control the output of the necessities of life; direct and govern the markets of the world, and dictate prices for the necessities of life without due regard to fairness or to the universal laws, very largely, of supply and demand. There are good and there are evil results to be expected and to be found in the economic trend of our day.

The dangers of this economic tendency so far as capital is concerned are many fold; and the first danger is, that in the centralization of wealth and the increase of capital beyond the bounds of safety, we shall have two different and distinct classes in the social life of our land. The danger is, that, with a society in which there shall be, in effect, but two classes of men, we shall have a return, in an economic way, to the unhealthy conditions of the feudal regime. The danger is that, upon the one hand, we shall have the employer, on the other hand, the employe; on the one hand, the men of money and, on the other, the salaried. The danger is that, on the one hand, we shall have a class of independent wealthy men and, on the other, a mass of dependent retainers; on the one hand, the wealth holders and, on the other, the wage workers.

The second danger is from corporate concentration. By virtue of Governmental enactments a corporation, though composed of personalities, is itself an impersonality before the law. The sense of individual responsibility is lessened and men are released, by the law itself, from that lively sense of personal duty which is incumbent and felt upon the part of the individual man with a personal relation to the law and to trade. Men become the engineers of a huge mechanism. Humanity is lost in the machinery of commercial life.

Another danger of the economic tendency on the part of capital to-day is that, by virtue of its immense powers, it shall grow up as a State within a State. With the numberless and increasing ramifications and alliances of our larger corporations there has grown up an alarming situation. Take, for instance, the most noted corporation in the land. However valuable the public services of this corporation may have been; however important its contributions to society, as a leader in the march of trade, may be admitted to be; however much we may praise it for the many excellencies which it possesses, we cannot escape the fact that it stands to-day, as do many other corporations, as a danger to the public welfare and as a possible enemy to the common weal. The ramifications, the business alliances, the political coalitions of this one corporation are so diverse, so Nation wide, so stupendous as to be almost past belief. All this is wise from the standpoint of a pure commercial life. There is nothing inherently wrong in such a condition of affairs if the correlative power which it brings be exercised with an eye single toward the light of righteousness. But if ever this enormous influence and capacity for good or for ill should become vested in the hands of unscrupulous men the danger to our civil liberty would be very real. If, in the course of time, the power of such corporations should become the property of unjust and ungodly men, whose creed should be selfishness and whose commercial aim should be directed toward the satisfaction of unbridled self-interest, immediate and intense iniquity would, of sequence, result. The danger to these American people lies not in the strength of military force; not in an unselfish imperialism which strives for the amelioration of the peoples of the islands of the sea; but in the unholy use of dishonest power by immoral and conscienceless men of wealth. Then will be realized the prophecy of the State within the State. Then will come the test of capital, made arrogant with wealth, in the lists against the Governmental authority.

It does not necessarily follow, whatever may be our fears, that combination per se is evil. Combination is a natural and a logical result of the conditions under which we live. Anything, whatever its name, which lightens labor, enlarges efficiency, and increases the impetus of commercial life, is of value to humanity at large. Impersonality before the law is not in itself an unmitigated evil if so be the men who manage corporations do not forget humanity and God. Combinations and corporations are beneficial so long as they are good.

It also does not follow, necessarily, that the possession of great wealth is a crime. Wealth is a sin only when it is unrighteously acquired or inhumanly expended and used. The man who becomes rich in righteousness is an honor to the Commonwealth. The man who spends his substance in a decent way with due regard for the public good is a credit to the State. But bad men whose wealth is the result of malicious depredations upon the public, and whose moneys are expended in unclean ways, are public criminals and disgraces to humanity. It also does not follow necessarily that a system of corporate combination destroys individuality. It may destroy to some

extent the money making capacity of the individual; but to destroy a man's ability to exercise his financial instinct is not to destroy the man. Individuality is not a matter so much of money as of mind, heart, and soul. And any system which permits men to enjoy a larger opportunity for the exercise of their intellectual, moral and spiritual capacities, and which enables humanity to realize in a larger fashion the fulness of human personality upon every side, must be valuable to mankind. Righteous combination will afford opportunity for all the faculties. The individualism of to-day is an insult, in the last analysis, to personalities who are made in the image of Almighty God. About all that it emphasizes is our capacity and desire to make money. And however valuable money may be and however much we may all need it, this is the eternal truth of God, that that system which emphasizes this side of man's nature almost to the stultifying of his mental, ethical and spiritual characteristics is a thing of sin.

The message of Christ to capital. And what is this gospel? If I understand the truth of God unto men of wealth as it has been revealed unto us in Jesus Christ our Lord, it is this, that money is a trust; that wealth is a talent; that the possession of extraordinary ability for financial success and commercial leadership is a gift of God compelling inescapable duties upon those so blessed and enforcing tremendous obligations. A man's money is to be used not unto the satisfaction of his selfish desires, but for the good of all. Men are not to be treated as slaves. They are not to be considered as machines. Bearing in mind the admonition of our Lord, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them," our men of financial and commercial prominence should remember that even the humblest man is a personality and not a mechanism; that even a laborer is a child of the living God. If there are any men who should have patience, forbearance, charity, loving kindness, tenderness, compassion with and for the men who toil, they are the men who in the providence of God are supremely endowed with the fulness and the fatness of the good things of life. It is the business, as, under God, it should be the happiness, of our men of means and of commercial prominence to study the comfort, to enhance the joy, to foster the education, to assist the moral and spiritual upliftment of the man who is working for a wage. Their delight it should be, as it is their duty, to lighten labor and to increase wages to the utmost limit that the economic conditions which are existent will allow. They should see that the toiler has free hours, sufficient and often enough not only for rest, but also for honest recreation. Men do not ask for aims, they simply desire a chance and an opportunity to do something more than exist—to live. In the darkest days of African bondage there were no worse, though there were different, conditions, than those which characterize the inhuman white slavery that is a feature of the economic system of to-day. Multitudes of men eke out but a bare and, at best, a miserable existence, as the fruit of honest, laborious and oftentimes dangerous, toil; while those who pay their wages live in splendor, affluence, and, many times, in supercilious and arrogant indifference to the needs of men. The message of Christ to the man of wealth is a call for selfishness, self-sacrifice and honest philanthropy.

The great need of capital to-day is an instillation in its heart of the principles and the personality of the character and the convictions of Jesus Christ. We cannot hope for a sound exercise of commercial authority; we cannot, wisely and sensibly, expect a true development of our commercial life without the presence of His truth as the guiding and controlling factor in the hearts and the minds and the souls of our men of wealth. Filled with the spirit of Christ they will love men; and loving men, we shall have no fear.

A Mistake Frequently Made.

Professor F. Brouardel in an address on the measures adopted by different nations for the prevention of consumption, calls attention to a mistake made in the different countries by ministers who have the charge of the financial department of the State. He says they like to calculate the sum the State gets from the duty on alcohol, but they should deduct from it the cost to the community of the family of the ruined drunkard, his degenerate, infirm, scrofulous and epileptic children, who must have shelter. This invasion of alcoholism ought to be regarded by everyone as a public danger, and this principle, the truth of which is incontestable, should be inculcated into the masses, that the future of the world will be in the hands of the temperate.

The Ever-Present Sanctuary.

Wherever you are, there is the place of prayer. You have to take no pilgrimage to a faraway shrine, neither have you to ask the permission of any priest to enter the sacred precincts. The veil was rent in the hour of our Lord's dying, and you have access through Him, at all times, to the secret place of the Most High. You may come to that mercy seat for confession in the hour of your sin, for worship at all times, and for intercession on every occasion of need.

More Welcome Than Money.

The past is written, the future is beyond our control, but to-day is ours, and is an opportunity to bestow a gift which will be more welcome than any which money can purchase. There should be no guesswork concerning affection; "make it plain," "write it large." Silence is golden when it represses bitter words or ignorant comment, but it sinks like lead into the heart which has a right to expect tender and trustful utterances.—Christian Advocate.

Response to Prayer.

There is no true prayer without some response. Invisible wires from heaven to earth are ever vibrating with divine blessings, and when prayer touches them the electric stream of love enters the soul.—Newman Hall.