

"THE AGONIZED LOOK"

TEXT: And being in agony, he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground.

Luke 22:44

During this season of Lent, we have been reviewing with the eyes of faith the events in the life of Jesus, and have been seeking to apply to our own lives the meaning of our Lord's life and death. In our Wednesday evening meditations, we have centered our attention on the face of Jesus as He traveled the lonely road leading from Galilee to Jerusalem and the cross.....

In my own mind, I have always pictured Jesus as something of an outdoor man - a lover of the fields, the mountains, and the lakeshore. I have often visualized him as a man whose hands and feet were often soiled with dust.....whose hair was washed by the rain and the spray of the sea..... whose face was tanned by the hot Palestinian sun. For most of the adult years of His life He worked in the carpenter's shop in Nazareth. He left Nazareth and walked the valleys and the hills of his native land, bringing health and hope, peace and joy to those whom He changed to meet. There was a tenderness.....

a meekness in his eyes, and in his face, but there was a rugged manliness and a dignity in His whole appearance that won the respect of all who saw him....

I think it would be fair to say that the expression on his face was not always a happy one. Certainly there was no smile on His lips when he brandished the whip in the temple in Jerusalem, and drove out the heathen pack that was defiling His Father's House. Nor was he smiling when he denounced the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, or when he reproved the disciples for their lack of faith, or when he wept at the grave of his friend Lazarus. The face of Jesus often showed feelings of anger, grief, and disappointment.

fleat.....and", he added, "underneath are the everlasting arms." Around us and beneath us are the everlasting arms. This is no guarantee against misfortune. It is rather the confidence that what ever happens, nothing can really harm us. It's not the easy peace of dodging hard decisions, rather it is the contentment of facing everything squarely with God's help.

On the last night of his life under the shadow of the cross, Jesus prayed with such fervor that a look of agony came across his face. Soon this look of agony disappeared, and a look of peace and calmness was seen. It resulted from committing his life entirely to God. We can find that same peace and inward calmness by committing ourselves to the keeping of God.

A loud burst of thunder in the middle of the night awakened a ^{three} little ~~five~~ year old boy from a sound sleep. The lightening and thunder frightened him. His hand shot through the crib and tugged the covers of the bed next to his. A big hand found his tiny trembling fingers and enclosed them within its strong grasp.

"Is that you daddy?" asked the excited little boy. "Yes dear... I'm here." The storm continued....but the little boy went back to sleep assured that all was well so long as his hand rested in his father's. When we face life with the assurance that there is one who meets our outstretched hands, a strange peace and quietness comes into our souls.

LET US PRAY:

Drop thy still dews of quietness,
Till all our strivings cease;
Take from our souls the strain and stress
And let our ordered lives confess
The beauty of Thy peace. Amen.

OUR HEAVENLY FATHER, as we come together in prayer, we ask Thee to fill these moments with new meaning. It is not custom alone that brings us to this sacred place of worship, but our own deep sense of need.....

Forgive us that we worry so often and pray so little.
Forgive us for our lack of faith that ignores Thee
as the WAY, the TRUTH, and the LIFE.

We KNOW deep down in our hearts that without Thy guidance we can do very little.....but with Thee we can do all things.

We KNOW that there is no problem before us that with Thy care and wisdom we cannot handle...

We KNOW of no better way to end the work of another day than by thanking Thee for thy watchful care over us, and rededicating our lives to Thee....

Help us to be gentle....not brusing those we work with.

Help us to be eager to forgive others as we ourselves seek forgiveness.

Help us to know no barriers of race or creed, but give to us a love that sees all men as Thy children...

We do pray this evening for our friends and our loved ones who are sick.....

We pray for those for whom the skies are dark and cloudy....

We pray for those for whom the future is uncertain.....

Be near to us in this time of prayer.....GUIDE US.....USE US.....
and ACT through us, Thou

who art the joy of the hearts that love Thee
the light of the minds that know Thee
the strength of the will that serve Thee.

All this we pray in Thy great name. Amen...

I would draw your attention to the service planned for next Wednesday evening. Mr. Dail will preach on the subject, "The Compassionate Look".

"It is more blessed to give than it is to receive". In this spirit let us worship God with our tithes and offerings.....

One of the most able churchmen ever produced in America was Bishop William Quayle. He was often referred to as the "Skylark of Methodism." The man was eloquent, poetic, and full of good humor. Once he described in a sermon how he faced a problem one night that seemed to difficult to solve. He prayed, but his prayers seemed to get no where. He lay on his bed and tossed, unable to sleep. Then he said that about midnight God spoke to him and said: "NOW WILLIAM YOU GO TO SLEEP AND LET ME SIT UP FOR THE REST OF THE NIGHT". It may be that too many of us are staying up nights worrying rather than letting God carry some of the burden.

It was about a year ago that we read in our newspapers about the terrible Atlantic crossing that the Queen Mary had gone through. The news report told how the passengers were thrown from their beds as the ship rolled and tossed at a forty-eight degree angle. It was estimated that 6000 pieces of crockery were broken in this voyage. After reading this account I was reminded of the fact that even the most violent storms sweeping across the ocean disturb the water only a few hundred feet below the surface. Below the troubled waves, there is peace and calmness. In a similar way, the one who gets beneath the surface of life and lives in the spiritual depths can find the peace of God that passes the understanding of man. Jesus found it that night in the Garden of Gethsemane, and we can find it too.

I would like to tell you a story about a newspaper man whose name was Jack Appleton. He was regarded as a saint by many of his friends. For seventeen years of his life he wrestled with an incurable disease, and for seven years of that time, he lay helpless in bed. His room became a place of encouragement and inspiration, and his poems, with their note of "quiet courage" traveled far. One day Jack was asked the question, "What do you do when you can't touch bottom?" "Then I swim" he replied. "And when you c an't swim?" "Why then I

We need to inquire as to the meaning of this scene of agony? What lies behind this agonized look on the face of Jesus? And is there any meaning in it for us....

We would be within the mark when we say that this experience was perhaps the most terrible one that Jesus ever passed through. He had faced moments of danger before....moments of stress and strain. The struggle of Jesus in Gethsemane was an attempt on his part to harmonize his own personal will with a fate that now seemed to him to be the will of His Heavenly Father. It was to accept a course of events, the purpose of which he couldn't quite understand. It wasn't to avoid the tortures of the cross, but rather to drink the cup of failure which was even more bitter than death. If he did, what would become of that vision of a Kingdom of love and righteousness. What would become of his disciples who had hardly grasped the first principles of the Kingdom. How much easier it would be for him to retreat to Galilee and teach quietly in the small towns of that lovely area. I imagine the desire to flee from this place and from the events which he felt were coming was very intense. This was a moment of agony....a moment of decision.....But soon there came the steady resolute words:

"Nevertheless, not my will, but
thine be done."

The outcome of this struggle was a victory of faith over sight, a surrender of His entire personal interest and the interests of the Kingdom into the Father's keeping. This scene in Gethsemane reveals to us a glimpse of the great trust and faith that Jesus had in God.

There is a meaning in this experience of Jesus for us. It is a great privilege for us to believe in a God like the one that Jesus reveals to us. God brought him through this agonizing experience, and God will bring us through many of life's agonizing experiences if we only give him a chance. Many people have found this to be true.

There came that hour in Gethsemane when the look on his face was one of intense agony. It is that agonized look that we see in the face of Jesus as we meet together this evening.....

I suppose that the picture of the agonized look will always be framed in some mystery. The disciples caught only a vague glimpse of it through their sleepy eyes. The Gospel writers had difficulty expressing in words what was taking place in the mind of Jesus on this occasion. They do not describe it, except to say that he was in an agony so profound that his sweat was crimson with blood. Even though we do not fully understand it, we shall reverently and prayerfully seek to gain a closer look at his face....

We are in a Garden called Gethsemane. It lies on the western slope of a hill known as the Mount of Olives. It is about a half mile east of the wall surrounding the city of Jerusalem. It is a quiet spot to which Jesus frequently came with his disciples for rest and meditation. Spring is in the air. A white moon is silvering the oliveleaves that stir in the gentle midnight breeze. At the entrance to the garden, eight of the disciples are sleeping, totally unaware of the drama that is being enacted within the garden. In a more secluded portion of the olive grove there are three disciples sleeping - James, Peter, and John. Often Jesus had been of great help to these three, and now he calls on them for support:

"MY soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; tarry ye here, and watch with me.."

Still deeper in the garden, we see Jesus....alone. Perhaps only an hour ago he was speaking confidently to his disciples about peace and comfort. Now he seems to be utterly unstrung. Every muscle is tense. Each nerve is throbbing. His veins stand out on his temples. His eyes indicate suffering. His pale cheeks are streaked with sweat. His face has a look of agony.

Hymns:

51

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