

SHORT  
EXPOSITORY READINGS  
ON THE  
GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN.

A SELECTION DESIGNED FOR  
Family Reading, Mothers' Meetings, and District Visi-  
tors.

BY THE  
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IX.

CHRIST AT THE MARRIAGE FEAST.

JOHN 11. 1–11.

*“And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there:*

*“And both Jesus was called, and His disciples, to the marriage.*

*“And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto Him, They have no wine.*

*“Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come.*

*“His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it.*

*“And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece.*

*“Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim.*

*“And He saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it.*

*“When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was: (but the servants which drew the water knew;) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom,*

*“And saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk,*

*then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now.*

*“This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory; and His disciples believed on Him.”*

WE learn, from these verses, how honourable in the sight of Christ is the estate of matrimony. To be present at “a marriage” was almost the first public act of our Lord’s earthly ministry.

Marriage is not a sacrament, as the Church of Rome asserts. It is simply a state of life ordained by God for man’s benefit. But it is a state which ought never to be spoken of with levity, or regarded with disrespect. The Prayer-book service has well described it as “an honourable estate, instituted of God in the time of man’s innocency, and signifying unto us the mystical union that is betwixt Christ and His Church.” Society is never in a healthy condition, and true religion never flourishes in that land where the marriage tie is lightly esteemed. They who lightly esteem it have not the mind of Christ. He who “beautified and adorned the estate of matrimony by His presence and first miracle that He wrought in Cana of Galilee” is One who is always of one mind. “Marriage,” says the Holy Ghost by St. Paul, “is honourable in all.” (Heb. xiii. 4.)

One thing, however, ought not to be forgotten. Marriage is a step which so seriously affects the temporal happiness and spiritual welfare of two immortal souls, that it ought never to be taken in hand “unadvisedly, lightly, wantonly, and without due consideration.” To be truly happy, it should be undertaken “reverently, discreetly, soberly, and in the fear of God.” Christ’s blessing and presence are essential to a happy wedding. The marriage at which there is no place for Christ and His disciples is not one that can justly be expected to prosper.

We learn, secondly, from these verses, that there are times when it is lawful to be merry and rejoice. Our Lord Himself sanctioned a wedding-feast by His own presence. He did not refuse to be a guest at “a marriage in Cana of Galilee.” Here, if anywhere, God’s children have need to be on their guard. Each must know his own strength and natural temperament, and act accordingly. One believer can go without risk where another cannot. Happy is he who can use his Christian liberty without abusing it! It is possible to be sorely wounded in soul at marriage feasts and the tables of friends.

One golden rule on the subject may be laid down, the use of which will save us much trouble. Let us take care that we always go to feasts in the spirit of our Divine Master, and that we never go where He would not have gone. Like Him, let us endeavour to be always “about our Father’s business.” (Luke ii. 49.) Like Him, let us willingly promote joy and gladness, but let us strive that it may be

sinless joy, if not joy in the Lord. Let us endeavour to bring the salt of grace into every company, and to drop the word in season in every ear we address. Much good may be done in society by giving a healthy tone to conversation. Let us never be ashamed to show our colours, and to make men see whose we are and whom we serve. We may well say, "Who is sufficient for these things?" But if Christ went to a marriage feast in Cana there is surely something that Christians can do on similar occasions. Let them only remember that if they go where their Master went, they must go in their Master's spirit.

Happy are those who, like the disciples, believe on Him by whom this miracle was wrought. A greater marriage feast than that of Cana will one day be held, when Christ Himself will be the bridegroom and believers will be the bride. A greater glory will one day be manifested, when Jesus shall take to Himself His great power and reign. Blessed will they be in that day who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb! (Rev. xix. 9.)

X.

CHRIST IN THE TEMPLE.

JOHN II. 12–25.

*“After this He went down to Capernaum, He, and His mother, and His brethren, and His disciples: and they continued there not many days,*

*“And the Jews’ passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem,*

*“And found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting:*

*“And when He had made a scourge of small cords, He drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers’ money, and overthrew the tables;*

*“And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise,*

*“And His disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of Thine house hath eaten Me up.*

*“Then answered the Jews and said unto Him, What sign showest Thou unto us, seeing that Thou doest these things?*

*“Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up,*

*“Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt Thou rear it up in three days?*

*“But He spake of the temple of His body.*

*“When therefore He was risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this unto them; and they believed the Scripture, and the word which Jesus had said.*

*“Now when He was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast day, many believed in His name, when they saw the miracles which He did.*

*“But Jesus did not commit Himself unto them, because He knew all men,*

*“And needed not that any should testify of man; for He knew what was in man.”*

THE second miracle which our Lord is recorded to have wrought demands our attention in these verses. Like the first miracle at Cana, it is eminently typical and significant of things yet to come. To attend a marriage feast and cleanse the temple from profanation were among the first acts of our Lord's ministry at His first coming. To purify the whole visible Church, and hold a marriage supper, will be amongst His first acts, when He comes again.

We see in this passage *how much Christ disapproves all irreverent behaviour in the house of God.*

We are told that He drove out of the temple those whom He found selling oxen and sheep and doves within its walls,—that He poured out the changers' money and overthrew their tables,—and that He said to them that sold doves, “Take these things hence; make not my Father's

house a house of merchandise.” On no occasion in our Lord’s earthly ministry do we find Him acting so energetically and exhibiting such righteous indignation as on the occasion now before us. Nothing seems to have called from Him such a marked display of holy wrath as the gross irreverence which the priests permitted in the temple, notwithstanding all their boasted zeal for God’s law. Twice, it will be remembered, He discovered the same profanation of His Father’s house going on, within three years,—once at the beginning of His ministry and once at the end. Twice we see Him expressing His displeasure in the strongest terms. “The thing is doubled,” in order to impress a lesson more strongly on our minds.

The passage is one that ought to raise deep searchings of heart in many quarters. Are there none who profess and call themselves Christians, behaving every Sunday just as badly as these Jews? Are there none who secretly bring into the house of God their money, their lands, their houses, their cattle, and a whole train of worldly affairs? Are there none who bring their bodies only into the place of worship, and allow their hearts to wander into the ends of the earth? Are there none who are “almost in all evil, in the midst of the congregation”? (Prov. v. 14.) These are serious questions! Multitudes, it may be feared, could not give them a satisfactory answer. Christian churches and chapels, no doubt, are very unlike the Jewish temple. They are not built after a Divine pattern. They have no altars or holy places. Their furniture has no typical meaning. But



they are places where God's Word is read, and where Christ is specially present. The man who professes to worship in them should surely behave with reverence and respect. The man who brings his worldly matters with him when he professes to worship is doing that which is evidently most offensive to Christ. The words which Solomon wrote by the Holy Ghost are applicable to all times: "Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God." (Eccles. v. 1.)