

"Brid Christ Home The Power of God."

Preached Sunday Evening, Feb. 25, 1923.

Did Christ Have The Powers of God ?

Feb. 18, 1925.

"The multitudes were astonished at his teaching : for he taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes." With these striking ^{and} words, the so-called Sermon on the Mount closes, ~~as~~ a sort of editorial comment. ~~on~~

"Not as their Scribes" .

The scribes occupied a place in Jewish Religious life in the time of Jesus, somewhat akin to that a minister or teacher of religion to-day. They expounded the law, the ceremonial of religion. They spoke with authority,-- the authority of official position, the authority of tradition, the authority of the prophets, the authority of the synagogue, the full and complete authority of the established order.

Boldly and fearlessly Jesus set forth the ~~teachings~~ of

his own faith and conviction. "Ye have heard that it hath been by them of old time... But I say unto you." With one sweep he brushes aside the time honored tradition, even the ten commandments, and without apology announces "The Way of Life". Without official backing, in the face of prejudice, with a conviction that must have taken away ~~the breath of~~ the breath of the timorous and astonished hearers, he pushed through their creeds, their conventions, and struck at their very vitals, shoving home his appeal with a skill and authority that meant business. He got their ears, They heard -- and acted. Simon called Peter heard. James heard; John heard; publicans and sinners heard ; the rich young man heard ; the chief priests and the traders in the temple heard, trembled and struck him down in fear. He was speaking with authority, not as the scribes, but with authority.

The authority with which Jesus of Nazareth spoke, and the authority powers with which he acted, were that ~~knowledge~~ and that powers which develop in men who have knowledge of human life, who understand its deeper nature, and who develop out of that knowledge and insight, a conviction and faith in the meaning of life. The people heard him because he understood them,-- the deep nobler impulses and desires of their life. He went straight to the core of life, and men responded. He had moral conviction. He believed that the world is not a mockery, that the world is honest, that God exists; and he staked his whole life on this belief, this faith. This is the ^{source} ~~source~~ of his authority and power.

I He knew man.

Why did he speak of authority? First he was a man of

knowledge,-- knowledge of the world he lived in. He knew his fellowmen. His knowledge was not merely a knowledge of books, and tradition, although he knew those. His knowledge was the knowledge that comes of experience and keen observation . He taught in parables. Why did he teach in parables ? Because the knowledge and wisdom that he sought to teach had come to him in the parables of every day life. He had no secret mysterious sources of truth. He simply kept his eyes open, and his mind alert. He saw the sower in the field. He saw the widow giving here money in the temple . He saw the publican. He saw the pharisee .. He saw the poor, the weak, the halt the blind. He saw the peace makers, and the persecutors ; the Marys and the Marthas ; the children in the market place ; the merchants; the lepers; the outcasts and harlots. His teachings are a

mirror of the life of Palestine in his day. He lived among living men, saw them, knew them. When he taught he was dealing with real men and women-- with all their noble qualities and their sins and limitations as well. He had no delusions. He knew.

To illustrate,- The Story of the Widow's Mite. Jesus and some of his disciples were standing in the court of the temple watching all them that cast their money into the temple treasury, as you and I might stand in the market watching our hurrying fellow humans doing their weekly marketing. Some we know ~~xxxx~~ ~~xxxx~~ and we exchange greetings as we pass. Some we know of. We watch them with a friendly human interest. Men of influence we see. Women gaudily dressed and loud spoken. Others quiet and unobtrusive. Some look care-worn and distressed. Others are gay and laughing.

Such was the human stream that was passing in and out of the temple as Jesus and his disciples stood there watching, while they cast their money into the ~~treasury~~ treasury. Here came the rich and haughty Sadducee ; or perhaps the prosperous merchant, ostentatiously displaying his gift ; or possibly a traveller, lately returned from a foreign country, stopping to greet his friends as he passes. Next comes one learned in the law swinging by among the more humble folk. Thus they pass:-- great and small ; rich and poor; saint and sinner , while Jesus stands hard by, his keen searching eye following the passing show of Palestine.

Suddenly his attention is arrested. Something important has happened,-- something worth calling to the attention of his ~~disciples~~.

disciples. You can almost hear his keen alert voice. "Peter, John, Come here. I want to show you something." Perhaps he wished to impress upon these humble disciples the conviction that even they counted in God's world. "What is it?" you can imagine John asking. Then come the reply born of knowledge of human life.-- "Verily I say unto you, this poor widow cast in ~~now~~ more than all they that cast into the treasury, for they all did cast in of their superfluity; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living."

Knowledge! He saw the real thing that was happening, the parable of life, the incident of consecration, the witness to the Living God. When he spoke, they heard. When he appealed, they answered; because he spoke from a knowledge of the real life they lived, and because he appealed to their deepest and most precious hopes and aspirations.

II A Man of Insight. ~~8~~ 8

Many people have an idea that Jesus was some sort of lovely but utterly impractical dreamer,-- ~~the~~ He might have beautiful ideas, but he would be utterly impossible in the practical affairs of life. But quite the contrary is true. He was a man of exceedingly keen judgement, with a quick and witty mind out of which flashed those ~~like~~ thrusts of wit and satire that sent the heckeling lawyer and the smart pharisees slinking away, smarting with the sting of merited rebuke. Far from being a soft, sentimental and rather womanish person, he was on the contrary markedly powerful in those qualities, that we call, in our current language, red-blooded. He was the match of the keenest men of his time, and he would be the match of the keenest men to-day, ~~but~~ a man of great insight *and capacity.*

But he differed from most men of his time, and from most

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men of t-day in that he used that insight, not for his own gain,
his own profit, his own advancement, ^{but for all men.} He was not an exploiter of
human life, but a teacher. He had set for himself the task, not of
using his power and authority in taking advantage of his fellow
men, but in preaching good tidings to them, in proclaiming
release to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind,
setting at liberty them that are bruised, in proclaiming the
acceptable year of the Lord. With his keen knowledge of men,
and this penetrating insight, he called forth their unused ~~talents~~
talents, their reserve forces, set them to new tasks, new life,
new purpose, new efforts. "Come ye after me, and I will make you
fishers of men" said he to the humble fishermen. Life is more than
meat and raiment, more than pleasure and self-indulgence; To a new
way of life you are called.

^{-to new}
Why should one follow this way of life? Why should one love his neighbor as himself? Why should one forego the grosser purposes of life? Nay why do men and women love truth, honor, goodness? Why do they honor the hero, even if they themselves are cowards? Why do they honor the good in human life, even when they themselves have done evil? The answer of Jesus to this question, ~~is the~~ ^{is} ~~deeper~~ illustration of his insight into life and life's meaning. ~~is clear.~~

a clear
Life is an open secret. "Seek and ye shall find, ask and it shall be given you, knock and it shall be opened unto you. The world and life brings forth from its treasure that which you seek. What does life mean? What is the world like? What is God like? "What man is there of you, who, if his son shall ask him for a loaf, will give him ~~bread~~ a stone; or if he shall ask him for a

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fish, will give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, (being finite or human) know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask him? " God is at least as good as you are. The stream cannot rise higher than its source. As you at your very best towards your children, so also is the love of God towards you. If you desire to have your children grow in wisdom and power, honor and goodness, so does God ~~desire~~ the infinite father, desire to have you grow. There are no tricks in the world. The universe is honest, It does not make sport of your high purposes? The heart of the universe, like the heart of the father and mother, is a heart of love for mankind? Your child asks you for ~~some~~ bread, you do not give him a stone; he asks for a ~~serpent~~ fish, you do not give him a serpent. ~~He plays no tricks upon the~~

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You play no tricks with him. You care for, lead, teach, watch over him/ work for him, work with him, that he may attain unto a noble and worthwhile life . That , says Jesus, is the attitude of the world, of God , the heavenly father, towards men and women,—his children. God, the heavenly father, does not mock you. He ~~gives~~ ~~you~~ does not give you ashes when you ask for beauty and fullness of life . Every one that asketh receiveth, he that seeketh findeth; and to everyone that knocketh it shall be opened." The way of life is before you, ready to respond to your search for its deepest and most precious treasures. That was and is Jesus' answer to our query as to the meaning of life. Life does have meaning. God does exist ; The world is honest; The living God; the heavenly father does care for his children.

Such was the faith of Jesus. It was not a tradition accepted without question; It was not an infallible scheme

presented to him for unquestioned acceptance. ~~after~~ It was a living personal faith, -born of his doubt, his questionings, his knowledge, his experience and his insight. He knew the deeper real values of life. He had no magic knowledge about the meaning of life, or the nature of God, or God's purposes. He saw the choice of life. He saw the way of indulgence, lust, greed, leading to torment, ~~and ashes~~ remorse, and ashes. He saw the way of truth, love, and loyalty, leading to values that he believed to be imperishable and eternal. He made his choice. He staked his life on the higher values, -love honor, truth, - on the faith that God exists, that life has eternal significance. The multitudes were astonished at his teaching. Not as the scribes, -appealing to tradition, to the Law and the prophets, appealed he unto them, but as one having authority, as one having conviction, as one who saw life, saw it whole, and,

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out of his experience, ~~his~~ knowledge, ^{and} his insight, believed with all his heart and mind and soul in the eternal worth of life-- in a living God.

Jesus' Test of Faith.

Some believed and some did not believe. Jesus had paid a great price to gain his faith. With a still greater price he was to confirm it. There were people then, as there are people now, who want faith without paying the price that life requires to attain faith. The story of the Rich Ruler is to the point. You know the sort of man he was. There are thousands of such to-day. He desired some assurance. He had kept the commandments ; he had observed all the customs and traditions ; he had gone through all the motions from his youth up. But life lacked that zest, that glow, that buoyant passionate ardor that belongs to those who have a faith and a conviction of their own.

When he came in contact with Jesus he felt a zest , a glow, a power, a spirit of adventure that made his own life of ease and luxury seem tame and stupid. He knew ~~that~~ his life lacked something that this obscure carpenter had found. "What shall I do ?" said he to Jesus. Jesus replied,-- One thing you ~~lack~~ lack . You lack faith. Get out of this prison of convention and wealth you live in. Life is an adventure. Forget your ease, your ceremonials, your traditions. Live one day for something that you believe true and eternal. Be yourself for once , then you shall taste eternal life. Cast your wealth, your social position behind you. Come follow thou me."

" You seek an infallible guide to eternal life. There is no such guide. You seek from me an infallible program that you may follow.? There is no such infallible program. Life is adventure. Life is faith.

"But", says the Rich Ruler, " ~~How~~ how may I know what you say

is true ?" The answer is,- "You do not know . You never can know except as you try it out,-live it as if it were true. Out of your own experience,your own doubts, your own travail and pain, your own trials, mistakes and errors you must find faith and the kingdom of God for yourself. Seek him, and ye shall find him--- and life eternal. There is no other way. You must pay the price for faith that faith requires."

Jesus spoke with authority because he had paid the price for his faith that faith requires.

The Moral Courage of Jesus.

Finally there was in Jesus that supreme quality of faith, that moral courage that carries through. He spoke with authority because he meant business. His faith was real. He had given himself to a thing that was of greater importance to him than his own self interest and life. His young life had been stirred to faith and conviction. He had left all to teach the way of life. His decision had been made. He was now coming to the great test which was resulting from his decision. He was to face the test as to whether or not he had the courage to face the consequences of his own life work. He was to be called upon to give up that precious thing-- life for the truth he believed, for the men who believed in him, for the God he had called Father.

Here we come upon the inner secret of his life. He had *not*

boasted, or talked vainly. He had meant business. It was not unique in him. There have been other along the way of human history who have had the moral courage to ^{die} for some great cause they have loved. To them we owe more than our poor lives can ever repay. For the sake of faith, in religion, in science and knowledge, in adventure and discovery, in the daily rounds of humble life, there have been those who have given their life for their faith, their loved ones, their duty, their God. It is a noble company, greater perhaps than we dream. "Greater love hath no man than this that he lay down his life for the brethren." We touch the hem garment hem of God's spirit when we come in touch with those who lay their own life upon the alter for the sake of truth and the brethren?

To this holy ground the trail of Jesus of Nazareth leads

us.

The Garden of Gethsemene. The rumblings of discontent among the high priests of the established order had been increasing. The heresy hunters were on his trail. Did he not speak with authority ? Did not the people listen ? Was he not destroying faith in the law and the prophets ? Had he not said to many, - "Follow thou me." Now the critical hour was at hand. "Recant or resign".

The last meal together with his disciples was finished-- those close intimate friends. They had believed in him, left all to follow him and work with him. Now his hour of test had come. Can you imagine the thought that might have passed through his mind ? How he thought of the many to whom he had given faith and hope, and ~~meaning to life~~ a meaning to life. He might have said to himself, "

" I have told them that this is the way to life that is eternal. My Father, I love this life, these friends, these familiar fields, these mountains and hills the roads, the haunts of my fathers, but 'if this cannot pass away except I drink, thy will be done."

Let us pause for a moment. It is easy to declare our faith in the face of the applauding multitude ; it is easy to stand in the church surrounded by precious memories and dear friends , and say that we believe in the moral values of life, and that we believe in God. But when the tide of approval has run out, and the tide of angry opposition and violence is already lashing against the walls of life's most precious possessions, then the test of faith comes. When the multitude has vanished, when friends have been left behind, and, alone under God's open sky, you are called upon to make the decision of sealing your faith with your own life's

blood, then you really declare your faith. Did you mean business or were you just talking when you so glibly recited your credo ?
In the gardens of Gethsemane you are not condemning ^{the heretic} /for his faith;
You are not stoning some helpless soul for the sins of the flesh ;
you are not sending to prison some man who has had the courage to declare publicly his belief . No . None of these things happen in Gethsemene. In the Gardens of Gethsemene men ~~weigh~~ measure the quality of their own soul-- whether or not they have the moral courage to face the ignominy of trial, condemnation and death for truth's sake, for that spiritual value that we call integrity. In Christ's Gethsemene he made that choice. That is the supreme moment of his life. He had staked his life on the faith, the conviction, not the proven knowledge, but the conviction that God exists, that truth counts, that life has eternal qualities. That faith, that

conviction held good in the garden of Gethsemene. He came through clean. "You rich young man" he might have thought, "you once asked me what you could do to inherit eternal life. You believed me not. Again I say unto you,--Follow thou me." I believe. I believe that the Father lives."

That was the authority that Christ had and still has,-- the power of a faith tested in life, confirmed in death. Others have ~~had, it still lives in thousands of human lives today~~ had it. Their gracious and holy lives have lighted ~~along~~ the way of human history. They have kindled fires of noble purpose in thousands of souls. They have stimulated and confirmed that greatest of all human ~~adventures~~ adventures, the faith that God is, and that life has eternal meaning. ^{That} is the power of God in the human soul. It was in Christ. ^{ing} it is in you.