

"Why repair ye not the breaches of the house?"

- II Kings xii,7

II Kings xii,1-12

Matthew xxi,12-27

Psalm 103

New Book of Worship, Psalm 103, pp,73,74

Beginning with the twelfth chapter of Genesis the Old Testament in its letter is the history of the chosen people. Spiritually it describes the struggles, the discouragements, and the final triumph of the Lord's church and of the heavenly life in the regenerating soul. The time of the divided kingdom which followed upon the death of Solomon was a period of decline. In the northern kingdom, Israel, this decline was continuous and rapid, but in the southern kingdom, Judah, occasionally a good king came to the throne. It is especially beautiful to notice that two of the good kings, Jehoash and Josiah, came to the throne as children, at eight years of age. They foreshadow the prophecy, "A little child shall lead them." Such a child king, coming forward in evil days and recalling the people from idolatry, suggests the awakening of something childlike in ourselves, when we have gone astray, recalling us to worship of the Lord.

The Lord stores up holy states and memories in every child, and most carefully guards them. These states are the basis for our association with the heavens from which come those influences which in our later years operate to turn us from evil to good. Often we are conscious that the awakening of some innocent, tender state or some memory of earlier days is the means of recalling us to our duty. The Lord's care in storing up and guarding the innocent states of childhood, which are to be the source of strength in later years, is especially suggested in the story of Jehoash, whom the good priest hid for six years in the house of the Lord, until the time came for him to be recognized as king.

It is often said of children that they are having the happiest part of their lives. And if this is frequently so, it is only because they are then more innocent and friendly, more pure, and more easily contented than afterwards when selfishness and worldly ambitions develop, bringing anxieties, rivalries, and bitterness into the heart. If these disturbing influences can be shut out, if we can again become as little children, having an intelligent appreciation of the beauty of innocence as compared to the evils from which we have been delivered, then the innocence is deeper and the love and purity more delightful than was possible in childhood.

It was especially to make possible to men this return to wise innocence and to the joy of unselfish and unperverted love that the Lord came into the world. The childhood of the human race was innocent and open to the Lord and heaven, but the maturity of the race was full of violence and evil. "The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand,

and seek God. They are all gone aside." "An evil and adulterous generation" the Lord found when He came into the world. He saw the misery that men had brought upon themselves. He was not angry with them, for the Lord is love itself. He came to help and to save.

The story of the repairing of the temple, which was commanded and executed by King Jehoshaphat, applies to everyone. The temple, which was built as the Lord's house and in which His presence was felt, is a type of every dwelling-place of the Lord. It is a type of heaven and of a heavenly spirit in the individual, and in the highest sense it is a type of the Divine Humanity of the Lord, the perfect tabernacle of God with men. The great stones of the temple, made ready before they were brought thither, so that no tool was heard upon them while the temple was in building, represent the sure facts of eternal truth, unchanged and unperverted by men, on which the heavenly character rests. The timbers of cedar and other woods represent the rational understanding of heavenly principles, and the gold which covered the interior of the building represents the pure, heavenly love which is within it all.

If we turn to evil and selfish ways and make idols of our own selfish ambitions, the soul is no longer a beautiful dwelling-place of the Lord. His temple falls into decay. It is said that there were "breaches" in the temple. The breaches in the temple mean especially the parting of truth from goodness when we are not faithful to what we know is right. Every quickening of conscience, every effort to do faithfully what we know is right is a repairing of the Lord's temple. And there are repairings of the temple on a larger scale when the church as a whole returns to better states, especially when it seeks to learn its truths in order to live them, after a period of neglect. It is such a repairing of the temple that is commanded in the charge to Ephesus: "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works."

It is impossible but that the natural life should be developed before the spiritual. The body attains its development, the natural impulses are aroused - and with them the desires for wealth, pleasure, and fame - before the rational mind can attain the power of comparing natural pleasures with spiritual and choosing between them, repressing the one and cherishing the other.

The natural man is at first restrained from carrying out his impulses which would lead to the injury of others by laws, penalties, and public opinion. He is compelled to do useful work of many kinds to obtain the means of satisfying his desires. These restraints serve to establish an orderly natural life and habits of natural usefulness. They diminish the conflicts and unhappiness of natural desires, and regulate and increase their enjoyments. But they bring nothing of

the joy of heaven. So long as one labors only for gratifying his own desires, there is nothing of the Lord's love in his labor and nothing of the Lord's joy. For the Lord's love is the love of others and of usefulness to them for their own sake, and not for self. And so long as self is really first in the mind, there is no room for the Divine love.

But the primary regard for self retains a place in the mind for a long time and is ever seeking to supplant and destroy the building of the temple of the Lord in the soul, continually making breaches in it. Just as a house repeatedly needs repairs, so does the house of our souls.

The story of the repairing of the temple applies directly to our own experience. One of the particulars of this story is that the repairing was done in a willing spirit with no thought for money. This teaches the need of a willing spirit in the work of repentance and regeneration. The king's command to include in the fund for repairing the temple "all the money that cometh into any man's heart to bring," like the earlier command that the gifts for the building of the tabernacle be brought with a willing heart, seems especially to teach this lesson.

And in the money gathered in the chest by the temple gate we seem to perceive something of the same loving spirit which long afterward made the widow's two mites precious in the Lord's sight. It is this spirit which must animate any gift or any work that is to contribute toward strengthening or beautifying the temple of the Lord in us. That no reckoning was made with the laborers because they worked faithfully indicates still further that single, faithful, disinterested spirit which alone can build the Lord's house in our souls.

In what condition is the Lord's temple in us? Are there "breaches" needing repair, places where it has fallen into decay? What sort of king is ruling in our hearts? Is it a good king - perhaps a child king who has been kept safely by the Lord during evil days, something of childhood's innocence and tender conscience and keen sense of right which has courage to repair the house?

The Lord is ever saying to us, as He once said to the Jews through the prophet Haggai: "Consider your ways. Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the Lord."

Amen