

The Heart with the Treasure

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.-Matt. vi. 19, 20, 21.

- To understand the words of our Lord is the business of life.
 - For it is the main road to the understanding of The Word himself.
 - And to receive him is to receive the Father, and so to have Life in ourselves.
 - And Life, the higher, the deeper, the simpler, the original, is the business of life.
- The Word is that by which we live,
 - namely, Jesus himself;

- and his words represent, in part, in shadow, in suggestion, himself.
- Any utterance worthy of being called a truth, is human food:
 - how much more The Word, presenting no abstract laws of our being, but the vital relation of
 - soul and body,
 - heart and will,
 - strength and rejoicing,
 - beauty and light,
 - to Him who first gave birth to them all!
- The Son came forth to be, before our eyes and in our hearts, that which he had made us for,
 - that we might behold the truth in him, and cry out for the living God,
 - who, in the highest sense of all is The Truth,
 - not as understood,
 - but as understanding, living, and being, doing and creating the truth.
 - "I am the truth," said our Lord;
 - and by those who are in some measure like him in being the truth, the Word can be understood.

- Let us try to understand him.

- Sometimes, no doubt, the Saviour would have spoken after a different fashion of speech, if he had come to Englishmen, instead of to Jews.
 - But the lessons he gave would have been the same; for even when questioned about a matter for its passing import, his reply contained the enunciation of the great human principle which lay in it,
 - and that lies changeless in every variation of changeful circumstance.
 - With the light of added ages of Christian experience, it ought to be easier for us to understand his words than it was for those who heard him.

- What, I ask now, is here the power of his word For:
 - For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also?
 - The meaning of the reason thus added is not obvious upon its surface. It has to be sought for because of its depth at once and its simplicity.

- But it is so complete, so imaginatively comprehensive, so immediately operative on the conscience through its poetic suggestiveness, that when it is once understood, there is nothing more to be said, but everything to be done.
- "Why not lay up for ourselves treasures upon earth?"
- "Because there the moth and rust and the thief come."
- "And so we should lose those treasures!"
- "Yes; by the moth and the rust and the thief."
- "Does the Lord then mean that the reason for not laying up such treasures is their transitory and corruptible nature?"
- "No. He adds a For: 'For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.'"
- "Of course the heart will be where the treasure is; but what has that to do with the argument?"

- This: that what is with the treasure must fare as the treasure;
 - that the heart which haunts the treasure-house where the moth and rust corrupt,
 - will be exposed to the same ravages as the treasure,
 - will itself be rusted and moth-eaten.
- Many a man, many a woman, fair and flourishing to see, is going about with a rusty moth-eaten heart within that form of strength or beauty.
- "But this is only a figure."

- True. But is the reality intended, less or more than the figure?
 - Does not the rust and the moth mean more than disease?
 - And does not the heart mean more than the heart?
 - Does it not mean a deeper heart,
 - the heart of your own self, not of your body?
 - of the self that suffers, not pain, but misery?
 - of the self whose end is not comfort, or enjoyment, but blessedness, yea, ecstasy?
 - a heart which is the inmost chamber wherein springs the divine fountain of your being?

- a heart which God regards, though you may never have known its existence, not even when its writhings under the gnawing of the moth and the slow fire of the rust have communicated a dull pain to that outer heart which sends the blood to its appointed course through your body?
 - If God sees that heart corroded with the rust of cares, riddled into caverns and films by the worms of ambition and greed, then your heart is as God sees it, for God sees things as they are. And one day you will be compelled to see, nay, to feel your heart as God sees it; and to know that the cankered thing which you have within you, a prey to the vilest of diseases, is indeed the centre of your being, your very heart.
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- Nor does the lesson apply to those only who worship Mammon, who give their lives, their best energies to the accumulation of wealth:
 - it applies to those equally who in any way worship the transitory;
 - who seek the praise of men more than the praise of God;
 - who would make a show in the world
 - by wealth,

- by taste,
- by intellect,
- by power,
- by art,
- by genius of any kind,
- and so would gather golden opinions to be treasured in a storehouse of earth.

- Nor to such only, but surely to those as well whose pleasures are of a more evidently transitory nature still, such as the pleasures of the senses in every direction-whether lawfully or unlawfully indulged, if the joy of being is centred in them-do these words bear terrible warning.
 - For the hurt lies not in this-
 - that these pleasures are false like the deceptions of magic, for such they are not:
 - pleasures they are;
 - nor yet in this-that they pass away, and leave a fierce disappointment behind:
 - that is only so much the better;
 - but the hurt lies in this→

- that the immortal, the infinite, created in the image of the everlasting God, is housed with the fading and the corrupting, and clings to them as its good-
 - clings
 - to them till it is infected and interpenetrated with their proper diseases,
 - which assume in it a form more terrible in proportion to the superiority of its kind,
 - that which is mere decay in the one becoming moral vileness in the other,
 - that which fits the one for the dunghill casting the other into the outer darkness;
 - creeps, that it may share with them, into a burrow in the earth,
 - where its budded wings wither and damp and drop away from its shoulders,
 - instead of haunting the open plains and the high-uplifted table-lands, spreading abroad its young pinions to the sun and the air, and strengthening them in further and further flights, till at last they should become strong to bear the God-born into the presence of its Father in Heaven.

Therein lies the hurt.

- He whose heart is sound because it haunts the treasure-house of heaven may be tempted of the devil, but will be first led up of the Spirit into the wilderness.