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*THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS AND MODERN SOCIAL PROBLEMS.

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The subject assigned to me is "The Teachings of Jesus as They Bear upon the Solution of Modern Social Problems." For the sake of clearness it may be well for me to define or illustrate what is meant by the expression "modern social problems." We mean such problems as those which arise from the constant conflict between capital and labor; the problems which are created by extreme wealth, extreme poverty, and ignorance; the problems of marriage, divorce, the social evil, and child life; the problems which follow in the train of the terrible liquor traffic; and the problems that flow out of race prejudice and culminate in cruel war. These problems are not new, but they are more acute, more menacing, and more insistent in the complex civilization of the twentieth century than ever before in the history of the world.

Many human solutions have been proposed ranging through the whole gamut from extreme Individualism to extreme So-

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cialism. These suggested solutions are too numerous to discuss or even to mention here. There is one thought lying back of all of them, and that is a clamor for a change in the social order. For example, Socialism insists that the only solution lies in a change from private ownership to governmental ownership. These advocates for a change in our social order seem to think that if such a change could be effected our social problems would be solved and all would be well. But there is one fatal defect in all these proposed human remedies, and that is, they overlook the fact that man is by nature a sinful, selfish, greedy creature, and that it is impossible to take a group or a multitude of such selfish creatures and make of them an ideal, unselfish society simply by changing the external social order. You cannot purify the water in the well by simply painting the pump. The trouble lies deeper than that. Human solutions have failed and they are doomed to failure because they make no provision for changing the sinful and selfish nature of man, and because they have no power to make such a change.

If I can interpret the signs of the times, men are feeling more and more the inadequacy of human remedies, and are turning more and more to Jesus Christ, the Master Teacher, and are asking what solution, if any, can be found in his teachings for these perplexing social problems. This is made clear by the fact that a large literature is springing up on this subject, and by the fact that the subject is being discussed in just such conventions as this all over the country, a thing which was unheard of even twenty-five years ago.

Let us then, along with this growing multitude, turn to the teachings of Jesus and inquire whether they have any bearing on the solution of our modern social problems. You and I know that he has a wonderful message of love and power for the individual soul. We come now to ask whether his teachings have any application to our social questions. Of course we can not make an exhaustive study of his teachings, as they may bear upon this whole subject, in the space of one short

half hour. I can not hope, therefore, to give you more than a sample study. What I wish to do is to take a very familiar petition which Jesus has put upon our lips and which you and I make every day, and show you how centered in and about this petition are teachings of Jesus which would solve many of our social problems, in fact all of them, if we would only take them seriously and practice them in our daily social relationships. That petition is: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6: 10).

I. We pray that the kingdom may come. What is "The kingdom of God," or "The kingdom of heaven"? We understand the two expressions as being synonymous. You would find it a very interesting study to read the four Gospels and note how often the phrase "The kingdom of God" (or "kingdom of heaven") occurs, and to inquire into its meaning in each place in which it is used. It is found more than fifty times in the Gospel of Matthew alone. It is found more than one hundred times in the first three Gospels. The word "Church" is found in just two places in the four Gospels. It would seem as if Jesus placed even more emphasis upon the kingdom than he did upon the Church. May it not be that the kingdom is the end in view and that the Church is the means to that end? We need look at only a few passages to see what a tremendous emphasis is placed upon the kingdom idea in the New Testament.

John prepared the way for Jesus with the burning message: "Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 3: 2). When Jesus began his ministry a few months later he began with the same message: "Repent; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 4: 17). The kingdom seems to have been at the very heart and center of his message. More than once we have a record like this: "And Jesus went about all their cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel (good news) of the kingdom" (Matt. 9: 35). Luke tells us that when Jesus was with his disciples during the forty days between his resurrection and ascension

he was "speaking of things pertaining to the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3). In the same way the apostles placed great emphasis upon the kingdom. Take the apostle Paul for example. Listen to his farewell words to the elders of Ephesus: "And now behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more" (Acts 20:25). Just as the curtain drops on the life of Paul forever we have this record: "And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house (in Rome) and received all that came unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 28:30-31). Thus we might go on, page after page, quoting these rich passages from the Scriptures to show what a central place the kingdom occupies in the teachings of Jesus and the apostles. But these must suffice. Again we ask, What is the "kingdom of God"?

1. Is it heaven? That is one interpretation, and perhaps the most popular one. It seems to fit perfectly in a number of passages. See Matt. 8:11 and John 19:36. But it does not apply to the majority of cases. It does not fit in such passages as "Thy kingdom come," "The kingdom of heaven is at hand," "The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed," and many similar passages.

2. Is it the Church? That has been another popular interpretation, and is still the interpretation of the Roman Catholic Church. It seems to be the correct interpretation for a few passages. See Matt. 16:18-19 and Matt. 13:40-41. But it will not work in the great majority of passages. Substitute Church for kingdom in such passages as "Thy kingdom come" and "Seek ye first the kingdom of God," and you will see at once that it is a decided misfit.

3. Is it the reign of God in the individual heart? That is still another popular interpretation, and it certainly seems to fit a larger number of passages than any interpretation that we have mentioned. In fact Jesus seems to clearly decide for us that this is the correct interpretation. In Luke 17:21 Jesus

says: "The kingdom of God is within you." It is well to note, however, that the marginal translation makes this passage read: "The kingdom of God is among you." If you will recall the fact that these words were addressed to a group of scoffing Pharisees you will be inclined to think that the marginal reading is the correct one. The kingdom of God could scarcely have been within the hearts of these Pharisees, but it was among them, though they could not see it.

4. Is it the kingdom which Jesus is going to set up when he comes again? This interpretation was especially popular with the early Church fathers. There are a number of verses in the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth chapters of Matthew which seem to fall perfectly into line with this interpretation. See especially Matt. 25: 34. But this interpretation does not fit in the great majority of cases. Substitute this meaning in "Seek ye first the kingdom of God" or in such passages as "The kingdom of heaven is at hand" and you will see at once that it does not fit.

5. The kingdom of God includes all of these interpretations and more. There are two provinces in the kingdom of God, one is in heaven and one is on earth. The kingdom of God includes the reign of God in heaven, in the human heart, in the Church, on the earth, and will include the final kingdom which Jesus establishes when he comes again. Sometimes Jesus is speaking of one department of this kingdom and sometimes of another. So the expression "the kingdom of God" does not always have precisely the same meaning. But if you will study carefully all the passages in which the expression occurs you will find that he is generally speaking of the earthly province of his kingdom. That is certainly his reference in this petition which we have taken for our study. Read it this way: "Thy kingdom come—on earth as it is in heaven," and you will see the real thought. The heavenly province of the kingdom is perfect, it is the earthly province which gives the Master such deep concern. He came down into the world to establish and perfect the earthly province of the kingdom,

and it is for that he is asking us to pray and to work. The kingdom idea as applied to the world is not simply the reign of God in man, but it is the reign of God in man, over man, through man, in all the relationships of man, and in all the earth. There is not time now to go into detailed exegetical work to show that this conception of the kingdom will fit the great majority of the passages in the Gospels in which the expression occurs. I can only ask you to take the idea, turn to the passages, and see for yourself whether it will fit. I believe that you will find that it will fit a very much larger number of passages than any or all of the other interpretations which have been mentioned.

So then, in that petition, "Thy kingdom come—on earth as it is in heaven," we have Jesus' ideal for this world, or if we may use modern parlance, we have his ideal for the social order, it is the perfect reign of God in all the earth. The kingdom of God means more than that, but it cannot mean any less. That is the particular phase of its meaning which bears especially upon the solution of our modern social problems which we are studying just now.

If the modern world could only catch the great conception of the kingdom which Jesus had in his mind when he put this prayer upon our lips, the very conception would be a great contribution towards the solution of our modern social problems. I am aware that the kingdom idea is a bit abstract and intangible, but it is an idea that can be grasped and it is certainly worth the effort. A paragraph from a recent speech of President Wilson's is an excellent illustration of what I am trying to say: "No man ever saw a government. I live in the midst of the government of the United States, but I never saw the government of the United States. Its personnel extends through all the nations, and across the seas and into every corner of the world in the persons of the representatives of the United States in foreign capitals and in foreign centers of commerce. I never saw the government of the United States. It is an ideal thing. I must learn its spirit by the

facts of its imagination. I must make myself part of it, by thinking the things which separately and of myself I would not think, the thoughts that are national, the things that move great bodies of men to devote themselves to great tasks and even to great adventures."

So it is with the kingdom of God. We cannot see it. It does not come with observation. Yet it is in our midst and all about us and many of us are members of it. It is not confined to any nation or race or denomination but extends throughout the earth. The Church is God's greatest agent for advancing and establishing the kingdom, and yet it is not confined even to the Church. It is the reign of God in men, over men, through men, and in all the institutions and relationships of men. This kingdom had a small beginning in the earth. It was like a grain of mustard seed or a little lump of leaven, but the leaven is beginning to permeate the whole mass of humanity. The perfect day has not yet come, but Jesus' ideal for the world is nothing short of perfection—the perfect reign of God in the world. That is the solution which we find for our social problems in the teachings of Jesus. You may call this idealism, if so, it is the idealism of Jesus. What a glorious thing it would be for the world if men everywhere could catch a vision of this ideal and devote all the energies of their lives to its realization.

II. We come now to the second part of the petition: "Thy will be done in earth as in heaven." What is the will of God? We generally think of it as something to be passively submitted to with patient resignation in times of sorrow and disappointment. So it is, but it has a vastly larger meaning than that. The will of God is something to be actively done. It is the law of the kingdom. In this petition we are praying that the law of the kingdom may be as perfectly observed and obeyed in the earthly province of the kingdom as in the heavenly province. This law touches every department of our lives and among other things includes every duty that we owe to our

fellow men. In other words it includes all of our duties as members of the social order.

Let us pass now from these more general and abstract principles to some of the more concrete and specific laws of the kingdom as set forth in the teachings of Jesus. Bear in mind that these specific laws which I am about to mention are all included under the term "Thy will." Bear in mind also that every law which I shall mention was promulgated directly in connection with the kingdom teachings of Jesus.

1. Let us look first of all at what we may call the law of entrance into the kingdom. "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). This statement is perfectly true of heaven, but I do not understand that Jesus is speaking of heaven in this passage, but of entrance into his kingdom right down here in this present world. The only way to get into the kingdom is to be born into it. Before a man can get into it he has to be made over again. The past sin and selfishness of his life has to be cleansed away, and a new life for the future must be implanted in him by nothing less than the almighty power of the Spirit of the living God. Just here is where human remedies fail. They make no provision for changing the individual, and have no power to effect such a change. They prescribe instead the changing of the social order. Jesus goes to the fountain source of all our problems, the sin and selfishness of the human heart, and not only makes provision for changing this sinful heart but furnishes the power. The religion of Jesus Christ is a religion of power.

It is possible for men to get into a political party, into a fraternal order or union, or even into the Church without being made over, but he can not get into the kingdom. The first law of the kingdom is that he must be born again. He must become a new creature. This new creature, the redeemed individual, is the greatest contribution which the religion of Jesus Christ makes to the solution of our social problems. Let us never forget that. He redeems men and women and sets

them out in the social order and tells them that they must be salt to purify and save the world, or light to show a lost world the way, or leaven to permeate the whole mass of humanity with the influence of their new-born lives.

We seem to think sometimes that if every individual were only born again that all our problems would be solved. That is a mistaken idea. Children are born into our homes. They are our children and members of the home, but that does not guarantee that our homes are going to be entirely harmonious. Those children will have to learn and observe the laws of the home before all will be ideal. In the same way every member of a home may be a true Christian and yet the home life not be entirely Christian. We will have to learn and observe the will of Jesus for our home life before the home can be perfectly Christian. So men may be born into the kingdom and be true members of it and yet far from ideal members because they have either not learned or do not observe all the laws of the kingdom. There are many other laws to be learned and observed besides the law of entrance. We will pass on to a few of these laws.

2. The law of self-sacrifice. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Luke 9:23). Selfishness and greed lie back of all our social problems. In the words just quoted Jesus bids us renounce self, to take self down off the throne. Even that is not enough. Self is too insistent to be rid of by simple renunciation. It must be put to death. So he bids us take up our cross, bear it out yonder to our own Calvary, and there nail self to the cross and crucify it forever. That is precisely what Paul did. "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Galatians 2:20).

What if we would take Jesus at his word, and put self and all selfishness out of our lives, do you think that it would make any difference as far as our social problems are concerned? The majority of our social problems would be solved.

You see how the Great Physician cuts right down to the very root of the matter and removes the cause of the trouble.

3. The Golden Rule (Matt. 7:12). This law of the kingdom is so familiar that I need not repeat it. Everybody who knows anything about the teachings of Jesus knows it. It is a fundamental law of the kingdom and stands right in the heart of a great sermon on the kingdom. The meaning of this Golden Rule is perfectly clear and simple. There is no evading its meaning. The only way to get rid of the Golden Rule is to trample it squarely under our feet, and that is what we do. There are business men who are members of the Church of Jesus Christ who will frankly tell you that the Golden Rule is not practicable, and that they do not try to keep it. In the meantime we who are preachers are not saying much about the Golden Rule, and when we do speak on it we apply it to little children and to the little things of every day life, but not to the great social problems out in the commercial and industrial world.

A distinguished professor in a theological seminary tells of an interesting experiment which he made. At a meeting of a ministers' association in New York City he asked if any one present had ever preached on the Golden Rule and applied it to the conduct of business. Not a single minister present had ever preached or ever heard such a sermon. The professor remembered that he had about three thousand sermons of his own, so he went home and examined his manuscripts to see whether he had ever preached a sermon on the Golden Rule and applied it to a man's conduct in his dealings with his fellow men out in the business world. He found that he had three sermons on the Golden Rule, but not a single one of them had any application to business and social life. He next went to his seminary library and examined thirty volumes of sermons by the great preachers of the past and the present, and found in the entire thirty volumes only one sermon on the Golden Rule, and that had no sort of application to the business and industrial world.

What if we who are ministers would preach the Golden Rule and the Royal Law and similar teachings of Jesus with more earnestness and emphasis, and apply them to present day life and conditions, and tell men that Jesus expects and commands them to follow these teachings in every relationship in life, and what if men would take these teachings seriously and try honestly to practice them in the home, in the Church, in society, and out in the commercial world, and what if even the nations would try to live according to these teachings in their dealings with one another, do you think that it would make any difference? Do you think that it would help to solve any of our social problems? I put this question one day to a man of large business affairs and asked him what he thought. He dropped his head for a moment in meditation and then answered: "It would solve our social problems, it would revolutionize and transform the whole business world."

4. The law of service. "Whosoever would become great among you shall be your servant; and whosoever would be first among you shall be your bond-servant" (Matt. 20: 27, margin).

James and John were asking for the seats of power in the kingdom when Jesus enunciated this great law of the kingdom. Men are still selfishly seeking for places of prominence and power. These men create many of our present day social problems. But Jesus estimates a man's place in the kingdom, not by his bank account, not by his political power, not by his social prestige, but by the service which he renders to God and humanity. What if men could catch that conception and live by it? Do you think that it would make any difference?

When Grover Cleveland said: "A public office is a public trust," the whole nation applauded. The sentence has been handed down for a generation. Why should such a truism excite such applause? It must be because such a conception is all too rare. Yet this ought to be the ideal of every man who holds any public office of any kind. What if every politician and every business man could catch the conception of Jesus and say: "I will not hold this office or conduct this

business for any selfish ends, but that I may render the very largest possible service to God and humanity” Do you think this conception would solve any of our present day problems?

5. The law of stewardship. “The kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods” (Matt. 25:14). “The silver is mine and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts” (Haggai 2:8). “It is He that giveth thee power to get wealth” (Deut. 8:18).

In these passages and many others like them we have the great law of stewardship. I have before me a leaflet which says that we are partners of God. That is a mistake. God is the sole owner. We are but His stewards. We ministers generally invoke this law of stewardship when we want our people to make liberal gifts to the great missionary and benevolent causes of the Church, and that is a perfectly proper use of the law, but it has a vastly wider reach than that. It applies to the part of a man's money which he keeps for himself and his business, as well as to the part which he gives away. The servants in the parable of the Talents were not expected to give away all that was entrusted to them. They were expected to use it out in the regular channels of trade, but they were expected to use it in a way that the Master could approve upon his return. If we could catch this conception of stewardship in this twentieth century and live accordingly it would make a world of difference. Our money would not go into any business which our Lord could not approve and bless. Our business methods would be such as he could approve. We would ask him to direct us as we fix the wages of those who work for us. This law of stewardship cuts deep in the business world. If we would only live according to this teaching many of our social problems would melt away.

6. The Sermon on the Mount. These great teachings of Jesus of which we have been speaking are only samples of the laws of the kingdom. There are many more like unto these. I can not take the time to speak specifically of any more just

now, but I do refer you to the Sermon on the Mount, where you will find many other kingdom teachings. The kingdom of God is really the subject of that sermon. The sermon from beginning to end is made up of kingdom teachings and kingdom laws. Nearly everything in the sermon has application to every day life and every day social problems. If only professing Christians would observe the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount in all their relationships to others there would be vastly fewer social problems, and our world would be a new world.

These are some of the teachings which are included in the will of God. Looked at from this point of view the will of God is not simply something to be passively submitted to, but it is something to be actively done. When you and I give ourselves more completely to the full doing of that will in our every day life and relationships, we may expect God to answer us more fully when we pray: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven."

When we make this petition we pray that the kingdom may come more completely in our own hearts and lives and that Jesus may be enthroned in the very center of our being; that his kingdom may come and his will may be done in our homes, our schools, our churches, in commerce, in shops, in mills, in mines, in banks, in nations and between nations, and in all the world.

That is Jesus' ideal for the world. When that ideal is realized social problems will vanish and earth will be touched with heaven. Nor is this a mere idle dream. Jesus has all power in heaven and on earth committed into his hands, power enough to effect the complete realization of this ideal.

It may be that we shall not see this perfect day until the King himself shall come again and unite perfectly into one the earthly and heavenly provinces of his kingdom and begin his universal reign. But in the meantime you and I can hope and work and pray for the perfect coming of his kingdom and

the perfect doing of his will right down here in this present world of ours.

Jesus has given us a great commission: "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all nations—teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you" (Matt. 28:19). There are two distinct parts to this commission. One part commands us to make disciples of the nations. We are to do more than go and simply "testify and warn and condemn," we are to make disciples of them. The other part of the commission commands us to teach the nations to observe all things which Jesus has commanded us. The Church has for centuries been laying the emphasis upon the first part of this commission. The cry has been to evangelize the world in this generation. Nor has the Church stressed the first part of the commission any too much, indeed she has fallen far short of doing her whole duty in this respect. But it is high time for us to lay more stress upon the second part of the commission. We must teach men and nations that Jesus expects us to do his will and to observe his teachings and to obey these great laws of the kingdom. "Our chief business with Christianity," said Dr. Thomas Chalmers, "is to proceed upon it." So our chief business with these laws of the kingdom and with the whole will of God is to proceed upon them by practicing them in our daily lives and in all our dealings with our fellowmen.

"Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven." Let us pray this petition with a new and larger meaning, and let us by the grace of God try more earnestly to order our lives according to the will of God in all things, and let us make renewed endeavor to obey that too often neglected part of his will which is set forth in these kingdom laws and teachings which we have been studying. It is to Jesus and to Jesus alone that we can look for the solution of our perplexing social problems. He alone can furnish the true ideal for the individual and for the world, and he alone has the power for the complete realization of this ideal. I have endeavored to set before you Jesus' way. Are you willing

unreservedly to accept his way? Will you take him as your own personal Savior? Will you take him as Lord of all in your life to direct every department and relationship of your life? When men are willing to do this the solution of our social problems will be at hand, but not until then.