

· LIFE · IS · MOST · WORTH · LIVING · TO · HIM ·
· WHOSE · WORK · IS · MOST · WORTH · WHILE ·

○ MEN ○
E
MISSIONS

Published Monthly

♣ TO THE UTTERMOST
PART OF THE EARTH
Rev. Chas. H. Parkhurst, D.D.
♣ COMMERCE & MISSIONS
Dr. James S. Dennis...

VOL. TWO
NO. TWO

Laymen's Missionary Movement
· New York City ·

SEPTEMBER,

1910

MEN AND MISSIONS

Vol. 2

NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER, 1910

No. 2

TO THE UTTERMOST PART OF THE EARTH*

Rev. CHARLES H. PARKHURST

But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and in Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth.—ACTS I : 8.

THAT was prophecy. This morning it is history. The Gospel began in Jerusalem, traversed Judea, spread out into Samaria, broadened forth into widening concentric circles, northward, southward, eastward and westward, till it has touched "the uttermost part." The point antipodal to Jerusalem is 155 degrees west longitude. On March 31, 1819, Christ's witnesses, aboard the *Thaddeus*, sighted the Hawaiian snow-capped peak of Mauna Loa. The missionary craft ran into port at 155 degrees west longitude, and "the uttermost part" was reached. It is not an everyday gift to be able to send out a word, have it travel around the globe and come back again eighteen hundred years later with historic fulfilment. It is like Christ's saying of the woman who anointed his head from that alabaster cruse: "Wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this which this woman hath done be told for a memorial of her." A poor woman anointing a poorer mechanic in a little insignificant Judean village, and the story of it to girdle the globe! And the story of it *has* girdled the globe. Who was that poor mechanic? Think about the alabaster box and "the uttermost part" when you get together your evidences of Christianity.

But what interests us just now is that Christ, even then, had his eye on the "utter-

most part," that the evangelization of Jerusalem, the home country, was felt by him in its relation to portions of the earth at the antipodes from Jerusalem. It is a splendid discipline to get at one of the Lord's thoughts, and then to feel our way as far as we can into the interior, the substance of that thought. We may well prize this verse in Acts, because it lets us see how the whole matter of the conversion of the world, from the beginning to the end, lay in the mind of the great Captain of the world's salvation. It is like being a private soldier, and overhearing the general and his staff contriving the plan of attack. It is solemn business prying into the drift of God's thinking and the current of God's purposing. Let us do it as with the fear of God before our eyes. Christ saw things not in their casual association, but in their organic connection. He beheld events not as so many accidental occurrences, but as livingly jointed, conjoined, in the great growing body of all the centuries. He felt the vital interrelation of events and the vast living oneness into which all the years and centuries are incorporated. In our verse he gives us four stages in the prospective history of the enlargement of his kingdom upon the earth; but to every warm, wide-open eye there is visible through all those stages one single divine nerve of love and purpose that makes them far more one than four. It is the power and fascination of this verse that it packs so closely together the mountainous events of the enlargement of Christ's kingdom, that you seem to see them flowing into one another as one con-

*Sermon preached to outgoing missionaries in the Madison Square Presbyterian Church, Sunday, May 29th, 1910.

tinuous table-land of wide tendency and elevated purpose. You have stood at the base of some high mountain, perhaps admiring its superb proportions, and with your eyes tracing its monumental outlines as they spire away into the air, and melt in the invisible distance; and the very vastness of the granite piles rises up in a way to eclipse the combined grandeur of the hills upon hills and heights upon heights that are associates, brothers with it, in a solid continuity of mountainous expanse; and it is not till you have threaded the dizzy passages of the mountain at whose feet you stand, and scaled its sky-piercing pinnacles, that you detect how that mountain is one with all the wide family of mountains of which it forms a part. So the verse that is before us, covering the whole mountainous prospect of God's purpose all the way from Olivet to the islands of the mid-Pacific, all the way from Ascension to the Second Coming, makes us feel how mightily and splendidly one with itself is all the widening progress, and how near together lie the upper room at Jerusalem and the last prayer offered and the last soul converted to Christ in the isles that wait for the Lord.

A while ago we discussed from this pulpit Home Missions. The best word was spoken that we knew how to speak. Not everything was said that we might have said. Thirty minutes is a short time in which to go around everything, and thirty minutes is as long as you want to sit. You have seen a church tower put up by a poor people, and when it has been carried up half way between the eaves and the ridge-plate of the church, has had work upon it suddenly suspended, has been roofed in, and the dismal truncation economically eaved by a bit of apologetic ornamentation, just low and squatty enough to fail of architectural effect, but conspicuous enough to advertise the impecuniosity of the congregation. When we spoke of Home Missions we did not roof in our tower. It was built for a spire. Every true word about Home Missions, every just conception of Home Missions, is so much foundation upon which to build up into the purer, higher air of a Kingdom of Christ, world-wide and universal. Jerusalem, the home country, goes before Judea and Samaria, but in Christ's thought and purpose reaches clear out to the archipelagoes of the Pacific. We are

instructed to hold the home in jealous isolation from the community, in order that the home might prove the richest benison to the community. We are taught to bend ourselves by prayer and contribution to the work of kindling the fires of our American Christian civilization, but with no purpose short of an ambition to make Christianity in America a beacon light, brilliant enough for all the peoples and nations of the earth to walk in the beauty and splendor of it. Jerusalem, with its Pentecost, its inspired Gospel eloquence and its tremendous outburst of divine power, and its hosts of converts; but not for Jerusalem's sake alone, but because it is the beginning of Christ and His Gospel away out in Madagascar and Polynesia. God forbid that we should be satisfied with anything short of getting out fully and squarely upon the track of God's own work and providence. The Bible trains the eye forever forward. It makes us feel to-morrow in the instant. It holds hopes, purposes, endeavors, upon lines so long that they stretch away out into invisibility. For years and centuries the Cologne Cathedral builders were laying the foundations of that mountain of architectural splendor, and yet every stone that was put into place, and every course of masonry that was laid along its slowly rising walls, looked forward to the last stone in the apex of the spires. Each nicely quarried block was instinct with a blind sense, a groping presentiment of the vast, growing, building, blossoming whole in which it was wrought. Chapels and crypt were strung upon one thread of architectural design, and the turret stone understands the foundation, and the foundation has a sense of the turret stone, though separated by acres of masonry and centuries of time. Jerusalem gears into Judea and Samaria, and Judea and Samaria belt onto Africa, Europe and the Occident. It is all threaded upon one divine nerve of holy purpose and redemption. Call it Jerusalem, or call it "uttermost part"; call it New York or call it Korea; call it London, or call it the Society Islands; to God it is one work. Christ died for the world; and much as Home Missions may mean to us in our national capacity, we have not gotten to the depth even of Home Missions till we have grown to feel that to the all present eye of God, it is *all* Home, centered in Christ, redeemed by one sacri-

fice, bending upon the Cross as its one universal axis.

The great secret of a passion for world-wide missions is an appreciation of Jesus Christ in His world-wide relations; and to those Christians and to those denominations to which Christ means most, missions will mean most. We have to be gathered up into Christ in his universality before we can broaden to the scope of the universal errand upon which he came. Men are making of Christ a matter of personal property. It is hard to let go of the idea that he has special reference to me, and a particular relevancy to me and to those that I am interested in. Thomas said, "My Lord and My God"! A good confession of faith, but too much possessive pronoun of the first person singular ever to make Thomas good for much as a means of diffusing the knowledge of Christ. It is no accident that the Apostle who felt most profoundly that Christ came as a world-Saviour—not as a Saviour of the Jews, not as a Saviour of the Gentiles as Gentiles, but as a world-Saviour—was the Apostle who accomplished most in helping the whole world to be saved by Christ. Only Christ can give us Christ-wide views, hopes, ambitions. This "universalism" will become part of our faith only as we are "enlarged" in Christ. We can understand Him and the immensity of his mission only as fast as we become his. To have a heart that stops at Home Missions is another way of saying that we have not gotten beyond an American Christ; a Christ that beams only on the side turned toward our one beloved continent. If we have no faith in sending out the Gospel to Burmah, it is because we have not yet gotten so widened out in Christ as to suppose that a Burmese means as much to Christ as an American does; that his Gospel can do as much for a Burmese as it can for an American, or that Christ's errand on earth contemplated Orientals in the same way that it did Occidentals. We are so small ourselves that unconsciously we curtail even the Lord and pare down his scheme. It seems to me that, as a rule, men have to be converted a great many times before they are thoroughly new men in Christ, and before they are so interiorly like him as to be able to see things as He sees them, and feel them as He feels them. Men are converted in instalments. You have seen a train of

cars carried up from a valley to a high mountain grade. It will run along as steep an incline as it will bear, and then come to a dead stop. Then the switchman shifts the tracks, the engineer reverses the locomotive and the train will go creeping up another stretch of incline. And so the process will be repeated; a little gain made every time till finally the train is zigzagged to the summit of the pass, and goes rattling along the elevated table land fifty miles an hour.

Once in a while you find a man like St. Paul, who shoots aloft in perpendicular bound as though he had been twitched up in an elevator. But with most of us, I am sure, there is a great deal of instalment and zigzag. We are taken along a little way to where we begin to rejoice in Christ as *our* Saviour—a point where Christ means to us simply a personal untransferable ticket of admission to everlasting felicity. That is just where Thomas stood when he said, "my Lord and my God." We are not belittling even that. It is an excellent point to reach; for one reason, because it is such an excellent point to get away from. It is where the Publican stood when he said, "God be merciful to *me*, a sinner"; and the thief on the cross when he said, "Lord, remember *me* when Thou comest into Thy kingdom"; and the woman of Samaria when she cried, "Sir, give *me* this water that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw."

There is not much but the veriest self-seeking in all that, but there is in it something that is pleasing to God and draws a blessing after it. Strange, it is not, that things could have been so arranged that a man, even while hunting for himself, can find the Lord! Now is it not a fact that a great many people stop at that first switch, that first fork of the zigzag? Heaven is the place where *they* are going, Christ the Redeemer that saves *them*. Not like St. Paul is that who wished himself accursed, if only it could be the means of saving his brethren. From that point stretches another incline that carries a man over the area of interest in the salvation of people immediately about him in his own town, city, vicinage. He has grown in Christ, and consequently Christ has grown upon him. Just as fast as we rise in Christ, Christ widens in import. "I" becomes "we"; "my" becomes "our." The circle broadens.

Christ's love becomes centering. His purposes are related to a larger number, and his redemption adjusted to a larger work. That is the second conversion.

A third stage is reached in the attainment of a Home Missionary spirit. At that point a good many people begin to fall off. Ask half the congregation whether they are interested in Home Missions, and they will tell you frankly "no." A man is more entertained by being upbraided for his own sins than by being instructed concerning the settlers on the frontier and on the wastes of western states and territories. We believe in Christ as the Christ of the eastern and middle states, and perhaps as far west as Chicago and St. Louis; but we have been converted three times already, if we are so long and broad in Christ as to feel that he died for people all the way from Portland to San Francisco; and that a soul on the Pacific Slope means as much to Him as the men and women that live on Twenty-fourth Street and on Madison Avenue; and that not because our imagination is not sufficiently vivid to make real that which is so distant, but because we are not so entered into his spirit and purpose and power and grace and love as to feel that Christ is a thing apart from all considerations of geography; that to a heavenly messenger, come from the bosom of God, a matter of terrestrial latitude and longitude is no matter; that he loves men because they are men, and that those who dwell upon the right bank of the Mississippi mean as much to Him, are as dear to His heart, as the dwellers on the left bank of the Hudson. The true missionary spirit is the power that we win in Christ to feel that He belongs not to us alone, but to every man, woman and child that is tenant with us of our national domain.

That is the third zigzag, the third installment of conversion; the fourth remains, and that is conversion to Foreign Missions. How many stages of elevation we may be promoted to in the world to come we cannot tell; but that is as far as we get here. And when we speak of the Foreign Missionary spirit, the thing intended is not simply an interest in foreign peoples and their modes of living, style of dress, intellectual and moral attainments, but that sympathy with the universal Kingship of Christ that makes us experience Him as a

personal *Redeemer* of the uncounted millions who swarm on foreign continents and throng the islands of the sea. It is not the sense we have of each individual in that indiscriminate mass; it is the sense which our love of Christ gives us of that attitude of sovereign tenderness in which he stands to that mass; which to him is not indiscriminate at all, but a vast family of sons and daughters with the divine image almost effaced, and widely, sadly astray from their Heavenly Father's house. If you direct a powerful telescope toward a closely knotted cluster of stars, its effect will be to separate them into a little congregation of stellar points, shining each of them in individual lustre and beauty.

Now Christ is such a telescope; through Him we are helped not to see, but to feel the beauty that belongs to and beams from each as such; fitted all of them (the history of missions shows that) to shine, wherever uncleanness is removed, as jewels in the Saviour's crown. Christ feels the preciousness of every human soul; the Foreign Mission spirit is the power that he gives us of feeling the same thing. In a word, the true Foreign Mission spirit is the simple spirit of love become so much like that love which brought Christ to the earth, that our hearts sympathize with him in His mission, feel with Him the world-burden that he came to relieve, the world-sin from which he came to save, and go out tenderly to any soul, wishing *we* could help save it, and glad to get in under the weight of its ignorance, distress and sin in order that we may be *able* to help save it. It is love, the whole of it. We have said nothing about the *results* which missions have achieved; nothing about the commercial impulse communicated by leavening the nations with the Gospel, the opening of heathen markets to the products of American industry. I once heard a missionary sermon that told us how many plough shares a certain manufacturer had been able to export in consequence of the conversion of a certain tribe. That is interesting, but it is not quite what we want. "The field is the world." Foreign Missions deal with the "world," in the same manner and in the same spirit with which the Lord commenced dealing with it when He visited it as the first Foreign Missionary, though he came on a longer errand and sailed from a more distant shore.