

Righteousness

Third Series – Sermon Thirty-Four

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Righteousness is being a partaker in the right relationship that the Father, Son, and Spirit share and that right relationship shared with all of Their creation, leading us into LIFE! Anything other than this relationship as righteousness would be to say that our inventions of pretzel logic, of our religious, legal, and human constructions are, in fact, a straight line leading to LIFE!

Righteousness is to be so in love with what is fair and right to make it impossible for a man to do anything less than be absolutely fair. It is not the love of righteousness in the abstract that makes anyone righteous. It is instead the love of fair play towards everyone we encounter. Anything less than the fulfilling of fair play, in the joy of our divine relationship with others, is not righteousness.

Righteous living is an other-centered and self-giving life. The Life They demonstrated to us in giving Themselves for our liberation! Righteousness is simply, being followers of Their Life in the present moment, in our present place, with the ones present to us, and righteousness will be as natural as our next breath!

Outline

Righteousness of God - Righteousness is being a partaker in the right relationship that the Father, Son, and Spirit share.

Nature of Righteousness - The one who does right is righteous.

Faith as Righteousness - Faith is the one and only spiritual act that connects us to the power of God.

Righteousness - Anything less than the fulfilling of fair play, in the joy of our divine relationship with others, is not righteousness.

God's Righteous Life - God's life and righteousness are expressed in His right relationship with and love for us.

Becoming Righteous - Only the childlike can understand and become righteous.

Living in Righteousness - Righteous living is an other-centered and self-giving life.

Philippians 3:8-9 RSV

"...In order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own, based on law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith;"

Righteousness of God

What does Paul mean by the righteousness that is of God by faith? He means the same righteousness that the Father and Son have.

In second Corinthians, Paul says, "He hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Did God make him be treated like a sinner, killed and cast out of his own vineyard by his people, that we might in him be made righteous like God? As the antithesis stands, it is rhetorically correct. But if the first half means, "he made him to be treated as if he were a sinner," then the latter half would mean, "that we might be treated as if we were righteous?"

Some insist that is precisely what Paul means. "He means," they say, "that Jesus was treated by God as if he is a sinner, our sin imputed to him, so that we might be treated as if we were righteous, his righteousness being imputed to us."

This imputation is only valid by some sort of legal fiction. Jesus is treated as what he was not in order that we might be treated as what we are not. According to the prevailing theology, this is the best system that the God of truth, mercy, and forgiveness could invent for saving His children!

With this much double-mindedness, it would seem that every honest member of the body of Christ should challenge this so-called doctrine. It is a mean, nauseous invention, false, and the product of deception. To speak of it as a metaphor is to say it is a false one and the embodiment of lies. To say it expresses reality is to teach the worst of lying fiction. To say there may be a shadow of truth in it may be accurate, but there is not enough truth to be worth teaching it this way. Unenlightened by even a glimmer of divine imagination, this is a product of a poverty-stricken religious structure and the malformed offspring of a legal system. No one who knows his New Testament would dare say that this concept is ever used in it!

I have dealt with this in detail in "Justice." They say; first, God must punish the sinner, for justice requires it. Then they say he does not punish the sinner but punishes a perfectly righteous man instead, imputing his righteousness to the sinner, creating justice. This creates such confusion and the reversal of all that is right and wrong! Justice could not treat a righteous man as unrighteous, nor if justice required punishment, could it let the sinner go unpunished. To inflict the righteous with this pain in the name of justice is simply monstrous. No wonder unbelief is rampant. Believe in Moloch if you want, but call him Moloch, not Justice.

We can be sure that the righteousness God gives, "the righteousness that is of God," is real righteousness and not a legal invention. Please, God, I want no righteousness imputed to me. Let me be regarded as the sinner I am. Nothing will help me except being made a righteous man, one who sins no more.

Nature of Righteousness

The word "imputed" is only used once in the New Testament. I do not care whether this false doctrine occurred from a possible misunderstanding of scripture. The word Paul uses, and the thoughts that spring from it appeal to my sense of right and justice as much as its common application arouses my hatred. Paul says that a certain thing was imputed to Abraham for righteousness, or, as the revised says, "reckoned unto him." So, what was reckoned or credited to Abraham? The righteousness of another? God forbid! It was his own faith. The faith of Abraham is reckoned to him as righteousness.

To impute the righteousness of one to another is simply to act dishonestly. To call a man's faith his righteousness, is to speak the truth. Was it not righteous of Abraham to obey God? The Jews placed righteousness in keeping the law of Moses. Paul places righteousness as faith in God before Moses was born. You may answer that Abraham was unjust in many things and was not a righteous man, and you would be right. His righteousness would not have satisfied Paul's or his own, but it was counted as righteousness. Abraham's faith was righteousness.

It was faith mixed with action. "He went, not knowing whither he went." These actions based on believing in God will lead us to obedience. This obedience is the highest and deepest righteousness we are capable of and is at the root of all righteousness, and the spirit of obedience will work in us until we are perfect.

True religion is nothing, if not the deepest expression of common sense. Therefore, if we define righteousness in a common-sense way, as the giving to everyone what is fair, then the first responsibility is to Him who made us capable of owing in the first place. You may say this is not one's first feeling of duty. That is true, but the first in reality is seldom the first perceived. This first duty is too high and deep to be recognized by our newly awakened consciousness. If any of us were born perfect, it would be first. But since we are not, it is in the doing or honestly trying to do something else of worth that eventually leads us to see our obligation is to God. And this obligation includes all the other duties entirely.

A person could live for thousands of years in neglect of their duty and never come to see the fact that any obligation was upon him to put his faith and obedience in God. Never glimpse that he owed God something. I would agree that if God were what we think He is, we would indeed owe him little. However, we think little of Him because we do not do what we know to do and have not come to the

light. We have deadened, dulled, and hardened our nature. We have not been people without deceit and have not been true and fair.

Faith as Righteousness

While faith in God is our first duty, and therefore may be called righteousness in the person who lives in it, even if imperfectly, there are more reasons why faith should be counted to a man for righteousness' sake. Faith is the one spiritual act that brings us into contact with the original creative power. A connection that helps us in every struggle after righteousness and ensures our progress to perfection. So, the person who exercises faith may be called a righteous person. However far from perfection, they are in righteousness.

We may rightly call a woman beautiful who is not perfectly beautiful. In the Bible, people are constantly recognized as righteous who are far from perfect. **The Bible never demands the impossible. It does not require more than we can give at any given moment. Neither does it put any other burdens other than right relationships on us. It expects this rightness, and when we offer what we are capable of, it is content for the moment but goes on to ask for more. The common sense of the Bible is beautiful!**

Faith cannot look like righteousness to a person who has no faith in God. Neither can the faithless know righteousness' creative power towards their inferior lives. They cannot understand that faith is not merely the beginning of righteousness, but the seed of that life, the active force that grows into a righteous life.

It is not some single righteous action. It is the ongoing life of the whole person on the road of turning to good from evil. That is, turning our backs on all that is opposed to righteousness, so that we go on growing and discovering what it is and what it is not in us. In the one act of believing in God, that is, giving ourselves to Him in obedience, we show our hatred for what God hates, both what we have seen and what we are yet to see in ourselves.

A person may have turned to God and yet still be capable of many injustices to his neighbors that they have not yet understood as injustices. But as they go on in obedience, they will discover them. Not only will we grow more and more determined to be just, but be more sensitive to injustice in ourselves. A person who continues in injustice to his neighbor after it has been revealed cannot have turned to God.

We cannot be close to God and learn what God's justice is without being close to our neighbors and discovering our injustices to them. It is God's will that we find good and genuine relationships with our neighbors and choose to be righteous. If we are blamed for not choosing righteousness, not turning to the light, not coming out of darkness, then the ones who decide, turn, and come out are justified in their actions and declared righteous. They are not fully righteous but are growing into and towards righteousness.

We need the creative power of God and time for our will and effort to be fruitful. We are not yet righteous. We cannot yet act righteously, for only those who have become the image of God can live perfectly. We are born into the world without righteousness. Therefore, we could not see, know, or recognize that we are not in touch with perfect righteousness. It would be the most profound injustice to demand from us, with the threat of penalty more than we know how to give. However, it is the

highest form of love to require the proper relationships we can achieve. Using what life and hope we are capable of, we must keep turning from sin to righteousness, ever aiming at the perfection of God.

This obedient faith being all God can justly and fairly require of us is called righteousness in us. It would not be enough for our Father, or Jesus, or any saint, capable of perfect righteousness to expect anything less than this. Because we are capable of and able to choose to grow into righteousness, this is enough at any given moment for us as disciples of the Perfect One.

The righteousness of Abraham cannot be compared with that of Paul's. Abraham did not struggle with himself as Paul did, not because Abraham was better, but because his understanding of what was required was different than Paul's. Yet, he was made righteous in the same way Paul was righteous. Abraham had begun to be righteous, and God called his obedience righteousness, for faith is righteousness. His faith was the action of one who recognizes God as his will and way, and that is not a partial action but an all-embracing and all-determining one.

A single righteous action towards our neighbor cannot be called righteousness. A person not desiring righteousness may do many good things, and they will not be forgotten, but they will not be credited as righteousness. Abraham's action of obedient faith was righteous even though it was far behind that of Paul's obedience. **Abraham started at the beginning of the long, slow, and disappointing preparation of the Jewish people. Paul began at its close, with the incarnation of Jesus behind him. Both believed in God, obeying Him, and therefore both were righteous. They were righteous because they submitted themselves to God to make them right. It would be unjust not to call them righteous, not to attribute their faith as righteousness. God is entirely just, not resembling a sovereign king nor a bad theologian in formulating this horrible doctrine of vicarious sacrifice.**

Righteousness

What, then, is the righteousness of God by faith? It is simply the thing God wants everyone to be, working it out in them by constant obedient contact with Himself. It is not an attribute either of God or man, but a fact of the character of both. God's righteousness worked out in us so that as He is righteous, we too are righteous. Our righteousness is not granted to us because we obey this or that law, or, because we keep, every law. Being righteous is to have such a heart, soul, mind, and will that we would recoil with horror from the slightest possible breach of any relationship without regard to the law. It is to be so in love with what is fair and right to make it impossible for a man to do anything less than be absolutely fair. It is not the love of righteousness in the abstract that makes anyone righteous. It is instead the love of fair play towards everyone we encounter. Anything less than the fulfilling of fair play, in the joy of our divine relationship with others, is not righteousness.

The righteousness of God goes far beyond mere deeds. It requires of us, as our highest obligation, love, helping mercy, and justice to our fellow man, those who have done nothing for us and those who have harmed us. Our relationships with others, God first and then our neighbors, must one day be as they genuinely are the joy of our very being. Then nothing that is not in harmony with these relationships will appear good to us.

Every thought will not merely be just, but more because they are alive and true. What heart in heaven would even dream of constructing a philosophical system of what we owe God and why we owe it? The light of our life, our sole eternal and infinite joy, is simply God-God-God and nothing but God, and

all His creatures in Him! He is all and in all, and the kingdom's children know it. For everything is included in God. To not be true to anything He has made is to be untrue to Him. God is truth. God is life and to be in Him is to know Him and need no law. Existence then will be eternal Goodness!

God's Righteous Life

You may not like this way of life, but there is and can be no other way. However, before you judge it, you must know a little of God as He is, rather than how you imagine Him. I say it this way because no one could know Him as He is and not desire Him. In the proportion we know Him, we will want Him until we come to live in, from, and for Him with all our conscious being. That is why the Jews did not like the Lord. Jesus cared so completely and simply for His Father's will and not for anything they called His will.

The righteousness of God by faith is the source and root of that righteousness, the same righteousness as God possesses. It is different only as the created differs from the creating. The righteousness of those who do the will of their Father is the same as that of Jesus' and the Father's. The righteousness of God which is of God by faith is God's righteousness. The righteous one thinks as God thinks, loves what He loves, and cares for nothing but the will of God.

Even while this righteousness is being born in us, we will say to ourselves, "Why should I be troubled about this or that? Does God care about it? No. Then why should I care? I must not care either. I will not care!" If they do not know whether He cares about it or not, they will say, "If God wants me to have my desire, He will give it to me. If He does not, neither will I want it. So, in the meantime, I will do my work.

Becoming Righteous

The man who has God's righteousness does not love something merely because it is right, but loves the very rightness in it. God not only loves the thought, but He loves the one thinking the thought. So, God loves the thought alive within the man. This man does not find his joy in himself. He experiences the joy in himself, but it comes to him from others. This joy comes from God first and then from somebody, anybody, and everybody next.

In the fulness of his contentment, he would rather cease to be instead of another ceasing to exist. He would rather do without knowing himself instead of losing one of the brothers and sisters God has given him. The one who truly knows God is, and always will be, content with what God, who is the heart of himself, gives him. This one is entirely God's and not his own. His awareness of himself is his reflection of those around him, not the result of his own reflection and regard of himself.

It is not the contemplation of what God has made him. It is in being what God has made. Considering who God is and what He has made in his fellows gives him joy. This one wants nothing and feels that he has everything, for he is in the heart of his Father and receives His thoughts and mind. He knows that if he needs anything, it is his before he asks, for his Father has decided, in the power and truth of His Fatherhood, for him to be one with Himself.

This relationship, or something like it, for our words are inadequate to express divine things, is the righteousness which is of God by faith. Righteousness is so far from anything, our ideas and concepts can invent on the garbage heap of the legal fiction of vicarious sacrifice, or its shadow of imputed

righteousness, that only children with childlike hearts can understand it. And not understood by those who think themselves wise and prudent. The seemingly wise and prudent interpret God from themselves and do not understand Him. The childlike do so from God Himself and do know Him. These intelligent ones must make a system and arrange things in their mind before they believe. The child sees, believes, and obeys, understanding that he must become perfect in love as his Father is perfect!

What if an angel, seemingly coming from heaven, told us that God had let us off and that He did not require this much of us and would be content with less? What if that God, while not allowing us to be wicked, would pass by a great deal, would modify His demands because of His love and in recognition that it was hard for us to be good? The true child of God would at once recognize, woven with the angel's starry brilliance, the flicker of the flames of hell and would respond, "Get thee behind me, Satan." This response would not be surprising, for the words of the deceiver, if even for a moment imagined true, would be recognized in the shadow of hell rising over the face of creation. All hope would vanish, the eternal Son would be as that of a dead man, and the glory of the Father would depart from His face. That is, until the groan of a thunderous light burst forth from the depths of the universe, and the truth flashes on His child's soul from the heart of the Eternal, Immortal, and Invisible One, destroying the lie of this messenger of darkness!

Living in Righteousness

Let God do it, and you will know. Even if you never come to know it, there it will be. Participate with Them, or They cannot do it. God created us as children, with our origin in the possibility of our becoming sons and daughters. He gave us the power of will, but we must choose it! If God is not doing it in you because you are preventing Him from the start, why should I tell you, even if I know the process of how He would do, what you will not let Him do?

Why should you understand? What claim have you to understanding? Better said, how could you possibly understand? Righteousness deals with more profound and higher things than you can know until at least the work has begun in you. Perhaps if you understood and approved of His plans, you would allow Him to make of you something divine! It would be worthless to try and teach only your intellect that which can only be learned or understood by your whole being. Does anyone think this falls in the dominion of man? I do not think so!

Let the dead bury the dead, and let the dead teach their dead.

For me, I will try to awaken the dead. And for those who are awake, I cry, for the sake of the Father and His Son, the first-born to whom we belong and those they have given us to love. Let patience have its perfect work, as a statue under the sculptor's chisel, stand steady under the blows of His mallet. As clay on the wheel, let the hands of the divine potter mold you to His will. Obey the Father's most minor directions. Listen to your Brother who knows you, loves you, and died for you. Children beat down your sin and trample it to death under your feet!

When you sit in your house, which is His, open your windows to breathe the air of His coming presence. Put watchers on the walls to listen in the darkness for the sound of His coming. And let your hand be on the doorknob to open the door at His first knock. If you open and do not see Him, do not say He did not knock, but understand He is there and wants you to come out to Him.

It may be that He has something He wants you to do for Him. Go and do it, and perhaps you will return with new prayers and find a new window in your soul. Never wait for a better time or place to talk to Him. Do not wait till you go to church or your closet. That would be to make Him wait. He will listen to you as you walk down the path, on the crowded streets, or in ordinary places. Indeed, remember that it is not in any church that the service He requires is done. He will never say to anyone, "You never went to church, so depart from me, I do not know you. But insomuch as you never helped one of my Father's children, you have done nothing for me." A church or chapel is not the place of divine service. It is a place of prayer, a place of praise, a place to feed upon good things, and a place to learn of God, and what place is not? It is a place to look into the eyes of your neighbor and love God along with him. But in the world in which you move, make your living, love, and labor, not the church you go to on holidays, these are the places of your divine service and the service of your neighbor.

Do not pay attention if men mock you and speak lies of you or, in goodwill, defend you unworthily. Pay no attention if even the righteous turn their backs on you. Only take heed that you turn not from them. Take courage because nothing covered will not be revealed and hidden that will not be known.

CLIFFNOTES WITH ORIGINAL MACDONALD QUOTES

Righteousness of God

That is, that, by a sort of legal fiction, Jesus was treated as what he was not, in order that we might be treated as what we are not. This is the best device, according to the prevailing theology, that the God of truth, the God of mercy, whose glory is that he is just to men by forgiving their sins, could fall upon for saving his creatures!

It seems to me that, seeing much duplicity exists in the body of Christ, every honest member of it should protest against any word tending to imply the existence of falsehood in the indwelling spirit of that body. I now protest against this so-called doctrine, counting it the rightful prey of the foolishlest wind in the limbo of vanities, whither I would gladly do my best to send it. It is a mean, nauseous invention, false, and productive of falsehood. Say it is a figure, I answer it is not only a false figure but an embodiment of untruth; say it expresses a reality, and I say it teaches the worst of lies;

Be sure that the thing that God gives, the righteousness that is of God, is a real thing, and not a contemptible legalism. Pray God I have no righteousness imputed to me. Let me be regarded as the sinner I am; for nothing will serve my need but to be made a righteous man, one that will no more sin.

Nature of Righteousness

We have the word imputed just once in the New Testament. Whether the evil doctrine may have sprung from any possible misunderstanding of the passage where it occurs, I hardly care to inquire. The word as Paul uses it, and the whole of the thought whence his use of it springs, appeals to my sense of right and

justice as much as the common use of it arouses my abhorrence. The apostle says that a certain thing was imputed to Abraham for righteousness; or, as the revised version has it, 'reckoned unto him:' what was it that was thus imputed to Abraham? The righteousness of another? God forbid! It was his own faith. The faith of Abraham is reckoned to him for righteousness.

If you define righteousness in the common-sense, that is, in the divine fashion—for religion is nothing if it be not the deepest common-sense—as a giving to everyone his due, then certainly the first due is to him who makes us capable of owing, that is, makes us responsible creatures. You may say this is not one's first feeling of duty. True; but the first in reality is seldom the first perceived. The first duty is too high and too deep to come first into consciousness. If any one were born perfect, which I count an eternal impossibility, then the highest duty would come first into the consciousness. As we are born, it is the doing of, or at least the honest trying to do many another duty, that will at length lead a man to see that his duty to God is the first and deepest and highest of all, including and requiring the performance of all other duties whatever.

Faith as Righteousness

But while faith in God is the first duty, and may therefore well be called righteousness in the man in whom it is operative, even though it be imperfect, there is more reason than this why it should be counted to a man for righteousness. It is the one spiritual act which brings the man into contact with the original creative power, able to help him in every endeavour after righteousness, and ensure his progress to perfection. The man who exercises it may therefore also well be called a righteous man, however far from complete in righteousness.

The Bible never deals with impossibilities, never demands of any man at any given moment a righteousness of which at that moment he is incapable; neither does it lay upon any man any other law than that of perfect righteousness. It demands of him righteousness; when he yields that righteousness of which he is capable, content for the moment, it goes on to demand more: the common-sense of the Bible is lovely.

He needs creative God, and time for will and effort. Not yet quite righteous, he cannot yet act quite righteously, for only the man in whom the image of God is perfected can live perfectly. Born into the world without righteousness, he cannot see, he cannot know, he is not in touch with perfect righteousness, and it would be the deepest injustice to demand of him, with a penalty, at any given moment, more than he knows how to yield; but it is the highest lore constantly to demand of him perfect righteousness as what he must attain to. With what life and possibility is in him, he must keep turning to righteousness and abjuring iniquity, ever aiming at the perfection of God.

Such an obedient faith is most justly and fairly, being all that God himself can require of the man, called by God righteousness in the man. It would not be enough for the righteousness of God, or Jesus, or any perfected saint, because they are capable of perfect righteousness, and, knowing what is perfect righteousness, choose to be perfectly righteous; but, in virtue of the life and growth in it, it is enough at a given moment for the disciple of the Perfect.

Abraham started at the beginning of the long, slow, disappointing preparation of the Jewish people; Paul started at its close, with the story of Jesus behind him. Both believed, obeying God, and therefore both were righteous. They were righteous because they gave themselves up to God to make them righteous;

and not to call such men righteous, not to impute their faith to them for righteousness, would be unjust. But God is utterly just, and nowise resembles a legal-minded Roman emperor, or a bad pope formulating the doctrine of vicarious sacrifice.

Righteousness

What, then, is the righteousness which is of God by faith? It is simply the thing that God wants every man to be, wrought out in him by constant obedient contact with God himself. It is not an attribute either of God or man, but a fact of character in God and in man. It is God's righteousness wrought out in us, so that as he is righteous we too are righteous. It does not consist in obeying this or that law; not even the keeping of every law, so that no hair's-breadth did we run counter to one of them, would be righteousness. To be righteous is to be such a heart, soul, mind, and will, as, without regard to law, would recoil with horror from the lightest possible breach of any law. It is to be so in love with what is fair and right as to make it impossible for a man to do anything that is less than absolutely righteous. It is not the love of righteousness in the abstract that makes anyone righteous, but such a love of fairplay toward everyone with whom we come into contact, that anything less than the fulfilling, with a clear joy, of our divine relation to him or her, is impossible.

For the righteousness of God goes far beyond mere deeds, and requires of us love and helping mercy as our highest obligation and justice to our fellow men—those of them too who have done nothing for us, those even who have done us wrong. Our relations with others, God first and then our neighbour in order and degree, must one day become, as in true nature they are, the gladness of our being; and nothing then will ever appear good for us, that is not in harmony with those blessed relations.

Every thought will not merely be just, but will be just because it is something more, because it is live and true. What heart in the kingdom of heaven would ever dream of constructing a metaphysical system of what we owed to God and why we owed it? The light of our life, our sole, eternal, and infinite joy, is simply God—God—God—nothing but God, and all his creatures in him. He is all and in all, and the children of the kingdom know it. He includes all things; not to be true to anything he has made is to be untrue to him. God is truth, is life; to be in God is to know him and need no law. Existence will be eternal Godness.

God's Righteous Life

You would not like that way of it? There is, there can be, no other; but before you can judge of it, you must know at least a little of God as he is, not as you imagine him. I say as you imagine him, because it cannot be that any creature should know him as he is and not desire him. In proportion as we know him we must desire him, until at length we live in and for him with all our conscious heart.

The righteousness which is of God by faith in the source, the prime of that righteousness, is then just the same kind of thing as God's righteousness, differing only as the created differs from the creating. The righteousness of him who does the will of his father in heaven, is the righteousness of Jesus Christ, is God's own righteousness. The righteousness which is of God by faith in God, is God's righteousness. The man who has this righteousness, thinks about things as God thinks about them, loves the things that God loves, cares for nothing that God does not care about.

Becoming Righteous

He would rather, in the fulness of his content, pass out of being, rather himself cease to exist, than that another should. He could do without knowing himself, but he could not know himself and spare one of the brothers or sisters God had given him. The man who really knows God, is, and always will be, content with what God, who is the very self of his self, shall choose for him; he is entirely God's, and not at all his own. His consciousness of himself is the reflex from those about him, not the result of his own turning in of his regard upon himself.

This then, or something like this, for words are poor to tell the best things, is the righteousness which is of God by faith—so far from being a thing built on the rubbish heap of legal fiction called vicarious sacrifice, or its shadow called imputed righteousness, that only the child with the child-heart, so far ahead of and so different from the wise and prudent, can understand it.

Living in Righteousness

Let him do it, and perhaps you will know; if you never know, yet there it will be. Help him to do it, or he cannot do it. He originates the possibility of your being his son, his daughter; he makes you able to will it, but you must will it. If he is not doing it in you—that is, if you have as yet prevented him from beginning, why should I tell you, even if I knew the process, how he would do what you will not let him do?

for me, I will try to wake them. To those who are awake, I cry, 'For the sake of your father and the first-born among many brethren to whom we belong, for the sake of those he has given us to love the most dearly, let patience have her perfect work. Stand under the chisel of the sculptor, stand steady to the blows of his mallet. Clay on the wheel, let the fingers of the divine potter model you at their will. Obey the Father's lightest word; hear the Brother who knows you, and died for you; beat down your sin, and trample it to death.

It may be he has something for thee to do for him. Go and do it, and perhaps thou wilt return with a new prayer, to find a new window in thy soul. Never wait for fitter time or place to talk to him. To wait till thou go to church, or to thy closet, is to make him wait. He will listen as thou walkest in the lane or the crowded street, on the common or in the place of shining concourse. Remember, if indeed thou art able to know it, that not in any church is the service done that he requires. He will say to no man, 'You never went to church: depart from me; I do not know you;' but, 'Inasmuch as you never helped one of my father's children, you have done nothing for me.' Church or chapel is not the place for divine service. It is a place of prayer, a place of praise, a place to feed upon good things, a place to learn of God, as what place is not? It is a place to look in the eyes of your neighbour, and love God along with him. But the world in which you move, the place of your living and loving and labour, not the church you go to on your holiday, is the place of divine service. Serve your neighbour, and you serve him.