

Stories of The Master

Lessons in the Value of Family



WHEN the work of teaching the people did not press them, it was the custom of the master and his followers to rest from their labors each Wednesday. On this particular Wednesday they ate breakfast somewhat later than usual, and the camp was pervaded by silence; little was said during the first half of this morning meal. At last the master spoke: "I desire that you rest today. Take time to think over all that has happened since we came here and meditate on what is just ahead, of which I have plainly told you. Make sure that the truth abides in your lives, and that you daily grow in grace."

After breakfast the master informed Aaron that he intended to be absent for the day and suggested that his followers be permitted to spend the time in accordance with their own choosing, except that under no circumstances should they go within the gates of the city.

When the master made ready to go into the hills alone, David accosted him, saying: "You well know, master, that many seek to destroy you, and yet you make ready to go alone into the hills. To do this is folly; I will therefore send three men with you well prepared to see that no harm befalls you." The master looked over the three well-armed and stalwart men and said to David: "You mean well, but you err in that

you fail to understand that I need no one to defend me. No man will lay hands on me until that hour when I am ready to lay down my life in conformity to my Father's will. These men may not accompany me. I desire to go alone, that I may commune with the Father."

Upon hearing these words, David and his armed guards withdrew; but as the master started off alone, young Mark came forward with a small basket containing food and water and suggested that, if the master intended to be away all day, he might find himself hungry. The master smiled on Mark and as he reached down to take the basket from Mark's hand, the youth ventured to say: "But, master, you may set the basket down while you turn aside to pray and go on without it. Besides, if I should go along to carry the lunch, you would be more free to worship, and I will surely be silent. I will ask no questions and will stay by the basket when you go apart by yourself to pray."

While making this speech, the temerity of which astonished some of the near-by listeners, Mark had made bold to hold onto the basket and there they stood, Mark and the master both holding the basket. Presently the master let go and, looking down on the lad, said: "Since with all your heart you crave to go with me, it shall not be denied you. We will go off by ourselves and have a good visit. You may ask me anything that arises in your heart, and we will comfort and console each other. You may start out carrying the lunch, and when you grow weary, I will help you. Follow on with me."

The master did not return to the camp that evening until after sunset; he spent this last day of quiet visiting with this truth-hungry youth and talking with his

Paradise Father. This event has become known on high as "the day which a young man spent with God in the hills." Forever this occasion exemplifies the willingness of the Creator to fellowship the creature. Even a youth, if the desire of the heart is really supreme, can command the attention and enjoy the loving companionship of the God of a universe, actually experience the unforgettable ecstasy of being alone with God in the hills, and for a whole day. And such was the unique experience of Mark on this Wednesday in the foothills.

The master visited much with Mark, talking freely about the affairs of this world and the next. Mark told him how much he regretted that he had not been old enough to be one of the favored followers and expressed his great appreciation that he had been permitted to follow on with them since their first travels.

Mark was thrilled by the memory of this day with the master in the hills, but he never forgot the master's final admonition, spoken just as they were about to return to the camp, when he said: "Well, Mark, we have had a good visit, a real day of rest, but see to it that you tell no man the things which I told you." And Mark never did reveal anything that transpired on this day which he spent in the hills.

In the course of this day's visiting with Mark, the master spent considerable time comparing their early childhood and later boyhood experiences. Although Mark's parents possessed more of this world's goods than had the master's parents, there was much experience in their boyhood which was very similar. The master said many things which helped Mark better to understand his parents and other

members of his family.

The master said: "I know you will prove loyal to my teachings because I can depend upon your present faith and love when these qualities are grounded upon such an early training as has been your portion at home. You are the product of a home where the parents bear each other a sincere affection, and therefore you have not been overloved so as injuriously to exalt your concept of self-importance. Neither has your personality suffered distortion in consequence of your parents' loveless maneuvering for your confidence and loyalty, the one against the other. You have enjoyed that parental love which insures laudable self-confidence and which fosters normal feelings of security. But you have also been fortunate in that your parents possessed wisdom as well as love; and it was wisdom which led them to withhold most forms of indulgence and many luxuries which wealth can buy while they sent you to school along with your neighborhood playfellows, and they also encouraged you to learn how to live in this world by permitting you to have original experience. You came where I preached with your young friend Amos. Both of you desired to go with us. When you returned home, your parents consented; Amos's parents refused; they loved their son so much that they denied him the blessed experience which you have had, even such as you this day enjoy. By running away from home, Amos could have joined us, but in so doing he would have wounded love and sacrificed loyalty. Even if such a course had been wise, it would have been a terrible price to pay for experience, independence, and liberty.

"Wise parents, such as yours, see to it that their children do not have to wound

love or stifle loyalty in order to develop independence and enjoy invigorating liberty when they have grown up to your age.

"Love, Mark, is the supreme reality of the universe when bestowed by all-wise beings, but it is a dangerous and oftentimes semiselfish trait as it is manifested in the experience of mortal parents. When you get married and have children of your own to rear, make sure that your love is admonished by wisdom and guided by intelligence.

"Your young friend Amos believes this teaching just as much as you, but I cannot fully depend upon him; I am not certain about what he will do in the years to come. His early home life was not such as would produce a wholly dependable person. Amos is too much like one of the followers who failed to enjoy a normal, loving, and wise home training. Your whole afterlife will be more happy and dependable because you spent your first eight years in a normal and well-regulated home. You possess a strong and well-knit character because you grew up in a home where love prevailed and wisdom reigned. Such a childhood training produces a type of loyalty which assures me that you will go through with the course you have begun."

The master went on to explain to Mark how a child is wholly dependent on his parents and the associated home life for all his early concepts of everything intellectual, social, moral, and even spiritual since the family represents to the young child all that he can first know of either human or divine relationships. The child must derive his first impressions of the universe from the mother's care; he is wholly dependent on the earthly father for

his first ideas of the heavenly Father. The child's subsequent life is made happy or unhappy, easy or difficult, in accordance with his early mental and emotional life, conditioned by these social and spiritual relationships of the home. A human being's entire afterlife is enormously influenced by what happens during the first few years of existence. Very few modern homes are such good places in which to nurture boys and girls as the master's and Mark's simple homes were. The love life of a wise home and the loyal devotion of true religion exert a profound reciprocal influence upon each other. Such a home life enhances religion, and genuine religion always glorifies the home.

As long as we teach the child to pray, "Our Father who is in heaven," a tremendous responsibility rests upon all earthly fathers so to live and order their homes that the word *father* becomes worthily enshrined in the minds and hearts of all growing children.