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THE APPROACHING
Mission Services.

BY A LADY.

EDITED BY THE
REV. A. W. THOROLD.

LONDON: WILLIAM MACINTOSH,
24, PATERNOSTER ROW.



THE APPROACHING MISSION SERVICES.

A WEEK of SPECIAL MISSION SERVICES is proposed. The movement, which has spread so rapidly in all parts of the kingdom, has reached your own doors. Energetic preparation is being made, earnest prayer is being offered, and warm expectation is already awake.

What is it all about? Why do people talk of "expectation"? Why should clergymen give themselves so much trouble? And how will it affect the readers of this paper?

We will answer the last question first, and say to every one who reads this: Perhaps it will affect *you* for ever and ever and ever! Perhaps, ere that week closes, you, who know and love the Lord Jesus, will be sealed anew

with a fresh baptism of the Spirit, blessed with richer manifestations of Christ's presence and love, filled with deeper joy, and stirred up to holier zeal and more single-hearted devotedness than ever before. Perhaps, ere that week closes, you who earnestly desire to be saved, and yet have never dared to lay hold of Christ's full and free salvation, will be rejoicing "with joy unspeakable and full of glory." Perhaps, ere that week closes, you who have "no hope, and are without God in the world," will be made "new creatures" altogether, will know the terrible danger in which you have been living, and the hitherto unguessed joy of having a "sure and certain hope," and an Everlasting Friend to love and lean upon. Such are the effects which we hope for, pray for, and expect.

It is a thrillingly grand and glorious thing to stand on the eve of such a season, looking forward to such blessings, and to an actual share in them. It is a thrillingly solemn and

awful thing to remember that one may be taken and another left; that a day of doom may follow close upon a day of grace, and that if the blessing is despised or neglected by any heart, that heart may be left dry, dead, untouched, while showers of blessing fall on all around.

But WHAT IS A MISSION WEEK? It is a means of grace which, more than any other of late years, God appears to have used for the conversion of sinners, and the raising of His own people to a higher, holier, and happier life.

Many important towns have followed this plan. The whole week is set apart for one object. Special services, not long, but intensely fervent, are held in every church every day; the usual order of services being shortened, and earnest, striking addresses given by special preachers, specially qualified for this work. These are preceded and fol-

lowed by meetings for Prayer:—for pleading and wrestling with God for His blessing, and the outpouring of His Spirit. Arrangements are made to bring the glad tidings to those who will not come to any place of worship, and to those who cannot attend the special Church Services. Meetings and addresses are planned for all classes; rich as well as poor. Short addresses are given in factories, workshops, and railway sheds; gatherings of different callings and classes are held; cabmen, policemen, servants, young shopmen and shopwomen, poor mothers, young ladies in boarding schools, gentlemen in business—all are considered and arranged for.

It may not be advisable to mention names, but we could tell of many places where great and abiding blessing has rested upon the Mission Week. In one small town the number of those who were not merely impressed at the time, but have become decided and steady Christians, is estimated at twelve hundred! In a manufacturing town,

the numbers added to the church in one parish were so great, that the Incumbent had to procure an additional Curate, on purpose to take up the work arising out of the Mission Week! In another, it was the working men who seemed to obtain the greatest blessing; and such congregations of these have perhaps never been seen as in a large church in that town on the Sunday evenings after the Mission Week. In the same place, the railway men, to whom short daily addresses had been given, have requested the Vicar to continue them regularly; and the results have been such as no scoffers could ignore or explain away.

It has been remarked that the greatest blessing, in nearly every place, has been among those who have already had serious impressions, and in whom the soil was in some degree prepared, rather than among such as have had no previous care or thought about their souls. Is not this a very important note of encourage-

ment and of warning? To these who are seeking Jesus, but have not found Him, it gives encouragement to pray very earnestly that this coming Mission Week may be the great turning-point of their lives, and the coming out of doubt and darkness and indecision, into "marvellous light" and "glorious liberty." To those who care for none of these things, it gives a warning, lest this great opportunity should only add to their condemnation, if they refuse to "prepare their hearts to seek God."

Our God may work above reason, but He does not work against reason. So we may fairly ask, WHY SHOULD WE EXPECT GREAT THINGS FROM A MISSION WEEK? And the answer is no mystery, to those who know the secrets and the power of PRAYER. For months beforehand, many faithful hearts have been pleading, constantly and intensely, for a blessing. As the time approaches, more and

more are stirred up to join in these prayers. Their fervency and earnestness deepen day by day, till at last one great cry is ascending day and night, unheard by the sleeping souls around, but strong and loud in "the ears of the Lord God of Sabaoth." How is this? Do our own evil hearts prompt to such prayer? Does Satan set us praying? How else can it arise, but from the promptings of the HOLY SPIRIT? The God in Whose hand the blessing is hid, waiting to be gracious, pours out "the spirit of grace and of supplication" upon His people, because He "will be inquired of" for the good things which He purposes to give. And the coming shower of blessing, of which this spirit of prayer is the earnest, will be all the sweeter and more powerful for being thus, as it were, drawn down by their prayers.

"He that watereth shall be watered;" and it seems that these prayers for those around generally receive a double answer; returning

in a wonderful gladness,—a very reaping-time of joy, upon the hearts of those who have been, it may be, sowing these supplications in tears. Let no Christian heart lose its share in the blessing, by neglecting or delaying to join in the prayer. Let every one resolve at once, by God's help, to make it a subject of daily prayer, during the coming weeks of anticipation.

But WHY DO THE CLERGY TAKE ALL THIS TROUBLE? They are not paid for it; they will get nothing by it; they will only be wearied and worn out, after days of work, and perhaps night-hours of prayer. Why? It is because they love the people around them; and because they believe that God means what He says, when He speaks in His Word, of Sin, Death, Judgment, Eternity, and of Pardon, Life, Salvation, and Glory. Months of prayer and preparation, and a week of labour to the utmost, are a very small thing to those whose

whole lives are being spent for their people, and who know that in a few years every soul under their care will be in heaven or in hell.

If so, shall it be a great thing to those for whom they toil, to give a few hours to the affairs of millions of years beyond imagination? What does it matter about any business or engagement, in comparison? "What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

The Mission Week will be a golden opportunity; perhaps the very last for some who read this. Loving voices will say to you, "Jesus of Nazareth passeth by! Rise! He calleth thee!" Oh, will you not come to Him, that you may have life?

A word with those who talk about "excitement," or who throw cold water on that zeal for God which one longs to see kindled in every heart. Do any perish through religious excitement? But are not thousands perishing of religious apathy?

There is much foolish parrot-talk about this, by persons who, having no real means or power of forming an opinion of their own, catch up clap-trap phrases of irreligious cant, (and for every phrase of religious, there are ten of irreligious cant!) and talk grandly about the "danger of excitement." What *is* the danger of it? Confessedly this, that if the feelings are touched and excited, without real change of heart, they lapse into greater coldness and deadness than before. Then the danger obviously is—not of going too far, but of not going far enough! None are so illogical as those who try to argue with God. See to it, you who would hinder others by talk about the danger of "excitement," but shut your eyes to the danger of death and hell,—see to it that God does not take you at your word, and leave you, untouched by "excitement of feeling," cool and easy, outside the gate, while others are entering in. What will you feel, when the last hour has struck for you, when

the door is shut, and you are outside, left to "the blackness of darkness for ever"? Will there be no "excitement" in the moment of *that* discovery, think you?

But some real Christians look a little doubtfully upon new efforts, and hold aloof, and do not see why ordinary means should not be sufficient. *Have* they proved all-sufficient? *Do* they reach all the unconverted? And if not, why not try other means, in the spirit of our heavenly Father, who doth "*devise means* that His banished be not expelled from Him;" in the spirit of our Master, who said, "Go ye out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in;" in the spirit of His follower, who said, "If by *any* means I might save some." Let us not, then, hinder the gospel of Christ by our chilling half-heartedness.

While praying for "showers of blessing" upon our country and our Church, surely it will be both right and pleasant that Christians

should join their pastor in seeking and expecting a special blessing on their own parish. God's order appears to be, "The more prayer, the more blessing."

Again, — the approaching Mission Week seems a new call to pray for our own home circles, that if any who are near and dear to us are not yet "on the Lord's side," they may then be brought to Christ, and thenceforth live unto Him. And, drawing the circle still closer, shall we not each, whatever be our state or need, whatever be our age or position, seek a personal blessing upon our own souls? "*Bless me, even me also, O my Father!*"

F. R. H.

LORD, I hear of showers of blessing
 Thou art scattering full and free;
 Showers the thirsty land refreshing:
 Let some droppings fall on me,
 Even me.

Pass me not, O gracious Father !
 Sinful though my heart may be ;
 Thou might'st curse me, but the rather
 Let Thy mercy light on me,
 Even me.

Pass me not, O tender Saviour !
 Let me love and cling to Thee ;
 I am longing for Thy favour ;
 When Thou comest, call for me,
 Even me.

Pass me not, O mighty Spirit !
 Thou canst make the blind to see ;
 Witnesser of Jesu's merit,
 Speak the word of power to me,
 Even me.

Have I long in sin been sleeping,
 Long been slighting, grieving Thee ?
 Has the world my heart been keeping ?
 Oh, forgive and rescue me,
 Even me.

Love of God, so pure and changeless,
 Blood of God, so rich and free,
 Grace of God, so strong and boundless,
 Magnify them all in me,
 Even me.

Pass me not, this lost one bringing ;
 Satan's slave Thy child shall be ;
 All my heart to Thee is springing ;
 Blessing others, oh, bless me,
 Even me !

E.C.

Hymn 830 in "Songs of Grace and Glory for Mission Services." (London : Nisbet & Co.)



HINTS
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