

The Gospel Witness

PUBLISHED WEEKLY.

IN THE INTEREST OF JARVIS STREET BAPTIST
CHURCH, TORONTO, AND OF EVANGELICAL TRUTH.

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PASTOR AND EDITOR.

"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ." Romans 1:16.

SATURDAY, JUNE 24th, 1922.

Vol. 1.

No. 6.

The Jarvis Street Pulpit

"THE SHADOW OF THY WINGS."

A Sermon by the Pastor.

"How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings."—Psalm 36:7.

Somewhere I have read of a woman who, finding her sight was failing, consulted an oculist. Having carefully examined her, he inquired how far she was able to see from her windows. She replied that the street was narrow, and that only brick walls could be seen across the street. The oculist then inquired if there were not an upper storey from whose window she might look over the roofs of the houses opposite. She said there was, and that from the attic window the mountains could be seen in the distance. He then immediately prescribed a half an hour at the attic window every morning, gazing at the distant hills. The busy housewife replied that she had no time for such idleness; but the oculist insisted that she must find time, and that the half hour should be extended to an hour or more as it might be found possible.

Even the first morning the patient experienced a new restfulness of spirit, and a physical refreshment to which she had long been a stranger. The half hour soon became an hour; and as the household duties were despatched with a new facility, the good housewife found herself drawn to her attic window in the afternoon as well as in the morning, to find rest in gazing upon the scene of beauty beyond. The headaches ceased, the nerves were soothed, and the eyes regained their wonted vigor. She was cured by her attic window, by lifting her eyes unto the hills.

And this text prescribes the attic window for us all. It spreads before us the divine prospect which awaits the view of those who look through the window of the promise with the eye of faith.

This psalmist had been looking at the blank walls of the houses across the street; and had experienced the discomforts of near-sightedness; and had learned that it is not well to dwell too long within shuttered windows, nor to occupy the mind too much with the morally tragic aspects of human life. There are views

of human nature which are not encouraging; there are evidences of human depravity sufficient to inspire one with despair of his kind. "The transgression of the wicked," so brazen and blatant, proclaimed that there was "no fear of God before his eyes." The sinner's self complacency; his deceitfulness; the persistency of his folly; his premeditated continuance in ways that were not good, all filled him with abhorrence. And it is still possible to fill the mind with horror by gazing into the backyard of the world, and upon the heaps of refuse, and the litter of its broken goblets and abandoned toys. Whoever exclusively occupies his mind with such views of life, cannot escape the infliction of cynicism. Our text shows us, however, a more excellent way.

It teaches us that we must find a place for God in our thinking. Observe how the psalmist lifts his soul out of the fetid atmosphere of the low plane of carnal living. He turns his thought toward God; and as one after another of the elements of the divine character appear to his mind, he casts about to find some standard by which they may be appraised: "Thy mercy, O Lord, is"—but on earth he can find nothing like it, therefore he cries, "Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens." Then he surveys the divine faithfulness, and the long record of a covenant-keeping God. Again he can find no earthly comparison, and exclaims, "Thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds." He observes man's spasmodic and feeble attempts toward goodness and his determined pursuit of evil; and, in contrast, beholds the divine righteousness, and cries, "Thy righteousness is like the great mountains." And then, perhaps with his own and his people's history in view, and with the consciousness of the abounding evil about him, he observes, "Thy judgments are a great deep." Yet the earth abides, and the world of men continues,—"O Lord thou preservest man and beast." And with this view of the harmonious co-operation of the divine qualities in the preservation of the race, he worshipfully exclaims, "How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings."

I. WE CAN ENGAGE IN NO HOLIER EXERCISE THAN THE WORSHIPFUL CONTEMPLATION OF THE DIVINE CHARACTER.

Ours is a "practical" age, and we talk much of "practical" preaching. It is well, however, to reflect that doing is easier than being. It were easier to do good for a month than to be good for an hour. The truth is, nothing of more practical value than a clearer knowledge of God. The evil of the wicked here observed by the psalmist is due to there being "no fear of God before his eyes." We must learn to set the Lord always before us, saying in our hearts, "My meditation of him shall be sweet." As a mother is enraptured with the beauty of her child; as a maiden glories in the real or fancied virtues of her lover, so should we always have in our mind the excellencies of our God; for as He becomes glorious in our own eyes we shall be able to exalt Him before others.

"How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God!" What a wealth of meaning is in that word "lovingkindness"! It is a word whose music is its definition. One can almost feel what it means. The psalmist has been inspired with his view of the divine mercy, and faithfulness, and righteousness, and judgment. He has, as we have said, observed all these qualities in harmonious and co-operative exercise in divine providence, and, thrilled with their blended beauty, he calls it "lovingkindness." This is an Old Testament equivalent for grace; and grace is the fullest, richest, mightiest, divinest word in human speech. It represents all that is revealed of God "in the face of Jesus Christ." Let us view the comfort, and strength, and glory of it, in a few quotations: "Thy loving-

kindness is before mine eyes." "Remember, O Lord, thy tender mercies, and lovingkindnesses: for they have been ever of old." "I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation. Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O Lord; let thy lovingkindness and thy truth continually preserve me." David begins his great penitential prayer, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness." In another place he exclaims, "Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee." Isaiah sang: "I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the Lord, and the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which he hath bestowed on them according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his lovingkindnesses." In Jeremiah we read: "Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord." "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee."

The New Testament fulfils the promised grace of the Old; and all the gracious qualities of Deity represented by His lovingkindness find incarnation in our glorious Kinsman, the Lord Jesus Christ. For kindness is **kin-ness**, the riches of divine grace sympathetically relating the powers of Deity to me, a poor sinner. The lovingkindness of God is another name for its only complete exemplification, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Consider, then, **how excellent** is His lovingkindness, in what respects it excells all human love.

This appears first in **the infinity of its resources**. Have you watched, as Christmas approaches, a father or mother, or both, in the toy department of some great store? How lovely, yet how pathetic! His thought is upon the little ones at home, and he goes to the counter where the most expensive toys are displayed. What boundless love lights up his face as he handles the treasures he so longs to give his children. "What is the price of this?" he inquires. When he is told he lays down the toy with a scarcely-suppressed sigh and moves on to a counter where inferior toys are shown. And thus from counter to counter he moves until he comes to one where only cheap and tawdry things are spread to tempt the generosity of the poor. But the father's love was equal to the most expensive gifts, only his love's material resources were limited.

Or perhaps you have seen a young man standing before a jeweller's window. He sees much more than the precious things so attractively exhibited there. He carries in his mind the image of one who, to his eyes, is fairer than any queen who ever sat upon a throne. He steps into the store with an inexpressible desire to be possessed of pearls, and rubies, and diamonds, of inestimable worth. He never cared for them himself, but now he wishes he had millions. And he begins somewhere near the top. It ministers to the longing of his heart, at least to look upon the jewels he would like to give. But in the end he must content himself with taking from the store for presentation to his beloved such treasures as his meagre purse can pay for.

"How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God." "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father

which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" By what rule shall we estimate the excellency of that "how much more"?

"My Father is rich in houses and lands;
He holdeth the wealth of the world in His hands;
Of riches and diamonds, of silver and gold,
His coffers are full, He has riches untold."

And what will this Bridegroom give to His bride? What jewels of grace! What ornaments of virtue! What mansions will He prepare, what banquets will He provide, what music will He discourse, what servants will He commission, what fountains of delight will He create, what raptures of joy will He plan, for His beloved! "How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God!"

The excellency of the divine love is further shown in its **immortality**. We are loved by a Lover who was dead, and is alive for evermore. Other lovers die. The husband and wife are separated by the pitiless hand of death; the mother is taken from the child, the child from the parent, the friend from friend. David, out of a broken heart, pours the spikenard of his love, crying, "I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan; very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women." Thus, since death entered into the world, men and women have had to write their ecstasies in the past tense; when the silver cord is loosed, and the golden bowl is broken, and the pitcher is broken at the fountain, and the wheel is broken at the cistern; amid the ensuing silence man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets. "How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God!" "I am he that liveth and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death."

But **some loves change even before they die**. The Orpahs are more numerous than the Ruths, the Absaloms than the Ittais, the Judases than the Jonathans! In all ages the fickle Demas has more successors than the faithful Paul. Through all the tragic years of history many a broken heart has echoed the cry of the betrayed, "For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him; but it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company." "How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God!" "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them even unto the end."

What if you survey all your earthly possessions; with all the companionships and fellowships of life; and all the wealth of affection which the associations of life have accumulated; these are precious, and priceless possessions. But they are mortal, temporal, evanescent. And as from it all we turn to contemplate His glory,—behold, His mercy is in the heavens; His faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds; His righteousness is like the great mountains, and His judgments are a great deep! Who then can refrain from the exultant exclamation, "How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God!"

II. A CLEARER VIEW OF DIVINE GRACE IS EVER THE INSPIRATION OF A FIRMER TRUST: "Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings." God is to be trusted for what He is, "They that know thy name will put their trust in thee." The contemplation of the divine character is always a profitable and faith-inspiring exercise. He who can say, "Thy lovingkindness is before mine eyes," will add, "and I have walked in thy truth." All that God has revealed of Himself in His dealings with us is

conducive to a growing faith. Faith needs no more invigorating tonic than a clearer view of the lovingkindness of the Lord. In that wonderful one hundred and seventh Psalm, where the praises of God's redeeming goodness in providence are sung, it is said, "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord."

The metaphor of the text is a very familiar one, but it abounds with spiritual suggestiveness: "the shadow of thy wings."

There is an allusion here to the wings of the cherubim overshadowing the mercy-seat. The tabernacle is clearly in view, "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house." When we see His lovingkindness to us in Christ we run to the blood-sprinkled mercy-seat, and put our trust under the shadow of His wings. If poor sinners could but see the love of God, they would no longer seek to hide from Him; as did Adam and Eve in the garden, or as criminals try to hide from the officers of the law; but would fly to Him to obtain forgiveness.

And who needs such forgiveness more than we? How prone to wander are we all! How frequently we fail and fall! And then in the consciousness of our inherent sinfulness we are disposed to put an increasing distance between ourselves and God. What can woo us back again? How may our fears be dispelled, and our faith be inspired? Only the lovingkindness of God revealed in the cross can reassure our trembling spirits: "Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings." Is there not some one here this morning who needs this word of hope? I exhort you to come once again to the mercy-seat:

"Ah, whither could we flee for aid,
When tempted, desolate, dismayed;
Or how the hosts of hell defeat,
Had suffering saints no mercy-seat?"

But here is a promise of protection, too; for we may find refuge under the shadow of His wings, just as the brood finds shelter under the wings of the mother. Our Lord employed this figure when He said of Jerusalem, "How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and ye would not." It is thus He gathers His children still, and puts Himself between us and all that could really harm us. Do you remember that when His enemies came to take Him in the garden, He asked, "Whom seek ye?" When they replied, "Jesus of Nazareth," He answered, "I am he"; and the second time He answered them, "I have told you that I am he: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way: that the saying might be fulfilled which he spake, "Of them which thou gavest me I have lost none." When the German admiral sought to persuade the British admiral at Manila to stand aside and permit him to prevent Admiral Dewey from attacking the Spaniards, the British admiral replied by steaming between the German and American fleets with decks all cleared for action. It is thus the redeeming grace of God puts omnipotence between the redeemed soul and all harm.

"Plagues and death around me fly;
Till He bids, I cannot die:
Not a single shaft can hit,
Till the God of love sees fit."

The comfort of faith is also suggested by the figure of the text. There are times and situations in life when, above all other things, our souls need comfort.

Such comfort as is found at a warm fire-side when the winds howl about the gables, and the snow beats upon the window panes; such comfort as comes from the company of a friend on a dark and lonely road; such comfort as one feels within the folds of a warm coat when spring is long in coming and winter lingers; such comfort as the tiny feathery balls find beneath the warm wings of their mother! Is it weakness to confess it? Is it unheroic to acknowledge that we have none of us outgrown our need of being mothered? that we all at times long inexpressibly for a soft hand upon our brows, and a loving arm about us, and for gentle words to soothe our tired spirits? If it be so, then we are all weak: we are none of us heroic! The text, I believe, promises such comfort. There is a luxury in believing; there is a rest indescribable in knowing we are cared for. Said the psalmist, "Let, I pray thee, thy merciful kindness be for my comfort, according to thy word unto thy servant." "Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem and cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned." Our great Kinsman is anointed "to comfort all that mourn"; and He has promised, "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you." "Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings."

We should miss much of the sweetness of the text were we to fail to observe **what tenderness the grace of God displays**. How shall the mighty power of God be described? The psalmist has described the divine qualities as "reaching to the clouds," "like the great mountains," "a great deep"; but there is that in God which these majestic figures cannot portray. Therefore he speaks of the "wings" of God! The powers of Deity are exercised for the protection and comfort of His children with great tenderness, and with infinite gentleness. Great power is in our minds associated too often with rough and ungentle manifestations. But how does God take care of His children? "He shall cover them"—with what?—"with his feathers, and under his wings shall thou trust." We have a proverbial saying, "As light as a feather." So is it that the power which brought light out of darkness; which laid the foundations of the earth; which set a compass on the face of the deep; which established the mountains; and spread out the heavens as a tent to dwell in; which made the stars also, that Power covers us as with feathers! Almightyness caresses the children of God with a touch that is "as light as a feather"! Out of an experience of such tenderness David must have been speaking, when he said, "He teacheth my hands to war; so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms. Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation: and thy gentleness hath made me great."

But "under the shadow of his wings" **it is very dark!** The young now have no eyes but mother's. And yet, who does not know that they are safer in the dark than in the light! Safer in the shadow than in the sunshine, when the shadow is the shadow of a wing!

Sometimes, however, there is complaining even under the wings. You have said, "I cannot see any good purpose in this untoward experience. I cannot understand why this must be; I am wrapped about with shadows." Thus Jacob complained of old, "Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me." But when the storm has passed, he asks no greater blessing for those he loves than the shadow which has proved his salvation; and for Joseph's sons he prays, "The Angel that redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads." O children of God, we are none of us safe but under the shadow of His wings!

"He lends you, oft, His softening cloud,
When sunshine makes a heaven below;

Lest in the brightness you be proud,
Forgetful whence the sunbeams flow.

"The cloud that meets you in the day,
Is but the shadow of His wing;
Concealing from your sight the way,
That faith alone may homeward bring.

"The fire that meets you in the night,
Is the full brightness of His face;
Revealing, through your tears, a light
That leads you to His dwelling place."

"How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God! Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings."

A WORD ABOUT "THE GOSPEL WITNESS."

This paper is designed to serve the need of Jarvis Street Church, by giving to the congregation information about our affairs. It is also intended to be used by the members in spreading the message it contains from week to week among many who do not attend the church. In this work we earnestly invite the co-operation of all our members. We suggest that members take one or two copies on Sundays, and that, if they do not wish to keep them on file, they hand their copy on to someone else; and further, that on Monday evening any copies which may be left be applied for at the church office and sent broadcast about the King's business. We venture a few suggestions as to how every member may help in the wise and effective distribution of the paper.

Report the names and addresses of any shut-ins not directly connected with the church to the office, and a copy will be mailed them. The sermons in **The Witness** will periodically be specially selected to minister to the Lord's afflicted children.

Make a list of friends for your own use who you think could be helped by the paper. Some issues will be useful to one class, and some to another. From time to time messages to the unconverted will be published. When this is done send the paper to your unconverted friends.

ANNOUNCEMENTS.

Next Sunday the Pastor will preach morning and evening.

The Monthly Communion Service next Sunday, being the first Sunday in the quarter, will be held at the close of the morning service. Members are reminded of the collection for the poor taken at this service and are requested to be as generous as possible.

The Branch Picnic will be held at Centre Island, Tuesday, June 27th. Everybody is invited. Subscriptions to defray expenses will be gratefully received by Mrs. Allen MacLean, Mr. McKay, or the office.

The Sunday School and Church Picnic will be held at Centre Island, July 11th. Keep the date open, everybody. Yes! **Everybody.**

The Prayer Meetings maintain their great interest, and continue to be largely attended. Let us not rest contented, however, until every member becomes a prayer meeting attendant. Shall we not begin afresh to cry mightily to God for revival? During the war people thought nothing of foregoing their vacations, that they might give themselves to some form of war service. And this is war time. We are at war with all the powers of darkness. Let us give ourselves to the battle with new devotion.

The Pastor's Absence. Nothing has delighted the Pastor more than to hear of what great services have been held during his absence. That is a true test of the genuineness of any work. It is a serious reflection upon the quality of any minister's work, when the work begins to decline the moment his back is turned. When the work is of God, it goes on at full strength.

The Open-Air Services. This afternoon the **gospel car** will leave the church for **Sunnyside Board Walk** at 2.30. There is accommodation for twenty on the car. All who have cars of their own are invited to join the procession. **The Second Service** will be held at the Gerrard Street gate of Allan Gardens, from 5.30 to 6.55. Prayer service in the Parlor from 6 to 7. Also open-air service at Gerrard Street gate of Allan Gardens, Thursday, at 8 p.m. This will be a fixture every Thursday evening. Great crowds attend this service.

This Evening (Sunday) you had better come early. Multitudes will want to hear Mr. Philpott. Don't miss him.

Home Department Visitors are requested to call at the church office for literature, after either service on Sunday. Mrs. Walker, supt.

Members going away from home are requested kindly to advise the church office of the time of their leaving, and of their summer address, that we may be able to send them **The Gospel Witness** every week.

Members Dismissed. Of the 340 granted a collective letter June 7th, six have since applied for separate letters to other churches, and two for certificates of membership. These were authorized on Wednesday evening last, thus leaving 332 names on the collective letter.

JARVIS STREET CHURCH DIRECTORY.

T. T. SHIELDS, Pastor, 72 Lowther Avenue. Tel., Hill. 563.

A. W. RECORD, Treasurer, 41 Victor Avenue. Tel. Ger. 5273.

VIOLET STOAKLEY, Church Clerk and Office Secretary. Tel., M. 5670.

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C. LEONARD PENNEY, Director of Music, 36 Earls court Ave. Tel., Ken. 7086W.

W. J. HUTCHISON, S. S. Superintendent, 295 George Street. Tel., M. 3321.

The Church Calendar

For the week beginning Sunday, June 18th, 1922.

SUNDAY.

10.00—Prayer Service in the Church Parlor, Mr. George Greenway.

10.30—Communion Service.

11.00—Public Worship. Rev. E. E. Shields, of Brantford, will preach.

3.00—The Bible School will meet.

Lesson for the day: Judah's Prosperity and Adversity. Ps. 65: 1-13.

2.30—Open-Air Work with the Gospel Car, starting from Jarvis Street Church.

3.00—The Parliament Street Bible School, at 250 Parliament Street.

5.30—Open-Air Service on Gerrard Street.

6.00—Prayer Meeting in Church Parlor.

7.00—Public Worship. The Rev. P. W. Philpott, of Hamilton, will preach.

Service at **Parliament Street Branch**, Mr. W. L. McKay.

MONDAY, WEDNESDAY and SATURDAY—8.00—Prayer Service.

THURSDAY—8.00—Open-air service, Gerrard St. Gate, Allan Gardens.

FRIDAY—8.00—Choir Rehearsal.