

# 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.

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No. 45

## The Jarvis Street Pulpit

"A DAY OF GOOD TIDINGS."

A Sermon by the Pastor.

Preached in Jarvis Street Church, Toronto, Sunday Morning, March 18th, 1923.

(Stenographically reported.)

"Then they said one to another, We do not well: this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace: if we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will come upon us: now therefore come, that we may go and tell the king's household."—II. Kings 7: 9.

**T**HIS text is part of the story of Israel's many wars. On this occasion the Syrians were their adversaries, and for many weary months Samaria had been straitly shut up, none went out, and none came in. It was completely besieged by a vastly superior foe, and Samaria had been reduced to a condition of starvation. The people were dying and had been brought to such dire straits that they had actually resorted to cannibalism; and the king on hearing of this had announced his intention to take Elisha's head. When anything went wrong in that ancient time it was always the fault of the prophet; nobody else had any responsibility for it; it was always the fault of the man of God who brought to the people the divine admonition to turn away from their sins! But on hearing of this Elisha uttered a great prophecy: "Thus saith the Lord, To-morrow about this time shall a measure of fine flour be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria." There was neither flour nor barley to be found within the walls of the city, and yet the prophet promised that there should be an abundance of food on the morrow. "For the Lord had made the host of the Syrians to hear a noise of chariots, and a noise of horses, even the noise of a great host: and they said one to another, Lo, the king of Israel hath hired against us the kings of the Hittites, and the kings of the Egyptians, to come upon us." And without waiting for further inquiry the Syrians took to their heels; they left their tents, and their horses, and their asses, with all their commissariat department, all the provisions that had been laid up for a great army, with all the wealth which they carried with them to the battle,—they left it all

behind, and threw away their garments that they might be the lighter, and be able to make the better speed.

But the people of Samaria knew nothing at all about it: they still imagined that the hosts of Syria were round about them. But "there were four leprous men at the entering in of the gate: and they said one to another, Why sit we here until we die? If we say, We will enter into the city, then the famine is in the city, and we shall die there: and if we sit still here, we die also. Now therefore come, and let us fall unto the host of the Syrians: if they save us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall but die." They were possessed of the spirit of that hymn,

"I can but perish if I go,  
I am resolved to try;  
For if I stay away, I know  
I must for ever die."

Thus, they turned their faces toward the camp of the Syrians, and on arrival there they found the place was deserted, the tents of the officers and the men were there, there was an abundance of provisions and of great wealth; they had the whole camp of a great army, with plenty of food and raiment, everything to satisfy their desire, all to themselves. They began to enjoy it, but they said among themselves, "It is too bad for us to keep this all to ourselves. We do not well: this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace. Yonder is Samaria with its many thousands of starving men, and women, and children, the king himself within: if we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will come upon us: now therefore come, that we may go and tell the king's household." And they went as messengers of a real gospel to tell the news to the beleaguered city that there was plenty of food, and that the enemy had been utterly routed.

Now, that is the story of the text, and I want to use it this morning to illustrate the duty of every one to whom the gospel has proved the power of God unto salvation.

I. FIRST OF ALL, THEN WE, TOO, HAVE BEEN BROUGHT BY DIVINE GRACE TO A DAY OF GOOD THINGS; and those of us who know the Lord have a secret for which a hungry world is longing, and we do not well if in view of our fuller knowledge we hold our peace.

What then was the truth which had dawned upon these leprous men, of which the people of Samaria were still in ignorance? In the first place, *they had discovered that a foe which Israel greatly feared had been dispersed*; that the battle which they feared they would never be able successfully to fight had already been fought in their behalf; that the foe which surrounded them and threatened them with death had really been put to rout by the power of God Himself; and that, whereas the doors of Samaria were bolted and barred to keep the enemy out, they had at that moment, although they did not know it, the fullest possible liberty to walk abroad.

The picture of Samaria, my friend, is the picture of every human soul in its natural state; for though we boast so much of our democratic privileges, though we are so fond of insisting that we are our own master, there is no man who is not conscious of a very clearly defined limitation round about him; he can go only so far, and that is not very far; his soul is held in bondage in spite of his boast that he is a free man. There is not one of us here this morning, whether we have been converted, or are still in a state

of nature—there is not one of us who is not conscious that just out there round about us there are forces superior to ourselves. We may not give them a name; we may not have a very clearly defined conception of whence they come and what their full purpose respecting us may be; but there is not one of us who has not had to cry as one great master of old cried, "When I would do good—when I say I will open the door, I will push it back, I will step forth into full freedom, and I will realize within myself the purpose of my creation;—for God said, 'Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness,' and I will rise to the height of my privilege as one who was made to wear a crown and sway a sceptre: I was made to be king, and I will be a king but—when I would do good, evil is present with me." The soul is besieged; he cannot move abroad as he desires. "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Who shall break through the Syrian host? Who shall give me the mastery of these principalities, and powers, and rulers of the darkness of this world, and spiritual wickedness in high places?—

"Look how we grovel here below,  
Fond of these earthly toys;  
Our souls can neither fly nor go,  
To reach immortal joys."

We are held in bondage; we are a besieged city: "A strong man armed keepeth his palace." I appeal this morning to your experience; and there is not a man or woman here who does not know that what I say is true. I want to talk to you personally; I wish I could sit down with every one of you and say, "Come now, be honest, are you the man you want to be? are you the woman you think God planned you to be? Do you live the large and luxurious life of the Spirit that the soul within you longs for? Come tell me! Nay, rather, answer to God!" I know your answer, it is this: "No." Why? And you can only answer, "Can't you see them?—the Syrian hosts round about."

But many of us also can say, "This is a day of good tidings;" for there is One Who took the handwriting of ordinances that was against you and nailed it to His cross; He spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly: "The Lord had made the host of the Syrians to hear a noise." Oh, there are many arrows in His quiver; His armoury is full of weapons of war, like the tower of David where hung a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men. Our God can disperse the enemy. And some of us while admitting that we were once besieged, have to say, "I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves against me round about . . . for thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek bone; thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly. 'Salvation belongeth unto the Lord: thy blessing is upon thy people.'" There are many of us here this morning who have experienced just what these leprous men had; we have discovered that the power of evil is broken, that principalities and powers are dispossessed and dispersed, that the strong man armed has found his match in One Who is stronger than he. Do you know it my brother? Have you been able to cry, "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ;" "Thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ;" "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me"? The deliverance for which every sin-bound soul is longing is possible to all,

as many here this morning have experienced. "This day is a day of good tidings;" and if you know that, you do not well to hold your peace.

Another element in the good tidings was this: not only was the enemy dispersed, but *an abundance of food was provided*. There was enough in the camp of Syria to make fine flour cheap in Samaria. There was "bread enough, and to spare." And these men said among themselves as they went through the camp, "We shall not live long enough to eat all this. It is a day of good tidings, and yonder is a whole city hungering for the very thing that we see spread out in abundance before us." Are there any hungry people? Yes; there are many people who are hungry and do not know it. Was it yesterday, or the day before, I passed one of the great theatres down town in the middle of the day, and the street was thronged with people coming out. I wondered how they found leisure for that kind of thing. I do not go to the theatre, but I am faced in spite of myself with their advertisements in the daily papers. They were eating strange things in Samaria; they do eat strange things in the days of famine, you know. When Paris was shut up in the Franco-Prussian war, rats were an expensive luxury. We should not relish that; but hungry people will eat almost anything. Samaria must have been in sore straits when an ass's head was esteemed a delicacy. And if you look at the newspapers which advertise the mental pabulum upon which some people are seeking to nourish their souls, you will conclude that the human soul must be in a state of siege, and reduced to a quality of fare not much superior to that of Samaria. A soul made in God's image and likeness must be in a terrible condition when it feeds upon such offal as is now provided for the amusement of the people. If there are any here this morning who are in the habit of attending those places you know what I say is true. Do not be offended; do not say it out loud: I am not asking for any humiliating oral confession; I am asking you to confess to your conscience that when an immortal soul has nothing better than that to feed upon, it is hungry indeed. And when you come away you are not satisfied. Nor is the man who madly concentrates all his energies upon the getting of this world's goods. We must have food and raiment, houses to live in: there is a place for the consideration of these matters; but when you see that which characterizes our day, and which has characterized every other day,—men and women madly grasping after the things that cannot last, trying to feed the soul upon temporalities, trying to nourish the spirit upon the things of the material world, spending their money for that which is not bread, and their labour for that which satisfieth not, trying to satisfy the soul without God, you can only conclude that the soul is besieged by the enemy and reduced to spiritual starvation.

During the war Germany did not allow her enemy to know that she was hungry. She tried to create the impression that she had plenty to eat, and could hold out indefinitely. Meantime, they were starving. And so many a man will not give in; he covers it up; he tries to persuade himself and others that this world is satisfying a hungry soul; but he knows better. Haven't we all been there? Don't you know about it, you who are Christians? Do we not sing,

"I tried the broken cisterns, Lord,  
But, ah, the waters failed;  
E'en as I stooped to drink, they'd fled,  
And mocked me as I wailed."

We had more joy in our prayer-meeting last night, without any admixture of regret,—pure unadulterated joy, than you could find in all the theatres and places of amusement in this city, or in the whole wide world. You cannot be satisfied with the fare of a besieged city, but "this day is a day of good tidings." We have discovered, or there has been revealed to us a secret which the whole world ought to know, and we do not well to hold our peace; we do not well to be content, like the prodigal's brother, to sit alone at the father's table when there is "bread enough and to spare" for those who are without.

There is another word: not only was there deliverance and an abundance of food; but *there was great wealth in the camp of Syria*,—riches untold, garments of beauty, jewels of gold and of silver; and when these poor leprous men saw all these fine treasures, they said, "These were not designed for us; we cannot wear them all; there is enough here to make all Samaria rich. Let us go and tell the king's household." The religion of the Lord Jesus Christ was not designed to make us poor; it was not designed to take anything of real value from us: it was designed to make it possible for us to live in luxury. There is a great truth in that simple hymn which we sometimes sing:

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

We are not saved that we might walk about in ragged garments. It is not the will of our glorious King that we should be arrayed in sackcloth and ashes, that we should wear homespun: "He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels." Is not Jerusalem exhorted to awake and put on her beautiful garments? It is a luxurious experience to be a Christian. Every day the Beloved of our souls sends to us some special love-token; every day there are dainties from the King's table. No, I can put it in a better way than that: "He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love." Do you know it as a Christian? I know there are some people who are called Christians who live on something less than soda biscuits, who have half-starved existences, who live on the husks. I believe there are a great many people called Christians, who are church members, who have never got beyond that cry of the prodigal,—very commendable as far as it goes: "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants." He said, "How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare!" He said, "If I could only get back there into the servants' quarters, so that I might get a little bit of the surplus of my father's house to save me from starvation, instead of feeding upon the husks which the swine eat, I should be content." And there are some people who have never got beyond that; they are willing to be hired servants in the Father's house; or, like the woman who came to Jesus, and to whom, to test the sincerity of her faith, for she was a Syrophenician woman, He said, "Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs. And she answered and said unto him, Yes, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs.—If you will just give me a crumb I shall be satisfied." It was only to test her, because our glorious Saviour said, "Great is thy faith. I never feed anybody on crumbs. He that cometh to Me receives all the fulness of the Father's house."

Why are you living on crumbs? There is wealth in Christ Jesus: "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." I read of "the unsearchable riches"; there is incalculable, inestimable, incomparable, infinite wealth in Christ awaiting the command of faith. Do you know that? "O yes," somebody says, "I know that; I have seen something of the wealth of my Father's house." Have you told anybody about it? Are you telling anybody about it? We do not well to hold our peace.

There was another thing; and I am always interested in *the contrast* as well as the comparison. I so often quote to you that verse:

“Join all the glorious names,  
Of wisdom, love, and power;  
That angels ever knew,  
Or mortals ever bore:  
All are too mean to speak His worth;  
Too mean to set the Saviour forth.”

There is no illustration of redeeming grace in the realm of human endeavour that does not fall short in some particular of the spiritual reality. Who were they? Four leprous men. What did they find in the camp of Syria? Deliverance from the Syrians, food for starving bodies, wealth for the poor; but, alas! alas! *they found no cleansing for the leper*. It was still as lepers they must preach their gospel; and if there were lepers yonder in Samaria, they had no word of hope for them. But could they have found the divine Healer in the camp of the Syrians, and could they have stood afar off and said, “Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean,” and if He had graciously answered, “I will; be thou clean,” and immediately their leprosy had been cleansed; and if to their freedom, and their food, and their wealth, they could have added the glad tidings of cleansing for a leper, then indeed, they had had a gospel worth preaching. But you have that: “Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.”

“There is a fountain filled with blood  
Drawn from Immanuel’s veins,  
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,  
Lose all their guilty stains.

Shall we not therefore resolve anew,

“E’er since by faith I saw the stream  
Thy flowing wounds supply,  
Redeeming love has been my theme,  
And shall be till I die.”

II. “We do not well: this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace.” THEY WERE IN DANGER OF MAKING A GREAT MISTAKE; and that is the danger that faces every redeemed soul,—the danger of trying to live for ourselves, withholding our testimony, failing to be witnesses unto Him in Jerusalem, and Judea, and Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth. That, indeed, is what has happened. It is inconceivable that such great companies of people should assemble themselves together in organizations called churches; that they should meet twice every Lord’s day for a whole year; that they should organize themselves into all kinds of societies; that they should pour out their wealth, and in the course of a year turn into the treasury of that organization thousands and thousands of dollars; and that they should spend three hundred and sixty-five days of the year professing to be about the Master’s business, and as a result that there should be no souls turned “from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.” Something must be wrong. What is it? It is that they who know that this is a day of good tidings are holding their peace!

It is possible for the minister to hold his peace. What would you have thought of these men if they had said, “Now, we are comfortable; we have plenty to eat, plenty to wear, and are in no danger of being destroyed by the Syrians; we are in comfortable circumstances, let us get up a concert; let us have an entertainment. Let us find some means of amusing ourselves.” These men did not talk like that. They said, “There is more urgent business than our amusement. There are people who are dying for the want of the things we have. Let us go and tell them.” Yet that is what the church is doing,—that is what the blood-bought redeemed Church of Christ is doing,—everything but the one thing that it was put into this world to do, namely, to bear witness to the power of the Saviour’s blood to save poor sinners from their sins. And what is true of the organization as a whole becomes largely true of the individual members. These people did not organize. There were only four of them; but even one of them could have told the story as well as four, one could have witnessed to this great truth alone. Let any man in the power of the Holy Ghost bear witness to the Lord Jesus Christ

and his testimony will be heard to the ends of the earth. Try it. Do not say you are weak and small; let God have His way with you; bear your testimony and see what God will accomplish.

They said, "If we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will come upon us." And they were right: it was impossible that they should enjoy alone the fulness they had found. And that is why some people do not enjoy their religion, *they tarry till the morning; and mischief does befall them because it is of the very nature of the Christian religion that it must be shared if it is to be enjoyed.*

I must not keep you longer save to remind you of *their resolution*. They said, "Now therefore come, that we may go and tell the king's household." They resolved that they would tell the good news. What would you have done? Would you have said, "Well now, if you are going to the king's household with an important message like that, you must be careful how you tell it. You had better write it out; you had better be sure that it is grammatically phrased; you had better be sure that your deliverance has the proper literary flavour; you must be careful to express your good news in polite speech; because you are going to the king's household." I think the lepers might have said, "We may not know how to tell it very politely, but we are going to the city and we will tell the porters, and we believe hungry people will rejoice in our message however rough our speech. At all events, we are going to tell it." How long are you going to wait before you tell the good news? If you wait too long possibly you will not have any good news to tell. I have seen it again and again: hundreds of young men have gone to college full of the zeal of the Lord for the cross of Christ, for the gospel of His Son; but by the time they have passed through the hands of certain professors, they have no zeal for anything; they drift away into business or something else. I do not say, do not go to college. By all means, go: God wants you best; train your mind to the utmost. This gospel of the grace of God demands the utmost that any man can give; and the most brilliant intellects the world has ever known have been laid at the feet of Jesus, with all their splendid powers. There is not anything you have that is too good to surrender to Christ; and you do well to resolve that all your powers shall be cultivated to the highest degree. But be careful in the course of your training; do not allow anybody to spoil the message; "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ"; for the Gospel of Christ "is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."

Another says, "That is all right for the student, but I have to go to work in the morning, and I cannot go to college." Well, do not go then. If you cannot go God does not want you to go. But that is not a reason why you should not tell what you know. Tell it anyhow; tell it to the king's household; and in the doing of it, do you know what will come to pass? *the Word of the Lord will be fulfilled.* Only the day before Elisha had said, "Thus saith the Lord," and through these poor leprous men that plan and purpose of God found its fulfilment, and God was glorified. You go and do His will; go and tell the story in the simplest way you know how, stammeringly, hesitatingly, clumsily, perhaps; but never mind; tell it. Nobody stops to ask the nationality of the man who turned in the fire alarm; nobody enquires whether he had a Scotch accent, or whether he was a cockney, or whether he was an out and out Canadian, or whether he came from the North country, or whether he had a rich Irish brogue. Somebody cried, "Fire!" and the firemen came and the flame was extinguished: that was the main thing. *It is not how you do it; but in the name of the Lord and the power of the Holy Ghost, do it, and do it to-day!* And if we all go to work, and we are all at it, and always at it, then God will carry the news to the king's household, and ere the day is done the King's children will be sitting at His banqueting table; the fulness of divine grace will be enjoyed by those for whom it is prepared.

Is there anybody here this morning still outside? Is there anybody here this morning not a Christian? Any sin-bound, hungry, impoverished soul? Well then, I bring you the simple message and tell you that there is not only deliverance and food and wealth, but there is cleansing for the leper, too.

Let us drink deeply of the wells of Salvation, and then advertise the path to the Spring to all the world.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS.

**The Pastor's Out-of-Town Engagements.**—Except when ill with scarlet fever May and June 1921, the Pastor has been out of his pulpit only three Sundays (in New York last June) since August 1920. He will be away for four Sundays during April and May, not, however, for a holiday, but to do a little extra work for the Lord. March 26 to 30th, inclusive, he will preach every day at noon in Tremont Temple, Boston, under the auspices of the Evangelical Alliance of Greater Boston. April 2nd and 3rd he will speak at opening services of a new church building in Cleveland, Ohio. April 8th to about 18th he will conduct an evangelistic mission with Dr. J. R. Straton in Calvary Church, New York. Leaving Toronto April 30th he will give two addresses in Fort Worth, Texas, at the Christian Fundamentalist Convention meeting from April 29th to May 6th. He will give several addresses at another Bible Conference in Texas, and at the first meeting of The Baptist Bible Union of North America, meeting in Kansas City from May 10th to 15th he will give the Sunday evening address May 8th. Thus he will be away from Jarvis St. pulpit Sundays April 8th and 15th, and May 6th and 13th.

**Pulpit Supply April 8th and 15th.** At the request of the Prudential Committee, Rev. E. E. Shields of Brantford has consented to supply the pulpit the two Sundays the Pastor will be in New York.

**Every Day At Noon.** The Pastor will be grateful if those who pray will remember the services in Tremont Temple, Boston, every day this week but Saturday from 12 to 1. They will be evangelistic services and the Pastor is informed will probably be attended by about 2,000 each day.

**Sunday Evening March 25th.** At the urgent request of the Pastor and the Prudential and Finance Committee, our greatly beloved Deacon, Rev. E. A. Brownlee, B.A., will preach. Many on hearing of this said, "I am so glad,"—and they spoke for the whole church.

**The Last Sunday of the Church Year.**—We have only five more days in which to close our books. If any member's contribution is in arrears, please try to pay it in at the office not later than March 30th.

We hope also that every member will try to make a special thankoffering for the year's blessing by that date, to insure our having a balance on the right side of the books.

**The New Weekly Offering Coupon Books** are ready. Please call at church office and save expense of mailing.

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## JARVIS STREET CHURCH DIRECTORY.

**T. T. SHIELDS, Pastor, 96 Winchester Street. Tel., North 628.**

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

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

**WILLIAM FRASER, Pastor's Secretary, 65 Homewood Ave. Phone N. 6047.**

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

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

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## The Church Calendar

**Sunday.** For the week beginning Sunday, March 25th, 1923.

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

10.30—**Communion Service.**

11.00—**Public Worship.** The Pastor will preach. Baptism will be administered.

3.00—**The Bible School** will meet.

6.00—**Prayer Meeting** in Church Parlor.

7.00—**Public Worship.** Rev. E. A. Brownlee, B.A., will preach.

**Wednesday—7.15.** Junior Service.

**Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, 8 o'clock,** Prayer-meeting.

**The Parliament Street Branch, 250 Parliament Street—Sunday: 3.00—Bible School. 7.00 Evangelistic Service, conducted by W. L. McKay.**

**Wednesday, 8.00, Prayer Meeting: Friday, 7.15, Junior Service.**