

The Gospel Witness

PUBLISHED WEEKLY.

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

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

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The Jarvis Street Pulpit

THE COMING OF CHRIST THE HOPE OF THE WHOLE CREATION

A Sermon by the Pastor.

Preached in Jarvis Street Church, Toronto, Sunday evening, July 8th, 1923.
(Stenographically reported.)

"For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.

"And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.

"For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?

"But if we hope for that we see not, then we do with patience wait for it."—
Romans 8: 22-25.

HAVE been speaking about the coming of our Lord as "the blessed hope"—the hope of the believer, the hope of the bereaved, the hope of the Christian Church, the hope of society. I want to try to tell you this evening that the coming of Christ is the hope of the whole created order.

Many of us, I fear, have a pitifully small conception of the scope of the redemptive work of Christ. Many seem to suppose that it is little more than the issue of a kind of insurance policy which guarantees that after death men pass into a happier state than they deserve, as though salvation were merely freedom from the consequences of sin. It is infinitely more than that. I wish we could get Christian people to study their Bibles. I do not mean merely to read them; that would be one step in the right direction. But we all need to study our Bibles more. Those of you who profess to believe that the Bible is the word of God, and every word is divinely inspired, will do well to listen to it as to the voice of God. Some of you have radio sets in your home, and when you have nothing to do you listen-in to New York, or Chicago, or some other place. Let me tell you that it is our privilege to listen-in to Heaven itself every day, actually hearing God speaking. And only as we study His Word shall we come to understand the full meaning of the salvation that is in Christ. Grace and peace can be multiplied to us through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord. We are to have more grace and more peace, then we must have more knowledge

of God, and of His Son, Jesus Christ. The only way by which we can obtain more knowledge of Him is through this inspired Word which He has given.

Now, we are told that the Lord Jesus is coming again, and this is a "blessed hope," and that believers are to look for it. And I want just as briefly as I possibly can do it this evening to show you that the coming of Christ is the hope not merely of the individual nor only of the Church of Christ, but it is the hope of the whole creation.

You will remember in the story to which Dr. Carter referred us this morning, the story of Genesis, we are told the ground was cursed for man's sake. It was promised that it should bring forth thorns and thistles, and that in the sweat of his brow man should eat bread. Now if any of you have any doubts as to the inspiration and authority of Scripture, just try your theories on the reverse. Is it true? Is it in accord with all human history, and with present universal human experience? Does the earth in any measure share the curse that has fallen upon man? Is it true that it brings forth thorns and thistles? Is it true that in the sweat of his brow man eats bread? That is the word that is promised in Genesis.

Then in the New Testament, in this chapter from which the text is taken, we are told that the whole creation is subject to vanity, to uselessness, that it is falling in the complete fulfilment of the purpose of its creation, that the whole created order because of man's sin has fallen short of the realization of its divine purpose. And it "was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, because the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork"—but not to blind eyes, nor to darkened minds. This is a sense in which the created order has failed in its full revelation of divine wisdom and power. I know we sing of this world as a place—

"Where every prospect pleases,
And only man is vile",

but that is a half truth. And I think a little careful study will show you that even in nature itself every prospect does not please, and that the whole creation has shared in man's fall.

It is, expressly said, not of its own will—"not willingly"; for this creation was not made for itself: it was made for a distinct purpose in the mind of God, and it has been subjected to vanity, not because of its own deliberate rebellion against God, but by reason of your rebellion and mine. My dear friend, it is no doubt not a mercy that God has not fully disclosed to our understanding the nature and consequences of sin. In His Word He shows us enough to make us afraid of it, to teach us to abhor it. But if it be true that law is universal, if God is one, then our violation of the laws of the moral universe has affected the whole creation. There is not a star that does not, in some measure, feel the effect and consequences of sin. Talk about the bottomless pit, talk about the necessity of hell; if you and I could see sin with God's eyes, we should see it to be such an indescribable calamity that it would seem almost impossible—even God Himself should deal with it, and, at the same time, save the sinner.

The truth is—and it is a matter of universal experience—that the earth yields its fruit reluctantly. I saw yesterday companies of people working in the fields, just working against something that in the very earth itself was seeking to destroy the result of man's labour. Any farmer will tell you that his life is a warfare; that through every season he is battling against something that seeks to deprive him of the fruits of his toil; that his greatest labour after all is

ly in ploughing and sowing, but in contending against that something that
creation itself that prevents his realization of the fullest fruits of his labour.
We are told that this world was made for a particular purpose. You
remember the eighth Psalm: "O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name
in the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens. Out of the mouth
of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies,
thou mightiest still the enemy and the avenger. When I consider thy
works, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast
ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that
visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and
crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion
over the works of thy hands." "O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name
in the earth!" What is the picture he sees? Bring it into the New Testa-
ment, and hear an inspired expositor speak. He sees the glory and wonder of
the created order, and he leads us to that verse: "Thou hast put all things in
subjection under his feet—and then he stops to declare: "But now that is not
yet. It is in the Book, it is prophesied, it is promised by God that cannot
be broken, but it is not yet realized." "But now we see not yet all things put under
him." Is that true? We boast of our mastery of nature. We talk about our
triumphs, and our radio, and our electrical triumphs, and of the way in which
we have wrested her secrets from nature, in chemistry, and in every depart-
ment of human investigation. And when the great electrician has finished his
work, and the great chemist has finished his work, and the great geologist has
finished his work, and the great higher critic has finished his work, what does
it amount to? "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." It is not
that all things are put under him. He is subject to the bondage of corrup-
tion, and down into the earth he goes, returning to the dust whence he came. Is
the Old Testament obsolete? Are those passages worn out? No! I shall come
back to that in a moment. But that is the present state; that is the record of Scrip-
ture: "We see not yet all things put under him."

Well, now, what is the present temper of creation? The context says
"that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now,"
is that true? Where every prospect pleases, is man the only creature who
is free from pain? "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together
until now." What did you have for dinner to-day? Some wise man says:
"Do not believe that doctrine of substitution." You practise it if you do
not believe it. Where did you get your clothes from? There is pain, my
friend, apart from men. It is by the principle of substitution, of vicarious
suffering and sacrifice, we live even in the physical realm, and the whole
creation shares the groaning and travailing of that greater agony which Jesus
himself endured. I do not know that I should be wrong in carrying this
to the present. I was at Niagara Falls yesterday, and drove with Dr. Carter down the
canyon. And we were discussing the estimates of certain geologists as
to the age of the earth, and as to the time taken to cut back that gorge.
The science is very accurate? Scientists differ among themselves in their estimates,
recall, only about fifty millions of years, or something over that. That
is not much, sufficiently accurate for us to accept their conclusions, and throw
out our Bibles! I would like them to get a little nearer together first.
There are a good many things that may have been effected by volcanic origin.
There are all sorts of things in the past of which we have little knowledge.
Geology is not an exact science, neither is biology. You can afford to wait
a while until our scientific friends agree on some of their conclusions.
Remember reading some years ago a statement by Mr. Spurgeon at the time

of the down grade controversy, to the effect that he had ceased to waste time contending with men of science; for, he said, that each generation of scientists was chiefly engaged in telling the world what fools their predecessors had been. Therefore, he said, he was content to leave men of science to settle their differences between themselves; and when they got through with their controversies he felt like telling them that they had received greater unkindness at the hands of each other than they would have received from him. Earthquakes in divers places! I do not want to be carried away with the scarehead lines in the newspapers. But the creation as we know it, the created order, is not at rest: "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." And if you take into account the human element, and view the nations of the world in conflict to-day, armed to the teeth still, and, as Lloyd George said some time ago, "if not actual fighting, snapping and snarling at each other," where is peace? "There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked." And there can be no peace, even in the creation itself, until that thing which has disturbed the peace of the universe—and if I may dare to say so, has attempted to disturb the repose of Deity, until that thing has been sovereignly dealt with, until God is recognised as all in all. Sin is no light matter. God has His plan and purpose, dealing with it.

And then this context says, this whole creation is subject to the bondage of corruption. Is that true? There is a house I used to pass many times a day some years ago, which less than a year ago was vacated. It was a large house surrounded by large grounds. When its occupant was there, the lawns were carefully trimmed, the weeds were kept down, and it was a place of beauty. I passed it the other day, and it looked as if nobody had lived there for many years—subject to the bondage of corruption. Leave anything alone, be it a stone castle, a palace, a mansion, a cottage, or the field of the slothful, or the vineyard of a man void of understanding—pass it by, and you will see the buildings decaying and the fields all grown over with weeds. That law is at work everywhere—"the bondage of corruption." Every wash-day tells you that. There is a law of deterioration and degeneration at work everywhere. Something must be done with the whole creation before we can have the Millennium.

When I spoke to you about universal hope, I meant the universal instinct of hoping for better things. And I read here that "the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth"—there is an earnest expectation of a better order of things, somewhere, somehow.

Now, what does the Scriptures say about the future? I read to you last Sunday a promise from Isaiah. Well, Isaiah by inspiration declares that God will create new heavens and new earth. I must say that I do not share the view of those who speak of the Devil—the prince of the power of the air—as being supreme in that realm. God has never laid His sovereignty by, but that the Devil operates there, in the heavens, is proved beyond peradventure in the Scripture. Take for instance the story of Job: "Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?" You will remember the Devil's answer: "Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face." And when God laid down the fence, and when he gave the prince of the power of the air perm-

there came a whirlwind and fire from heaven. By whose power? By the power of those principalities and powers in the heavenly places, against which we wrestle. But there is a day coming when there shall be a new heaven, when that realm shall be cleansed and utterly purged of that satanic power, to which we are now so largely subject. And there shall be a new earth, which Peter carries the prophecy into the New Testament, and he tells us that this world in its present form is to pass away; it is to be changed; it is to be purged: "Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for the new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." God will not be beaten in any realm: "The Lord he is God; there is none else beside him." If you think of these things for a moment, I think it will save you from believing that any sort of millennial state is to be brought about—go to last Sunday evening for the moment—by any human effort. There is nothing in the present created order, not only in the earth upon which we walk, but in the heavens, that will not yield to human legislation. You may expend your energies trying to Christianize the present social order; but you cannot Christianize the principalities and powers in the heavenly places. Only the exercise of the sovereign power of Almighty God can redeem the whole creation, and bring it back into harmony with the will of Him Who created it.

But scarcely had the Lord uttered the curse upon the earth when He promised that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. Side by side with the shadow of sin, there is the promise of redeeming grace: after every storm-cloud there is the rainbow of His promise. And you must not learn to read this Bible aright until you have learned to see a sovereign God marching triumphantly to the goal of His purpose, until He shall be glorified in the eyes of all the universe.

Now, how is it to be done? Let me quote again the Scripture I read: "For we see not yet all things put under him. But we see Jesus." Would you ever have dreamed it from reading the eighth Psalm? Would you ever have dreamed that there was the incarnation, the resurrection, the ascension, the glorious coming of our Lord, wrapped up in the eighth Psalm? No, not until the interpretation put upon it by this divinely inspired expositor. You may say that he says: "O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth." And then he closes the Psalm exactly as he began it: "O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!" But the writer to the Hebrews says: "Now we see not yet all things put under him. But we see Jesus who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, and crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man."

The hope of the whole creation is not in the first Adam, but in the second Adam, Who is the Lord from Heaven. And when He shall come, and shall establish His kingdom which ruleth over all, then will be fulfilled the promise that is written: "O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!" You are not going to do it. The Department of Social Reform of the Methodist Church, that sneers at the Christian hope, sends its men to legislative processes, and turns men's thought away from the power of the law—that is not going to do it. There is but One Who can do it. "We see Jesus"—He is the Man under whose feet all things are put in subjection: "He gave him to be the head over all things in the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." "I have put all things in subjection under his feet"—I quote it again, to say, you and I will realize in our own experience the fulfilment of

that prophecy, and all things shall be under our feet, and we shall dominion, when Jesus is crowned Lord of all.

Then, I just ask this question: How is that to be realized through Christ? "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." That proposition is to be found in other Scriptures. There is a glory to be revealed in us; that is not what it means. "The sufferings of this present time—the groaning and travelling in pain together until now, on the part of the creation, on the part of men—are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to usward." The whole glory of the created order is to be revealed to usward; it is our inheritance in Christ Jesus. We shall reign on the earth with the Blessed be His Name, "kings and priests unto God and his Father; to his glory and dominion for ever and ever."

What, then, are the marks of the realization of this divine purpose? It is the whole creation waiting for?—"the revealing of the sons of God." Do you know who they are? Shall we begin with our church-roll? Read the list and see if there are any. I trust there are some. Let us never forget that the apostle, looking down on a church-roll long ago, carefully inspecting and revising it, said: "Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy." I have experience enough to be somewhat hesitant about marking people out as the sons of God. Individually we stand before God, and the true Christian can say, "I know whom I have believed"; but nobody else can say it for him. Do not misunderstand me. I dare to say that by God's grace, I am a poor sinner saved by the blood of Christ, and I am as sure of heaven as if I were within the gate of the pearl. Each man must know it for himself; but no man may accurately mark out who is or who is not a son of God. But there will come a time when the glory of God will be manifested, when they will be gathered out and revealed and crowned with glory—the glory of their Head—and there will then be no doubt as to who really belong to Christ. The whole creation is waiting for the manifestation, for the revealing of the sons of God. I will tell you when that comes to pass in a minute, and then we shall know when this other will take place.

The creation is waiting, what for? "The adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body"—when this material part of us, this physical nature, enters into its inheritance in Christ: "When this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory." This comes forward to that great day when these bodies of ours shall be redeemed, for that day—the glorious day of the resurrection of the just. If you can discover those who sleep in Christ shall rise, then you will know when the whole creation is to be delivered from the bondage of corruption—not into the glory of liberty, but into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. When we be set free, and our bodies shall be made like unto His glorious body, the whole physical order will share in that redemption. And for that it is waiting at this hour.

When shall that be? You have answered it in your minds already, you are the dead to be raised? "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so also, which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord." The resurrection of the body will take place at the coming of Christ, and the redemption of the whole creation will take place at the same time. How do I know that these things are to be dissolved, that the elements shall melt

heat, that purging is to be effected, not by water as in Noah's day, but
"The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels,
in fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not
the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." The coming of our Lord will be a day of
judgment to this earth, a day when the whole creation shall be purged of its
filth, of its corruption, and delivered into the liberty of the glory of the
son of God.

And now, "we are saved by hope." Paul says here: "We are saved by hope:
for that which is seen is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope?
But if we hope for that which we see not, then do we with patience wait for it."
Waiting for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God
and our Saviour Jesus Christ." That is the hope of the whole created order.

number of years ago, when I was preaching in New York, one Sunday
noon I went to hear Dr. A. T. Pierson in the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian
Church, and he told this story. I may have told it before, but I want to re-
peat it, as it serves my purpose here. He said he had a friend in Scotland,
a good man of middle life, who had a beautiful wife and a lovely family,
sustained by every comfort, with everything in life to live for. One day
when he was in London, in the Old Land, he received a telegram from this
friend in Scotland telling him that his wife had died suddenly, and asking
him to come. And he said, he went for the day of the funeral. This man
was a Christian, but he was crushed. Oh, but you say, a Christian ought not
to be crushed; a Christian ought to live above all these things. Ah, listen!
Dr. Pierson did not say this, but I make this comment—"And not only they,
but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves
within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our
body." Not yet, not yet, my brethren and sisters, do we know all that
is going to do for us. We have but the earnest of our inheritance. "Even
we ourselves groan within ourselves," and life is not one untroubled day
to the believer, as many of us know. Well, this dear brother, was in
London, of course, and yet trusting in the Lord. And Dr. Pierson said
the day of the funeral came, and the day broke dark; the skies were
dark and a heavy Scotch mist—hardly rain, but just a heavy Scotch mist—
settling. Everything was wet and gloomy, and there was not a patch of
blue in the sky anywhere. And he said as they drove into the cemetery, they
were just laden with moisture. All nature was weeping in sympathy
with the bereaved; and as their carriages passed under the branches of
trees, the moisture fell like rain about them. They came at length
to the grave, and the bereaved father stood there at the grave, and his little
son stood around him. Such a picture of sadness, he said, he had never seen
anywhere. There was nothing to relieve it; it was all as dark and
gloomy as anything could possibly be. And they lowered the
casket into the dark, cold grave; but just as the coffin rested upon the
edge of the grave, through a rift in the clouds, for the first time that day,
all a shaft of light; it shone down into that dark grave, and touched
the casket on the grass. And suddenly, a lark from the grasses
on the grave-side, flew into the sunbeam, and following the gleam of glory in happy
and pouring forth a flood of melody, with airy feet it climbed the
steeps to heaven. And Dr. Pierson said, "That is hope."

It is a dark day for the world; but this voice of prophecy comes into the
world that shines from heaven, and tells us that we must "live soberly,
righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope
and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ."

And that we were all ready for it, robed in His righteousness, washed in
His blood, adopted into His family, saved by His abounding grace, with the
ground under our feet, separated from it all, and just waiting for the coming
of our Lord.

There is one unconverted person here this evening. I bid you come in
to-day. Others may spend their time on other things. The greatest con-
cern I can make to any individual life, or to the weal of the world, is to
bring a man, or woman, or boy, or girl, into saving relationship to Jesus
Christ in Him. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be
saved. Let us pray.

CHURCH ANNOUNCEMENT

for the Week Beginning Sunday, July 29, 1923.

The August Campaign—Next Sunday, Dr. John Roach Straton of C Baptist Church, New York, will preach morning and evening. Dr. Straton's visit of two years ago is gratefully remembered by Jarvis Street people; he will be sure to receive a royal welcome. He is a fearless preacher of the Gospel, and a valiant defender of the faith, for whose ministry we do thank God. Dr. Straton will be with us at least until August 16th. Saturday night prayer meetings will be held as usual, and Dr. Straton will preach Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings of each week at 8 o'clock and will give an address the same afternoons at 3 o'clock.

A good number of pastors from out of town have announced their intention of being with us for all or part of the month. There will probably be many sessions for prayer and conference daily. The main purpose of the conference will be to learn more of how to draw nigh to God.

The programme for the latter part of the month will be announced as it comes. If possible the Pastor will be assisted by some outstanding preacher from out of town; otherwise our regular services will be held and the Pastor will be with us each Sunday.

Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday—These meetings are increasingly attracting many who are not members of the church. Many churches are sending, and thus the blessing is spreading. Don't miss one of these meetings this week.

The Gospel Witness—There are still some members who have not replied to the Pastor's note. Those who have replied thus far have responded generously. But if we are to do what may and ought to be done, we need the help of everybody. Send in your reply to the Pastor at once.

Never a day passes that we do not receive subscriptions for The Witness. Many of them come from the United States, and most of them are from the States. Several have written in most enthusiastic terms of blessing received. We are beginning to think The Witness is our most important missionary paper. With the help of all we can greatly extend the circulation of the paper.

The Pastor in His Old Pulpit Next Sunday—At the urgent request of the Deacons' Board of the Adelaide Street Church, London, the Pastor has been sent to preach in his old pulpit in London next Sunday. He regrets to be absent on Dr. Straton's first Sunday, but as Dr. Straton is no stranger to Jarvis Street, he hopes it will make little difference.

The Church Calendar

Sunday. For the week beginning Sunday, July 29th, 1923.

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

10.30—Communion Service.

11.00—Public Worship. The Pastor will preach.

11.30—The Bible School will meet.

6.00—Prayer Meeting in Church Parlor.

7.00—Public Worship. The Pastor will preach.

8.45—Open-air Service on the church grounds. The Pastor will preach.

Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, 8 o'clock—Meeting for Prayer.

Tuesday and Thursday, 9 o'clock—Open-air Services.

The Parliament St. Branch, 250 Parliament St. Sunday: Bible School, 10.00; Evangelistic Service, 7.00.

Wednesday, 8 o'clock—Prayer Meeting.