

Sermon Outlines Manifold Grace

*“That disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he . . . cast himself into the sea. And the other disciples came in a little ship.”
(John 21:7, 8)*

In his First Epistle, St. Peter writes of “the manifold grace of God.” One wonders if, in using this phrase, he may have had in mind the scene of our text. God’s grace is many-sided and is intended for numberless types of people. These may be exemplified by the persons mentioned in these verses. Man is apt to limit his experience to well-worn grooves, so it is essential to keep in mind the infinite variety of God’s dealings.

Jesus Christ works on and through the differing temperaments of men, and thus, in this scene on the shore of Galilee, He showed Himself in different ways. He watched over these fishermen followers of His, He spoke to them, He fed them, and all were loved by Him and all were disciples of His; but their after life and ministry varied with their differing temperaments. Jesus is on the shore of our life and it is ours to respond to Him, even though in varying ways. There was:

I. Clear Insight - John

1. Love, the great perceptive power.
 - a. All through, John was near to Christ and perhaps knew His deepest secrets.
 - b. To love at all we must know - head before heart.
 - c. Then, to fully know we must love - heart before head.
2. Love, the great penetrating power.
 - a. See God in everything. Cf. Christ here in relation to daily toil and disappointment.
 - b. Ignores second causes - logic thrown to winds - “It is the Lord!”

II. Eager Enthusiasm - Peter

1. Less capacity for delicate sensibility.
 - a. Not much insight.
 - b. Dependence on another for that.
2. Lion’s boldness, if not eagle’s eye.
 - a. Burning enthusiasm - not piercing vision.
 - b. No calculation of consequences.
3. But also manifestation of love.
 - a. Fervency - impulsiveness - strong affection based on gratitude and admiration.
 - b. We need both John and Peter.

III. Ordinary Service - the other disciples

1. As important because necessary to work.
 - a. Not see, nor swim, but row!
 - b. Knowledge of craft - practical ability.
 - c. No prophet’s eye, no enthusiast’s heart - yet love and practical devotion.

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2. As sincere even though not so showy.
 - a. Cf. Martha and Mary (John 11): it was Martha, the practical, who “went” while Mary, the spiritual, “sat” (v. 20); Martha who said not only “if” but also “but,” Mary who said only “if” and wept hopelessly (vs. 22, 23, 32, 33); Martha only who said, “I believe” (v. 27).
 - b. Thus, the devotee and the enthusiast sometimes fail in crises, while others plod on in humble trust.
 - c. Where would the Church be without such?
3. As noble, even though not so unusual.
 - a. Ordinary drudgery may be transformed into ordination to serve (Acts 6).
 - b. Peter and John no more prompt than others in landing - “they” (v. 9).

Conclusion

1. A gentle hint - careful in dealings with others - not depreciate - all needed. “Followeth not us” - who are we?
2. A precious encouragement - not all are outstanding - good thing, too. “They also serve who only stand and wait.”
3. A necessary duty - to be balanced Christian - cultivate all possibilities:
 - a. First type in danger of impracticality - so second.
 - b. Second type in danger of rashness - so third.
 - c. Third type in danger of secularity - so first and second.
4. A strong incentive
 - a. Begin with third type - ordinary, faithful.
 - b. Love grows by serving - thus first type.
 - c. Obedience not only test but means of love - thus second type.

“By love serve one another.”

“And daily, hourly, loving and giving
In the poorest life makes heavenly living.”

. . . . W.H. Griffith Thomas, D.D.