

CHAPTER 13

"FORBID THEM NOT"

AND NOW WE were back in Capernaum. While Jesus was meeting privately the many who came to him in need, I strolled outside the city to a wide playground much used by children. This day James had gone fishing with his father, but John chose to come with me. After watching the children play awhile, John offered to help a group who were forming boats out of wet clay.

He was still busy with this when I looked up and saw Jesus walking down the road with two mantled disciples. A thin column of women and children followed. I joined the procession, and coming up close to his side instinctively laid my hand on his fingertips. Without turning his head or changing his stride his hand opened and took mine in. Shortly he mounted a little hill, and there seated himself. The others gathered in silence and settled down about him, all seemingly as eager as I merely to sit a season in his presence. Soon there arrived a few of his disciples who had followed at a more leisurely pace, and finally a number of women came from the playground with their children, pressing through the throng until they were quite close to Jesus. They put the little children before him and cried, "Bless these children, O Lord."

Immediately Judas and Matthew arose, followed by the Zealot, and began to push the children away while they warned the mothers in stern voices.

Jesus, reaching over, caught up a little one that had avoided the pushing hands of the disciples.

"Stop, my friends," said he. "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of heaven."

I sat quietly beside him as one by one he blessed them—a veritable stream of children. My heart was filled with the glory and the gratitude of that marvelous hour.

When he had finished, he said quietly to those seated near him, "These little children live as they actually live in the Kingdom of heaven, genuine, spontaneous, unselfconscious and free. Only as you turn and become as little children are you worthy of entering into the Kingdom."

That night I retired to the upper room in a large house where the disciples were staying. John came in and sat down on the pallet beside me.

"You are a strange man," he said. "I noticed the way Jesus took you by the hand today. Tell me about yourself."

"I come from a land far away both in Space and Time. I do not know whether you can bear it now. I do not know whether you could understand me if I told you about it."

"Speak, brother," he replied. "In vision I have often seen a new heaven and a new earth; and your speaking is like the voice of the Spirit that I have heard sounding within me. So speak, brother."

"I have come from a land two thousand years away—from a nation as yet unborn, where much that our Master speaks of will come to pass. The sick will be looked after; men will be free to choose their rulers; the hungry will be fed; no one will be allowed to go in want; and temples will exist in every town, built to the glory of this humble man whom you call Master."

I paused, for John's eye were searching mine with such rapt intensity that I could not go on.

"Do you mean to tell me," he said, "that churches will arise in lands far away, where people will preach the gospel, heal the sick, raise the dead, and cast out demons?"

"Where they will preach the Gospel, yes. But the faith will not often be equal to those other things."

"Will it be a time of hypocrisy, like this one?" he asked.

"Not as bad as this one. The ministers will be dedicated to the Master's service, but that which Jesus preaches most, they will most neglect. Much attention will be paid to the outside of the platter—great buildings, large church memberships—and too little time will be given to the weightier matters of the Gospel—Love and Prayer."

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"Woe to an age that neglects those!" said John.

"Do you think I would have the right," I asked, "to go to Jesus and ask him for special advice for my age?"

"I will myself take you to him," said John, "I am sure he would reach that entire age as represented in you and lay his blessing upon it."

"That is what I want!" I exclaimed. "It is not his words or advice I would seek but his blessing. If he grants me that all else will be granted."

"When the time is ripe, I will tell you," he said.

I was surprised that John did not question me further. I was pleased that idle curiosity had not moved him to demand every last detail of the world that lay ahead. But it was like John to bide his time and to hurry no one, knowing that all things would come forth in their season. I wondered what he was thinking when he left the room for he seemed more absorbed in the heaven which Jesus had mentioned that afternoon than the world I had talked about—the world so far away.

I lay back and slept until dawn.

CHAPTER 14

A MOUNTAIN TOP

JOHN WAS shaking my arm vigorously. Oh, how hard it was to get my eyes open! Never had I seemed so heavy with sleep!

"Now is the time," he whispered, taking care not to waken others.

"Now is the time?" I whispered back. "What time?" It was as though the weight of centuries were holding me down.

"I could waken two thousand people easier than I can waken you," gasped John. "What is the matter? Are you drugged?"

"Yes," I replied, "drugged with the sophistication and materialism of an entire age. When you shake me you are shaking the inertia of two billion human souls. No wonder I am hard to waken."

"Get up at once. The Master is awaiting you—on the mountain. Now is the time for you to speak to him. Now is the time to ask for that blessing."

Five seconds later my hands were moving like fans on a July day, lacing my sandals and throwing my mantle about my shoulders. Oh, with what speed one can dress for a blessing like this! In a moment we were outside leaving the other disciples asleep within.

"Where is he?" I panted. "Follow me."

We walked in silence through the town, around the bend of the road leading to the west, and on up the hill that overlooked the fields of Galilee. And there at the highest point, seated on a stone and facing east, was Jesus. When I turned to thank my guide, John was gone.

Without a word I dropped at the Master's feet and let my eyes, like his, seek the dawn along the eastern horizon.

We sat in silence for a long, long time. Then as the gold of the sun's rim threw slanting gleams across the countryside, I heard his voice speaking behind and above me.

"You have come from a time far off. It is a time when much that I have prophesied will be coming true. Otherwise you would not be able to be here. A ribbon of eternity connects this age with yours, just as that ribbon of sunlight ties all these fields and meadows together as one. As the sun bridges Space, so the Son of Man bridges Time. There is no Time to one who is born again—everything to him is Eternal—and in Eternity all is one.

"Before Abraham was, I *am*. After all your woes and wars, I shall still *be*." He paused. Then, as the sun began to flood the valley, he continued, "And now, my friend, what blessing would you ask for your age?"

"O Master Jesus, I would bring to you in my hands, in my full heart, all the people of my Time, yes the Time itself, and kneeling, lay them at your feet to be blessed."

"And what special wish do you make when seeking this blessing?"

"My special wish is for the entire age to be reborn, for everyone living then to be born again. For what is life, if it be merely to eat and drink and reproduce one's kind, if our hearts are filled with hate and pride and greed?"

"You ask wisely, my son," he answered, and by now the voice was so clear I *knew this could not be a dream*. It was *real*, and I was truly in the presence of the Christ Himself.

"You ask wisely because *one cannot live* unreborn in an age where people talk across continents and fly across oceans—where Time and Space no longer control, where only Eternity exists. A man in that world must be reborn into Infinity. He cannot live safely beyond Time and Space unless he has found the secrets of Eternity. In such an age the man who limits himself kills himself. Many men in your time will die

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beneath the wheels of the chariots of war or by the arrows of hate because your leaders have not been reborn. Unless your people can find the doorways of Love and Prayer, and throw them wide open—as wide as you open the doors to invention and discovery, and through repentance and surrender die unto the little self and be reborn to the Great Self, the doors of death will yawn wide for entire nations. Unless you be born again in the Love Way you shall die and find rebirth in the Suffering Way."

"And how can the evil days be shortened?" I cried. "Only through turning to the Father in love and devotion, and to the neighbor at your gates with forgiveness, tolerance and good will. When pride and discrimination have vanished, when greed after gold has disappeared, when slavery to the cravings of the flesh is surmounted—then will you see the Kingdom coming to earth as it is in heaven."

"And will that come in my day?"

"What is that to thee? Follow thou me."

I was hushed. I had no more to say. I knelt with head bowed—not now facing the sun that was high in the eastern heavens, but facing Jesus, the Christ. Then I heard the voice say gently, "When I am on the cross I shall speak good tidings of your day."

CHAPTER 15

ON THE MOUNTAIN AGAIN

HAVING HAD that blessed period on the mountain, the yearning in my heart was so great to be alone with Jesus again that the following morning I arose while the rest were sleeping and retraced the same pathway I had gone before. There on the mountain, seated on the same stone, I found him. Slipping into position at his feet, I whispered, "O Master, it is such glory to be with you. But I must not interrupt your meditations."

"There are no interruptions in heaven," Jesus replied. "I came out here to abide wholly in the Father, and when one abides in the Father it matters not whether he speaks or remains silent. For Silence speaks as plainly as Words. Words, like Silences, can flow outward from the beginning of Time or inward for all Eternity."

"Will you give me the Word of Life, O Master?"

"Love is the Word of Life, for Love always radiates outward from Self, creating Life, through service, and returns inward to God, creating Life through adoration."

"Can Love bless others even if we do nothing?"

"Love blesses, no matter what one does or does not do. If one truly loves, he will find himself thinking, speaking, and doing in a creative, spontaneous way for the one he loves. For Love always leads. Therefore, to love in truth is enough. Right activity will always follow."

"Jesus," I asked, "will you reveal what you do in your silent periods on the mountain?"

"Why do I go up onto the mountain to pray? I am drawn up here. I do not come myself. I do not weary myself in the coming. Every step brings me rest. Even though I might be weary the night before I always find rest in the coming and a deep, infinite rest in the abiding after I get here.

"It is following the nights when I am most tired and heavy laden that I come and it is usually long before dawn. When I am very heavy with the sins of the world, or with the suffering of mankind, the Father takes me by the hand and leads me up into the light. The walking takes away the tiredness, and the climbing removes the weariness, and the being alone on the mountains dispels the anguish. People call it a paradox that to climb steep hills cures tiredness, and to walk out into the darkness takes one into the light."

"O beloved Son of God"—was I speaking or was I thinking?—"Is it concerns about this particular one or that particular one that fills you with sorrow and draws you up into the mountain?" He turned his eyes upon me.

"It is just a filling up of the cup of my heart," he replied, "and I do not always ask for whom the 'filling' comes, or to whom the healing goes. Whenever I do ask I find the answer—but it matters so very little in the Father's house who has the need, for who has not a need at some time or other? It is enough to know that someone in the Father's family is suffering, and the Father's Son must go forth and bring him peace.

"The heavy weight that falls upon my heart is usually from countless hundreds of woes, little and big, that trickle like the streams of water into a common pool, and when the cup of my heart is full, I find myself drawn to the mountain to pour it out before the Father."

"But Master," I cried. "There is such a radiance about you; there is such a contagious joy and permeating peace that I don't like to think of you—our strength and hope—bowed down with heaviness."

"Let not your heart be troubled, little one." Again the magnificent eyes were turned upon me. "The anguish is always overmatched by the ecstasy that comes to meet it when one reaches out to the Father in humility, sincerity, and love. Oh the bliss that rewards one when in place of the darkness the Light flows in.

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Verily, verily, I say unto you: Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is truly the kingdom of heaven; blessed are they that mourn, for on the mountain they shall be comforted.

"It is only at night that I am filled with the woes of mankind in this most overwhelming way—for it is only when the light of the sun is darkened that the waters of suffering flow downward and fill the pools. Always when the sun is shining the water is being drawn upward toward the light, making beautiful the clouds. It is only at night, in the absence of the light of the Father, that the Son finds the cup is put in his hands. And there is only one place where the juice of the cup loses its bitterness and that is on the mountain, or in the desert, where there is nothing about save God. Then when I drink it, God drinks it with me, and the more I take of the troubles of others into my soul, the more they are taken into God's soul; the more I take them into my heart the more they are taken into the Father's heart. And everything that is taken into the Father's heart becomes that moment perfect and whole.

"So I rejoice and am exceeding glad whenever I find myself drawn to the mountain before a journey and when my cup is unusually full, and when my heart is unusually laden, for it is always after the heaviest trips to the mountain that there follow the lightest trips through the hearts of men. Verily, verily I say unto you, that the time will come and now is, when that which is whispered in the inner chamber or on the mountain top alone with God will be proclaimed from the housetop; and when he who cleanses the inside of the cup will find that he has cleansed the outside also, and he who alone in communion with the Father cleanses his own heart of woe cleanses his entire world as well.

"Therefore I say unto you, when you pray, go into your closet and shut the door, pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is secret will reward you openly. And when you go up onto the mountain alone to pray, all the powers of mammon will tremble. For the prayer of one man upon the mountain will lift a multitude of men in the valleys.

"My beloved Son," those wonderful, compassionate eyes were upon me again, "never in history will the woes of mankind be greater than in the days that are to be yours. Never in history will the need be so great for a million surrendered and dedicated people to climb the mountains of prayer. Blessed shall be that people who hear these words of mine and do them."