

STRAIGHTWAY

And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him [Mark 1:18].

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Our Sovereign, Transcendent Lord

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It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in. (Isaiah 40:22)

This verse in the Holy Scriptures reveals the entire truth needed for the Christian's survival and joy in our ever-changing world as we enter into the twenty-first century.

I am reminded through its depth of my simple mother of years gone by. I was born in the days of the depression of the 1930s when everyone worked hard, became thrifty, and endured whatever was necessary for a family and heart to exist. All of us, as children in my mother's house, loved milk. It was not as necessary as water, nor as economical, but it was something of an extra to the meal, the cake, or the cookie.

The milk in our house was rationed down to a half-glass for each of the three children as well as for father and mother. The rationing came from grocery stores where a lot of milk was in storage. The grocer had purchased it from distribution points with an even larger inventory. The distributor received his milk for still larger grocery chains from even larger groups of dairies. These dairies involved thousands of cows with calves which took some of the plenteous supply of milk, besides that which supplied the grocery chains, that supplied the distributors, that supplied the local grocery

store, that supplied my mother's refrigerator.

However, after all of that, whenever my mother placed a half-glass before me, I would with a gentle heart remind her that the glass was half-empty. She would immediately correct me and say, "No, son, the glass is half-full."

Our Easter text for our April Issue of *Straightway* will be about the shortest message I have ever written in my forty-five years in the ministry. However, as we hope to see, this text reveals four great truths for this glorious remembrance of the Bodily Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

First, these are the words of our Sovereign, Transcendent Lord. He is the Commander-in-Chief of the entire universe. It is true His Immanence is among us, but it is equally true He is Transcendent above and separate from creation and the universe. He is the supply behind the boy at the mealtime table, back to the stores, the distribution centers, all of the dairies in the earth, and all the forces which descend through all the galaxies from His omnipotent Throne that filters down into our atmosphere to refresh the nutrients to the cows. In one unlimited heart of Almighty God, the beneficent God, is the source of all the needs of the universe, separate from all physical laws, magnitudes, galaxies, and planets.

Second, the text reveals that God sits upon "the circle of the earth." This indicates His humble and gentle care for all creatures, whether they be holy angels, evil demons, fallen man, wretched sinners, violent sinners, repentant believers, or regenerated Christians. God sits with His intent gaze from the circle of the earth, below the Throne and all else, with an intent scrutiny to all needs.

Third, God cares for all creatures on earth as One Who is willing to view us in our greatest "grasshopper" need. God does not simply act in our earth as a hurricane, a cyclone, a tornado, a typhoon, or across great waters. Although God sits and sees "the inhabitants as grasshoppers," the wonderful thing about this is that God sees the need of such a lowly creature as depicted in this metaphor. I do not mind being a "boy" or a "grasshopper" if God sees me and serves me and helps me as such. The greater problem would be if God created boys and grasshoppers as such and did not sit and see their need and/or plight.

Fourth, God's great sovereign, transcendent almightiness meets the need of the grasshopper under His "curtain" as well as in our "tent." These are the protective and homey ways in which God is with His creatures, stretching His curtain, spreading His tent. The "curtain" reveals His propriety, personalness, and privacy to us; the "tent" reveals a providential dwelling

place for us in the earth itself.

It is up to the Christian believer to measure the glass of milk: is it half-empty? Or, half-full? If you look just past mother, the refrigerator, the grocer, the distributor, and all the dairies from God, who owns “the cattle on a thousand hills,” what mother said was true. However, you must look above to see the place of the Supply.

So God took the death of His Son, a loss to His generation, and raised Him from the dead to the Glory of the Throne of Grace. So our lowly Christ became an Omnipotent Savior.

Yes, God took His Son and offered Him as a Substitutionary Atonement for the sinner. We know of no event in history that seemed so likely to fail, and it is because we are prone to think of loss at the Cross as a half-empty glass. In the twentieth century, people have become so acquainted with materialism and the promise of prosperity theology and divine health that anything less than that seems half-glass.

We could preach for hours upon the subjects of the optimistic miracles of Jesus. Do you remember them? They are as follows: the turning of water into wine, the feeding of the five thousand, the feeding of the four thousand, the healing of the sick, the opening of the eyes of the blind, the finding of the tribute money in the sea, and many, many more. They are examples of the full-glass.

However, we must keep our eyes on the half-glass, which sometimes is measured half-empty. Who would have ever thought that the death of One could be our Savior? Who would have ever thought that a man going down a road carrying his own cross would be a King? Who would have ever thought that a man born in little Bethlehem and reared in shameful Nazareth would be God?

There is a passage in Paul’s writings to the church at Philippi that brings us to the urgent appraisal of the half-glass, half-empty. It was said of Jesus in Philippians 2:6-8,

Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

There are two Greek words in this passage to be finally remembered in our time as The Kenosis and The Tapeinosis. The former is a word that has

something to do with “emptying,” Christ’s condescending to come down into the body, conceived in the Virgin Mary, and making himself of “no reputation.” As if that were not enough condescending, He would then pass through a humiliation. If that were not enough, He must also pass through “humbling Himself.” It is very necessary that we carefully note both the emptying of Himself and the humbling of Himself in coming down into the earth. The emptying of Himself, in condescending, marks the conceiving of the body in the womb of the Virgin Mary that He would enter; yet, having been born into the world in a manger, He must proceed 33 ½ years to press that emptied self humbly to “even the death of the cross.” Straining for some kind of understanding of this, we would dare say the humbled Christ humbled Himself more. Possibly we are viewing a miracle backwards—not as the former miracles mentioned of multiplying, of increasing, of taking things further than nature would. Here we see a miracle in reverse. Instead of His living, we find Him dying; and the miracle, like the cursing of the fig tree, is that after the death of Jesus He rises in resurrection Power. The half-glass is half-full and fullness over-flowing for us. In these dark apostate days of the twentieth century, seeing nothing encouraging in the public horizon of the apostate church, we are glad to know that although the glass appears half-empty, with our Sovereign, Transcendent Lord it should be measured from His Fullness.