

"Abide with us"

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"Abide with us; for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And He went in to tarry with them" (Luke 24:29).

"It is toward evening." That is what some begin to realize in their own lives. The high noon is passed; the shadows lengthen; the day of greatest activity is over. They cannot launch out as in former times. Certain things are dropped; new enterprises are no longer contemplated. Many friends and occupations of earlier life have faded from view.

"It is toward evening." What comfort to have someone who will abide and for that One to be the best. These words seem just the appropriate ones at such a time: "Abide with us." Let us make the same plea, both for His sake and ours, as these disciples did: "for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent."

When We Most Need the Lord

It is then, when it is toward evening, we most need the Lord. These two disciples did not feel they needed Him less than when He first joined them, but more. They knew Him better. And the more we know Him, the more we need Him. He makes Himself indispensable to us. Is this our growing experience? Happy indeed for Him and for us, if so it is. Sometimes it is the other way. As natural energy and vigor slacken, we become less eager in the divine life. It seems to have been so with Isaac. Once we read of him: "And the man waxed great, and went forward, and grew until he became very great." But when we see him later on, old age and blindness, in more senses than one, seem to have overtaken him. In contrast with this, may we turn to the Lord with increasing desire when it is "toward evening," and say with fresh emphasis, "Abide with us."

Christ had made Himself necessary to these two disciples. He had come to them in their perplexity and sadness, when terribly downcast, upset and almost hopeless. How far this was the case their own words tell us: "We trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel." And how sorely Israel needed redemption, He knew as well as they. But His words, as He walked and talked with them, made a marvelous change. Their hearts began to burn, and their prospects seemed to brighten. Is it any wonder they said at the close, "Abide with us"?

Sweeter Rest

Has He not done some great thing for us, too? He has. If we know what sin means, and our own sin, and how He has met all by His own death, then indeed we feel how necessary He is. But that is only one thing. We need Him in other ways beside. Has He not been doing great things for us along the journey of life? Strange it would be if such a Friend, with such power, had never done anything to make us say, "It is the Lord." Has He changed since that day on the Sea of Tiberias, when at His command the empty net became full of great fishes? Have we not often had occasion to say:

"I need Thy presence every passing hour;
What but Thy grace can foil the tempter's power?
Who like Thyself my guide and stay can be?
Through cloud and sunshine, O abide with me?"

And has He not been all to us that we needed? If so, how good, when it is "toward evening," to say afresh to Him, "Abide with me." Happy indeed for those who have thus learned to know Him and thus desire to have Him! He died for us; He lives for us; He is coming for us, and the approaching evening has no disappointments and no terrors if He is near, and His presence is felt.

How pleasant when it is toward evening to say "Abide with us," for after a day of toil the rest of evening will be all the sweeter because of His company. Evening is the time of relaxation and rest. It is peculiarly the time, too, when we need companionship. What better companion than He? Husband and wife who have realized in Him how closely they are united, and who have been drawn closer by the experiences of the way, and by all that He has been to them, as they realize that with both of them "it is toward evening," may well make this their prayer, "Abide with us." How blessed at the evening of life to desire to know more of Him, "And in that Light of Life to walk, Till travelling days are done."

A Day Well Spent

But, if all we have already suggested is to be realized, the day that is far spent must have been a day that knew something of His company. Has the day that is far spent been well spent? People who have never known Him, and never walked with Him, do not, as a rule, constrain Him to come in and tarry with them when it is "toward evening." They have done without Him so long, they can do without Him still. This is too often their feeling. It is not His feeling. He would come even at the eleventh hour. He is ever waiting to be invited.

"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me" (Revelation 3:20).

What a contrast is here presented! What a difference it makes whether the entreaty comes from our side or His! He will listen to our appeal. We do not always attend to His.

These two disciples had spent some time in His company. How long that journey took we are not told. But when the conversation is engrossing, the pace perceptibly slackens. Perhaps many a time during the walk they stood still facing that Stranger, or with bent heads listened to that unparalleled discourse which carried them from one end of their Scriptures to the other. For it was a Bible talk — that which, above all other means of instruction, edifies, interests and convinces. They wanted to have more. No sermon of fifteen minutes satisfied them. The day was far spent, but they did not wish it to end too soon. Could they persuade Him to tarry with

them? He responds to their invitation.

We must be with Him during the day if He is to abide with us when it is toward evening. Let us not miss the opportunity when it comes. How often He would join us if we would let Him! And the Christ we know must not be a Christ of our own imagination, or one to suit our own temper. He must be the Christ of God, the One of whom Moses and all the prophets spake. How real to the heart He becomes when thus revealed!

The Time of Greatest Gain

Even the evening of life may be the time of further disclosures. It was at the end of the day that the real vision—the crowning revelation—came to these two. Had they not constrained Him to enter their humble dwelling, how much they would have missed! Only as we seek Him and want Him do we come to know Him. He had on the road shown them much, but it was as He sat at their evening meal, and took the bread, and blessed it, and gave to them, that their eyes were opened, and they knew Him.

And the evening of life may be the time of greatest gain. Not until it is “toward evening” may all our longings be met, all our hopes satisfied, all our expectations realized, and our efforts become achievements. Happy, thrice happy, the one who knows this. “Better is the end of a thing,” as Solomon declares, “than the beginning.” It is well to have the “good wine” at the end of the feast. Those two disciples could have said, “Thou hast kept the good wine until now.” That day, which had begun in clouds and darkness round about them, ended with a clear sky. In one sense only was the day far spent; in another, it was morning: a new day had dawned which could never be overshadowed. As surely as the company of Christ is our chief aim and desire, it will be so also with ourselves.

Let us constrain Him to “abide with us.” “He made as though He would have gone further.” For He wishes to discover the place He has in our hearts. He will not force Himself upon us. When the day is far spent, friends may be few, and loved ones gone before; the years may leave us poorer in these respects; but richer in all that His company can yield to us, if we really desire Him.

The One Who Never Disappoints

Nor will He fail or disappoint us. “He went in to tarry with them:”—He the Lord of Glory, “the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father,” and yet perfect Man—He was their guest and companion. Who shall solve the mystery? Who shall explain how He who had made all things could so empty Himself and humble Himself as to be seen of men and become their companion? What immeasurable distances separate Him from us, and yet how near He has come! Let us receive Him with adoring hearts, remembering always the mystery, and also with joy and gratitude, for though reason may be baffled, the heart approves. Once He had invited two who longed for more of His company to “come and see” where He dwelt, and they “abode with Him” (John 1). He equally abides with us. Both are true; and both, in a certain sense, are now. The lowly, gracious Son of Man comes to us and would have free access to our hearts and homes. And yet He has revelations to make to us as Son of God of all that is His and of all

that He knows, and He invites us to dwell where He dwells and abide with Him.

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