

The One Gift That Makes You Like God

Jesus had a power of overcoming trouble, a power of triumphing over the “prince of this world,” which was unique in the history of mankind. All will agree to this, even the skeptics and agnostics and those of alien faiths. And He promised that He would leave us this power: “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father” (John 14:12).

Up to now His professed followers have failed, as a whole, to experience the power He said He was going to leave with us. The question that is left unanswered is, What is this power, and where shall we find it?

Having convinced myself that Jesus meant us to take Him absolutely at His word when He said we would do even greater works than He did, I determined to study until I had answered this question. And this is what I found—that Jesus’ attitude toward life was one of converting everything He saw and touched into parables.

He stood on this earth as a symbol of a greater world. He gripped the issues of life as mere symbols of eternal and heavenly realities.

Petty problems and sorrows and disasters He converted into beautiful symbols of eternal and infinite goodness. Thus nothing was petty, nothing was trivial, nothing was without meaning in Jesus’ world, for all things combined to reveal the kingdom—the kingdom of heaven in which He lived and moved and had His being.

“All these things Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables; and without a parable He did not speak to them” (Matt. 13:34).

Jesus never let His lips say what His mind and heart did not authorize. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks" (Matt. 12:34).

If Jesus talked in parables, He thought in parables; if He thought in parables, He felt in parables. The parable point of view of the universe was at the heart of His being. From somewhere about the beginning of His ministry He adopted this parabolic method of looking at the universe and never departed from it.

There is something tremendously significant in this fact. It reveals that this method of thinking and talking about life for Jesus was not a halfway method. He did not use it occasionally as a means to an end, but continuously, exclusively, utterly. Perhaps no teacher in all history has so completely given himself to one particular method as Jesus did to this.

To me this was the greatest discovery of my life. It took its rank beside Newton's and Watt's discoveries that apples fall downward and steam pushes outward.

And I am firmly convinced that when the religious world awakes to the full significance of these simple words the result will be just as transforming to its spiritual life as the discoveries of gravitation and steam power have been to its scientific and material life. For just as the discoveries of Watt and of Newton awakened man to the presence of a new world of physical and material forces outside him, so the discovery of Jesus' way of looking at life will awaken man to the presence of a new world of spiritual forces within him.

It was not till I made the discovery I have just referred to that there came to me a realization of the close association of cause and effect that existed between the parables and the miracles of our Lord. For in Jesus' parabolic interpretation of life lay the secret of the signs and wonders that

signalized His healing and teaching ministry.

If all this is implied in Jesus' parabolic view of life, it behooves us to consider carefully just what manner of thing this mystery is that we call a parable—this thing that is so filled with moral and spiritual dynamite.

"A parable," says the dictionary at my hand, "is an allegorical relation of something real." There we have it: A parable deals first of all with reality. Second, it translates this reality in terms of the imagination.

Jesus looked at reality through the lens of the divine imagination. By means of that fact troubles vanished around Him, obstacles fell away, the lost became found, the sick became well, sinners became redeemed, and rough places became smooth. Moreover, He promised that those who followed Him and used the way He used would have similar dominion over all things on earth and that greater works than He did they would be able to do also.

The imagination is the power we all possess of seeing harmonies, unities and beauties in things where the nonimaginative mind sees nothing but discords, separations, ugliness. It is the tool of the mind with which we build up our affirmations the "staff" of the shepherd psalm that comforts us when all other faculties fail us.

To look at life imaginatively, then, to see everything about us as a great parable full of deep inner meanings—meanings of love, joy, wholeness, symmetry, and perfection—is to see life truthfully, that is to say, spiritually. It brings us into a condition of continuous prayer that is conducive, above all else, to bringing into our lives those larger harmonies and unities that to our physical eyes appear to be miracles.

The imagination is of all qualities in man the most godlike—that which associates him most closely with God. The

first mention of man in the Bible is where he is spoken of as an "image" (Gen. 1:26): "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness."

The only place where an image can be conceived is in the imagination. Thus man, the highest creation of God, was a creation of God's imagination. The source and center of all man's creative power—the power that lifts him above the level of brute creation and gives him dominion over all the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and the animals that move and creep on the earth—is his power of making images, or the power of the imagination.

The imagination of man is but the window or door which, when thrown open, lets the divine life stream into our lives. When it is thus thrown open man is brought into a condition of consciousness which, for want of a better word, is called "inspiration."

This heavenly inspiration is what links man to the divine and brings into existence our poets, composers, prophets, mystics, seers and saints. This is a power that Jesus Christ had and that lifted Him above all other men—a power that He, in His immeasurable compassion and infinite humility, wished to bestow upon others and share with them, that greater works than He had done they might do also.

These works—these mighty works, these miracles, if you will—are the direct outcome of Jesus' converting everything He saw into parables. And a parable, we find, is merely "an allegorical relation of something real."

Looked at from this angle, the performing of a miracle is not such an impossible task. It consists merely of looking at reality through the lens of the imagination and then letting this parable, or imaginative way of looking at reality, bring to pass what is spoken of as a miracle.

And what is reality? Reality, in the eyes of the practical

man, is made up of cold, hard facts. And what are the cold, hard facts of life? As we look about us in this world what we see all too frequently is quarreling, bickering, unhappiness, unfaithfulness, treachery, covetousness and materialism.

These are facts of life. But what are facts? Fact comes from the word factum, meaning something we do or make. Are these facts of life identical with the realities of life?

Not according to Jesus. To Him reality does not consist of that which is made, but of that which eternally is. Love is—quarrels are made; joy is—unhappiness is made; truth is—lies are made; loyalty is—betrayals are made; purity is—impurity is made; life is—sickness is made.

So Jesus went through life seeing no quarrels, no unhappiness, no lies, no impurity, no sickness. Where they appeared to be, He turned the lens of His divinely inspired imagination upon them; He converted them into parables, and behold, they stood forth revealed as mere shadows or reflections—upside down—of the reality. And every time that Jesus converted a fact into reality the people exclaimed that a miracle had been wrought.

I do not mean to imply that Jesus went about disregarding and overlooking the facts of life. Rather He looked at them so much more steadily, so much more understandingly than the rest of mankind that He looked straight through them into the underlying reality of which they were the mere counterfeits or reflections. This is what the parabolic point of view consists of.

He looked steadily at the dead girl until He could utter with absolute conviction, based upon perfectly clear understanding, this startling parable: "The girl is not dead, but sleeping" (Matt. 9:24). He looked through the palsied sufferer until He could pronounce with conviction another parable, "Your sins are forgiven you" (v. 2).

For to Jesus a parable meant simply the going behind the fact

to the reality the fact represents. It does not mean watering the leaf that is waving conspicuously in the sunshine but watering the roots that no one can see. It does not mean healing a man's skin but healing his soul.

It does not mean dealing with the seen, but with the unseen; not with the carnal, but with the spiritual. Once perform the inner watering, the inner cleansing, and the outer healing will follow as a matter of course. "Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Arise and walk'?" (v. 5).

Now let me clear up a misunderstanding about the imagination that may have cropped up in the minds of many readers. Some have thought the imagination is something that makes believe that which is not. This is fancy, not imagination. Fancy converts what is real into pretense and sham; imagination enables one to see through the appearance of a thing to what it really is.

We may ask, Did Jesus perform a miracle when He said the leper was made whole? No, He merely demonstrated it. Did He break a natural law when He said, "The girl is not dead but sleeping"? No, He merely demonstrated that life is the reality, and death is the shadow or counterfeit of Life.

Then can we create miracles? Yes, we can, if we use our imaginations and look steadfastly through the appearances of things to the reality behind them. We cannot create miracles by our fancy—by trying to make believe we see things that we do not and cannot see because they do not exist. We can create miracles by faith—by knowing the reality that exists behind the things that only seem to exist. Faith will indeed move mountains.

And what is the greatest of all realities, the reality around which all lesser realities revolve, as it were? The great reality, the realization of which was at the core of all

Jesus' miracles, was the truth that man is eternally united with all that is good—in other words, with God and His kingdom—and eternally separated from all that is bad. Merely to see this reality and see it clearly as Jesus did will make the sick whole, the sorrowful happy, the sinful redeemed and the lost found.

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