

LUKE ... who became a connoisseur of pictures
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(LUKE 14-16)

Most men have hobbies, and it would be easy to believe that Dr. Luke was no exception to the rule. Undoubtedly he was a very busy man, yet in his spare time he developed a love for writing; and the quality of his work suggests he would have been an excellent art critic. If his Gospel may be likened to an academy, one may safely say that as an untiring collector he secured many art treasures to hang upon its walls. Some pictures hang alone in splendid isolation; they need neither supporting pictures nor commendation of man. Yet others are strangely related. They hang together, for none are complete without the others, Their production, and even their place in the collection, exhibit genius.

Earth and Its Madness-Luke 14:16-24

The great hall was lavishly decorated; the tables were prepared for a feast that would make history! The host was satisfied. He had planned to honor his guests, and no expense had been spared in supplying the best his wealth could offer. Yet his eyes were becoming shadowy. They were questioning the servants who awaited his instructions. " My lord, I carried your invitation to your friend. He wishes to be excused. He has bought land, and must needs see it My lord, I regret to announce that your friend is unable to attend tonight. He has purchased five yoke of oxen, and he declares it is imperative that they be tried out." " My lord, you will be interested to know that your honorable friend has decided to take unto himself a wife. He is very excited, and cannot attend your function." " Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind " The master frowned! An inspection of land; a testing of common beasts; the company of a woman! What trivialities! In considering that picture, Luke was intrigued. That God in Christ should provide a repast of eternal magnificence was beyond his comprehension, but the fact that sinners should invent excuses to refuse God's invitation, suggested madness!

Heaven and Its Gladness-Luke 15: 11-24

The night was still; the start were serene and beautiful. Across the fields, the windows of a farmhouse shone as jewels in a fairy palace. The laughter of the guests announced this to be a night of rejoicing. A long lost son had been found; the wanderer in a far country was home again. Oh, joy! Within the homestead the father's face beamed; he constantly lingered alongside the boy for whom he had waited so long. The guests still remembered the glad cry which echoed from his lips, " Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat and be merry. For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." And as Luke carefully placed this picture on the walls of his academy, he remembered the words of the Lord Jesus: "Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth " (v. 10). " Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of Man also confess before the angels of God" (Luke 12:8). Does this verse explain how the angels are made aware of conversions? The scene beggars description.

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Hell and Its Sadness-Luke 16:19-31

Luke's final picture once again brings into bold relief the disgusting people who refused the great invitation. "There was a certain rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day ... and he died, and in hell he lifted up his eyes. . . ." The picture is solemn. If this utterance is to be our guide in eternal matters, then certain facts demand consideration. (i) Death is not the termination of existence. (ii) Eternity does not destroy one's memory of time. This man remembered his brothers. (iii) Eternity does not provide an opportunity for those who died unrepentant to make a further decision relating to salvation. The man's request for help brought forth the startling response between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they who would pass from hence to you cannot, neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence." (iv) In all matters relating to this world and the next, the Scriptures stand supreme. If God would not permit the return of a departed soul to warn and evangelize the lost, then the claims of spiritist mediums are false. If messages are received from some spirit-world, their origin must be sought in realms not controlled by God. (v) If men desire to prepare for eternity, they should begin immediately. There can be no guarantee that their opportunities will extend until tomorrow.

I've been an awful fool

I knew her well, for she was a wealthy business woman in a small town where I often preached. She never attended any church, and excused her action on the grounds that many of her customers came shopping during service hours. Her excuses were many and varied, but occasionally when confronted by the challenge of the Gospel she became angry and said regrettable things. Vehemently she stated that church people should pay their debts, instead of giving money to support lazy clergymen! She was a strange character, completely devoted to the task of increasing her savings. Alas, as the time of her death drew near, her children were amazed when her entire outlook seemed to change. Just before the end, she looked at the family and said, " I hope you will be wiser than your mother. My god has been my money, and what use is it to me now? I never went to church; I ignored the Gospel, and forgot God. I'm dying, and I'm not ready to die. I've been an awful fool. I've made money, but I've lost my soul."

Just in Time

He was a very fine minister, who at one time during his ministry had served as a Police Court Missionary. Some notorious characters had criticized his unflinching loyalty to righteousness, but most of the underworld admitted gratefully that he was a true friend in time of need. One night, the " padre " was accosted by a teenager-one he had never seen previously. She appeared to be ill-at-ease, but there could be no mistaking the evil purpose which had brought her into the night. She was a Stranger in the neighborhood, and had no idea that her first contact was a clergyman. She was most surprised when the man gently but firmly gripped her arm and pushed her into a nearby home. " Who are you? How long have you been here? Who is your boss?" At first she was too frightened to answer, but ultimately his kindly persuasiveness triumphed, and she told all he desired to know. She had quarrelled with her parents, and had run away from

LUKE ... who became a connoisseur of pictures her home in the north of England. Penniless, but determined never to return, she had come to the big city, to be introduced to people who promised to help her find employment. Their apparent friendliness only disguised their evil trade, and soon the poor girl was coerced into obeying their commands. Threatened by betrayal to the police on some false charge, she consented to become a prostitute; but the first man she accosted was "the padre." A telegram was sent to the anxious parents, and soon a very grateful father arrived to take his repentant daughter home. The girl's mother had been praying earnestly that God would somehow protect the child, and her prayer had been wonderfully answered.

"Yes, Mr. Powell, she was rescued just in time. I think I can say now that this was the most amazing miracle I ever witnessed." "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

The Ruined Meeting

My old friend the late P.C. Dawes was a fine Christian gentleman, and some of his stories were very effective illustrations. On one occasion he was commissioned to guard the doors of a hall where an atheist was expected to address a large audience. The authorities feared that certain militant Christians might cause trouble, and my friend was instructed to prevent any disturbance. Long afterward he confessed he would have welcomed anything to upset the cold, calculated blasphemy to be uttered on the infidel's platform. Yet he could only stand on guard and pray. Suddenly the door opened, and the policeman was urgently asked to enter. The doorkeeper agitatedly explained that a sudden seizure had prevented the speaker from delivering his address. Would the police come immediately? P.C. Dawes hurried to the platform. He was shocked when he discovered that the lecturer was already dead.

I shall always remember the moments when this fine Christian policeman told me of that strange event. "Yes," he said, "I was standing on those steps wondering what could be done. I would have welcomed any interference, but as an officer of the law I had to preserve the peace. Obviously God would have to fight His own battles! I must confess I did not expect what happened. Surely, God can manage His own affairs-very effectively."

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