

THE HOUSE OF MERCY ... on the Jericho road
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(LUKE 10: 34, 35)

Dear Mr. Inn-keeper,
It seems an awful shame that you should be so hidden amid your surroundings. You are one of the most attractive personalities in the Gospel story. Perhaps it seems a little unfortunate that you should be so closely associated with such a thrilling account, for it is your proximity to Another which rather places you in the shadow. And yet, if you were anywhere else, you would be seen at a disadvantage. Did you build or buy that house on the Jericho road? Surely bravery and wisdom were united in your soul; your nearness to danger provided the opportunity for fame. We have looked at the desolate surroundings of that notorious highway between Jerusalem and Jericho, and have visualized the dramatic scenes of the ambush arranged for the unwary traveller. And then quite suddenly we saw you standing in the doorway of your famous home. You seemed a very nice fellow. What was the name of your hotel? Our eyesight is not too good at this distance, but it looks strangely like "The Sanctuary." Yes, that is a very nice name, and fits admirably into the general pattern of things.

A Wonderful Purpose

Did you help the good Samaritan to carry in the unfortunate victim? We have often read how that wonderful friend went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him." Perhaps you had often witnessed such rescues, and had become accustomed to these acts of grace. It would never surprise us if we heard that the good Samaritan was often found on that dangerous highway. Isn't it stupid how self-confident men ignore obvious warnings and calmly walk into trouble? Perhaps you recognized this, and planned a hostel of help. It has just occurred to us to ask- Were you by any chance personally acquainted with the wonderful Samaritan? Were you his friend? He seemed perfectly assured that you would care for his patient and continue his work of healing.

A Wonderful Privilege

Isn't it strange how we sometimes overlook obvious facts? The good Samaritan would have been in difficulty had there been no inn to which he could take his convert - dear me, I'm sorry, Mr. Inn-keeper ; that's the trouble with evangelists, we always get your stories mixed up with our message. Now what was I saying? Yes, I remember, your hospitable inn was "The Sanctuary" to which the poor patient was brought. There he was fed and nursed back to life. There during his convalescent days he found a new fellowship ; there he saw love in action. Your home was like a glorious church built alongside the highway of life. It seemed providential that it should have been placed in that exact position. The good Samaritan knew its location, and in the hour of need left his precious charge in your care. You helped him. My word, what a great privilege came to you that day!

A Wonderful Promise

Did you accompany this great man to the door on the morning of his departure? Were you sorry to see his going? Ah, but you were sure that he would return, for he said so, didn't he? What does the record say? "And on the morrow when

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he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the
host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever
thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee."
Our hearts would have thrilled had we been present that
morning. Then, Mr. Inn-keeper, you went indoors and looked
after the patient as if he had been your own brother-well,
he was, really, wasn't he? You were pleased to notice his
returning health. You shook his hand and rejoiced that you
had been of service to him and to his great friend. Oh, sir,
"That happened when the good Samaritan returned? Surely
his eyes lit with pleasure when you told him about his con-
vert-oh dear, there I go again. Never mind, you understand
what I mean, don't you? Was he pleased? Did he say, " Well
done, thou good and faithful servant: inasmuch as ye have
done it to him, ye have done it to me "? Were you thrilled
with your reward, Mr. Inn-keeper? Now shall I tell you a
secret? We are emulating your example, for all Christians
have been placed in charge of a similar place of healing. Our
Master called it " The Church." It belongs to Him really,
but we are privileged to nurse His patients. We are trying
to do well, for when He returns we want to be unashamed
before Him at His appearing. That's all. Goodbye, Mr.
Inn-keeper, and thank you very much.

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