

J.R. Miller:

Orientalists say that each man and woman has a message, and that only those who utter their message, are true men or women. It is interesting to think of ourselves in this way, as sent into the world with something to give out or manifest. Lowell tells us that,

"Life is a sheet of paper white
Whereon each one of us may write
His word or two " and then comes night."

Every life is meant to be a word of God. Christ was the Word. He came to manifest in his incarnation, the whole of God's being. Men looked into his face " and saw the effulgence of the Father's glory, and the very image of his substance. He was in the fullest sense, the Word. But every Christian life, even the least, if it fulfills the divine thought for it " is also a word of God, revealing something of God.

It is easy to believe this of a few men, like Moses, David, Isaiah, John and Paul, through whom definite and distinct revelations have been given to the world. But there is no one to whom God does not give something to tell to men. It is not the same message for all, or for any two. To one it is a revealing of science; to another, a poet's vision; to another, fresh light from holy Scripture; to another, a new thought of duty; to another, a special ministry of love.

Whatever our message may be, we dare not withhold it. Suppose that the beloved disciple, having leaned upon the bosom of Jesus and learned the secret of his love, had gone back to his fishing after the ascension, failing to tell men what had been spoken to him " how he would have wronged the world! Any life which fails to hear its message and deliver it " wrongs those to whom it was commissioned to carry blessing. But every life, even the lowliest, which fulfills the divine thought for it, adds its little measure to the joy and treasure of other lives.

The follower of Christ has a very definite message to deliver. Paul tells us that he is to manifest the life of Jesus in his body. Many lives of Christ have been written " but in every Christian life there should be a new one published; and it is these lives, written not in handsomely bound volumes, with fine paper and gilt edges, and with attractive illustrations " but in men's daily lives, that are needed.

It is important that we should understand how we are to manifest the life of Jesus in our own life. It is not enough to talk about him. There are those who with silver tongue can speak of Jesus eloquently and winsomely, of whom it cannot be said, even in widest charity, that his life is relived in them. When the apostles were sent out, they were not to witness for Jesus in words " but were to be witnesses unto Jesus in character, in disposition, in service. It is not more preaching which is needed to advance the kingdom of God among men; it is more gospels in the lives of Christians. It is not what we tell people about Christ, which makes his name glorious in their eyes, which makes them want to know him, which draws them to him with their sins, their needs, their sorrows, their failures: it is what they see of Christ in our own life.

What was this life of Jesus which is to be repeated in every Christian life? Its great central characteristic was love " not what passes for love among men " but love full of compassion, love serving even to the lowliest degree and at greatest cost, love that was patient, forgiving, thoughtful, gentle, love unto the uttermost, which went to a cross to save the world. It was indeed a wonderful life. The half of its blessed meaning has not yet been discovered, even after nineteen centuries of scholarly study and research and of precious Christian experience. Every day reveals some new beauty in the character of Jesus and uncovers new depths in his love.

When we think of being like Christ, we are apt to gather out a few gentle qualities, and let these make up our conception of Christlikeness. True, he was a kindly man, a patient, quiet man; he was thoughtful, compassionate, unselfish, loving. But we must not forget that the cross is the truest symbol of the life of Jesus.

An artist was trying to improve on a dead mother's portrait. He wanted to take out the lines in her face. But the woman's son said it would not be a true portrait of his mother, if the lines were effaced. They told the story of love, serving, and sacrifice which made her what she was. The lines were themselves the truest features in the whole portrait.

No picture of Jesus is true, which leaves out the marks of love's cost, the print of the nails, the memorials of his suffering. No manifesting of Jesus is true, which does not reproduce in spirit and act, his devotion to the will of

the Father and his love of men unto the uttermost. It is not enough that we point others to an historic cross standing on Calvary, far back in the centuries; they must see the cross in our own life. When we speak to our neighbors of the pity of Jesus, his eager desire to save the lost, his giving of his life a ransom â€” they must see all this in us. This is the manifesting of Jesus for which we are sent into the world. "Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in His steps." 1 Peter 2:21.

Only when we do surrender our lives to Christ, that he enters into us, can we thus repeat his life. There is a legend of the later days of Greece, which illustrates this. A prize was offered for the best statue of one of the deities. A country lad, who believed in this particular god with all his heart, had a passionate desire to make the statue. He wrought manfully, but, lacking the artist's skill and experience, the figure he produced was lacking in grace and beauty. Then the legend relates that this god, seeing the lad's loving endeavor worthily to manifest his character before the eyes of men, helped him. While the other competitors were laughing at the boy's crude work, the god himself entered into that pathetic marble failure, glorifying it with his own radiant beauty.

This is only a heathen legend â€” but it illustrates what Christ does for all who truly live for him, and with loyal heart and diligent hand, seek indeed to show to the world his beauty. He enters their hearts, and lives out his own blessed life in them. Poor indeed may be our best striving â€” but Christ in us will glorify it.