

THE PRODIGAL SON.

THE LATEST SERMON BY REV. DR. TALMAGE.

Golden Text: "Put a Ring on His Hand" - Luke xii:19 - Behold what manner of Love the Lord Has Cast Upon Us That We May Be Called Sons.



WILL not rehearse the familiar story of the fast young man of the parable. You know what a splendid home he left. You know what a hard time he had. And you remember how after that season of vagabondage and prodigality he resolved to go and weep out his sorrows on the bosom of parental forgiveness.

Well, there is great excitement one day in front of the door of the old farmhouse. The servants come rushing up and say: "What's the matter? What is the matter?" But before they quite arrive, the old man cries out: "Put a ring on his hand." What a seeming absurdity!

What can such a wretched mendicant as this fellow that is tramping on toward the house want with a ring? Oh, he is the prodigal son. No more tending of the swine-trough. No more longing for the pods of the carob-tree. No more blistered feet. Off with the rags! On with the robe! Out with the ring!

Even so does God receive every one of us when we come back. There are gold rings, and pearl rings, and emerald rings, and diamond rings; but the richest ring that ever flashed on the vision is that which our Father puts upon a forgiven soul.

I know that the impression is abroad among some people that religion be- means and belittles a man; that it takes all the sparkle out of his soul; that he has to exchange a roistering independence for an ecclesiastical straight-jacket. Not so. When a man becomes a Christian, he does not go down, he starts upward. Religion multiplies one by ten thousand. Nay, the multiplier is in infinity. It is not a blotting out—it is a polishing. It is an arborescence, it is an efflorescence, it is an irradiation.

When a man comes into the kingdom of God he is not sent into a menial service, but the Lord God Almighty from the palaces of heaven calls upon the messenger angels that wait upon the throne of God and "put a ring on his hand." In Christ are the largest liberty, and brightest joy, and highest honor, and richest adornment. "Put a ring on his hand."

I remark, in the first place, that when Christ receives a soul into his love, he puts upon him the ring of adoption. While in my church in Philadelphia, there came the representative of the Howard Mission of New York. He brought with him eight or ten children of the street that he had picked up, and he was trying to find for them Christian homes; and as the little ones stood on the pulpit and sang, our hearts melted within us.

At the close of the service a great-hearted wealthy man came up and said: "I'll take this little bright-eyed girl, and I'll adopt her as one of my own children." And he took her by the hand, lifted her into his carriage, and went away. The next day, while we were in the church gathering up garments for the poor of New York, this little child came back with a bundle under her arm, and she said: "There's my old dress; perhaps some of the poor children would like to have it," while she herself was in bright and beautiful array, and those who more immediately examined her said she had a ring on her hand. It was a ring of adoption.

around for defense. And when any man belongs to this great Christian brotherhood, if he gets in trouble, in trial, in persecution, in temptation, he has only to show his ring of Christ's adoption, and all the armed cohorts of heaven will come to his rescue.

Still further, when Christ takes a soul into his love he puts upon it a marriage ring. Now, that is not a whim of mine: (Hosea ii: 19) "I will betroth thee unto me forever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies." At the wedding-altar the bridegroom puts a ring upon the hand of the bride, signifying love and faithfulness. Trouble may come upon the household, and the carpets may go, the pictures may go, the piano may go—the last thing that goes is that marriage ring, for it is considered sacred. In the burial hour it is withdrawn from the hand and kept in a casket, and sometimes the box is opened on an anniversary day, and as you look at that ring you see under its arch a long procession of precious memories.

Within the golden circle of that ring there is room for a thousand sweet recollections to revolve, and you think of the great contrast between the hour when, at the close of the "Wedding March," under the flashing lights and amid the aroma of orange blossoms, you set that ring on the round finger of the plump hand, and that hour when, at the close of the exhaustive watching, when you knew that the soul had fled, you took from the hand, which gave back no responsive clasp, from that emaciated finger, the ring that she had worn so long and worn so well.

On some anniversary day you take up that ring, and you polish it until all the old lustre comes back, and you can see in it the flash of eyes that long ago ceased to weep. Oh, it is not an unmeaning thing when I tell you that when Christ receives a soul into his keeping he puts on it a marriage ring. He endows you from that moment with all his wealth. You are one—Christ and the soul—one in sympathy, one in affection, one in hope.

There is no power on earth or hell to effect a divorce after Christ and the soul are united. Other kings have turned out their companions when they got weary of them, and sent them adrift from the palace gate. Ahasuerus banished Vashti; Napoleon forsook Josephine; but Christ is the husband that is true forever. Having loved you once, he loves you to the end. Did they not try to divorce Margaret, the Scotch girl, from Jesus? They said: "You must give up your religion." She said: "I can't give up my religion." And so they took her down to the beach of the sea, and they drove in a stake at low water mark, and they fastened her to it, expecting that as the tide came up her faith would fail. The tide began to rise, and came up higher and higher, and to the girdle, and to the hip, and in the last moment, just as the wave was washing her soul into glory, she shouted the praises of Jesus.

Oh, no, you cannot separate a soul from Christ! It is an everlasting marriage. Battle and storm and darkness cannot do it. Is it too much exultation for a man, who is but dust and ashes like myself, to cry out this moment: "I am persuaded that neither height, nor depth, nor principalities, nor powers nor things present, nor things to come, nor any other creature shall separate me from the love of God which is in Jesus Christ my Lord?" Glory be to God that when Christ and the soul are married they are bound by a chain—a golden chain—if I might say so—a chain with one link, and that one link the golden ring of God's everlasting love.

I go a step further, and tell you that when Christ receives a soul into his love he puts on him the ring of festivity. You know that it has been the custom in all ages to bestow rings on every happy occasion. There is nothing more appropriate for a birthday gift than a ring. You delight to bestow such a gift upon your children at such a time. It means joy, hilarity, festivity. Well, when this old man of the text wanted to tell how glad he was that his boy had got back, he expressed it in this way. Actually, before he ordered sandals to be put on his bare feet; before he ordered the fatted calf to be killed to appease the boy's hunger, he commanded: "Put a ring on his hand."

Oh, it is a merry time when Christ and the soul are united. Joy of forgiveness! What a splendid thing it is to feel that all is right between my God and myself. What a glorious thing it is to have God just take up all the sins of my life and put them in one bundle, and then fling them into the depths of the sea, never to rise again, never to be talked of again. Pollution all gone. Darkness all illumined. God reconciled. The prodigal home. "Put a ring on his hand."

Every day I find happy Christian people. I find some of them with no second coat, some of them in huts and tenement houses, not one earthly comfort afforded them; and yet they are as happy as happy can be. They sing "Rock of Ages" as no other people in the world sing it. They never wear any jewelry in their life but one gold ring, and that was the ring of God's undying affection. Oh, how happy religion makes us! Did it make you gloomy and sad? Did you go with your head cast down? I do not think you got religion, my brother. This is not the effect of religion. True religion is a joy. "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and her paths are peace."

Why, religion lightens all our burdens. It smooths all our ways. It interprets all our sorrows. It changes the jar of earthly discord for a peal of festal bells. In front of the flaming furnace of trial it sets the forge on which scepters are hammered out. Would you not like this hour to come up from the swine-feeding and try this religion? All the joys of heaven would come out and meet you, and God would

cry from the throne: "Put a ring on his hand."

You are not happy. I see it. There is a peace, and sometimes you laugh when you feel a great deal more like crying. The world is a cheat. It first wears you down with its follies, then it kicks you out into darkness. It comes back from the massacre of a million souls to attempt the destruction of your soul to-day. No peace out of God, but here is the fountain that may slake the thirst. Here is the harbor where you can drop safe anchorage.

Would you not like, I ask you—not perfunctorily, but as one brother might talk to another—would you not like to have a pillow of rest to put your head on? And would you not like when you retire at night to feel that all is well, whether you wake up to-morrow morning at 6 o'clock, or sleep the sleep that knows no waking? Would you not like to exchange this awful uncertainty about the future for a glorious assurance of heaven? Accept of the Lord Jesus to-day, and all is well. If on your way home some peril should cross the street and dash your life out, it would not hurt you. You would rise up immediately. You would stand in the celestial streets. You would be among the great throng that forever worship and are forever happy. If this night some sudden disease should come upon you, it would not frighten you. If you knew you were going you could give a calm farewell to your beautiful home on earth, and know that you are going right into the companionship of those who have already got beyond the tolling and the weeping.

You feel on Saturday night different from the way you feel any other night of the week. You come home from the bank, or the store, or the office, and you say: "Well, now my week's work is done, and to-morrow is Sunday." It is a pleasant thought. There is refreshment and reconstruction in the very idea. Oh, how pleasant it will be, if, when we get through the day of our life, and we go and lie down in our bed of dust, we can realize: "Well, now the work is all done, and to-morrow is Sunday—an everlasting Sunday."

Oh, when, thou city of my God, Shall thy courts ascend? Where thy congregations ne'er break up, And Sabbaths have no end.

There are people in this house to-day who are very near the eternal world. If you are Christians, I bid you be of good cheer. Bear with you our congratulations to the bright city. Aged men, who will soon be gone, take with you our love for our kindred in the better land, and when you see them, tell them that we are soon coming. Only a few more sermons to preach and hear. Only a few more heartaches. Only a few more tolls. Only a few more tears. And then—what an entrancing spectacle will open before us!

Beautiful heaven, where all is light, Beautiful angels, clothed in white, Beautiful strains that never tire, Beautiful harps through all the choir; There shall I join the chorus sweet, Worshipping at the Savior's feet.

And so I approach you now with a general invitation, not picking out here a woman, or here and there a child; but giving you an unlimited invitation, saying: "Come, for all things are now ready." We invite you to the warm heart of Christ, and the inclosure of the Christian church. I know that a great many think that the church does not amount to much—that it is obsolete; that it did its work and is gone now, so far as all usefulness is concerned. It is the happiest place I have ever been in except my own home.

I know there are some people who say they are Christians who seem to get along without any help from others, and who culture solitary piety. They do not want any ordinances. I do not belong to that class. I cannot get along without them. There are so many things in this world that take my attention from God, and Christ, and heaven, that I want all the helps of all the symbols and of all the Christian associations; and I want around about me a solid phalanx of men who love God and keep his commandments. Are there any here who would like to enter into that association? Then, by a simple, child-like faith, apply for admission into the visible church, and you will be received. No questions asked about your past history or present surroundings. Only one test—do you love Jesus?

Baptism does not amount to anything, say a great many people, but the Lord Jesus declared, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," putting baptism and faith side by side. And an apostle declares, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you." I do not stickle for any particular mode of baptism, but I put great emphasis on the fact that you ought to be baptized. Yet no more emphasis than the Lord Jesus Christ, the Great Head of the Church, puts upon it.

Some of you have been thinking on this subject year after year. You have found out that this world is a poor portion. You want to be Christians. You have come almost into the kingdom of God; but there you stop, forgetful of the fact that to be almost saved is not to be saved at all. Oh, my brother, after having come so near to the door of mercy, if you turn back, you will never come at all. After all you have heard of the goodness of God, if you turn away, and die, it will not be because you did not have a good offer.

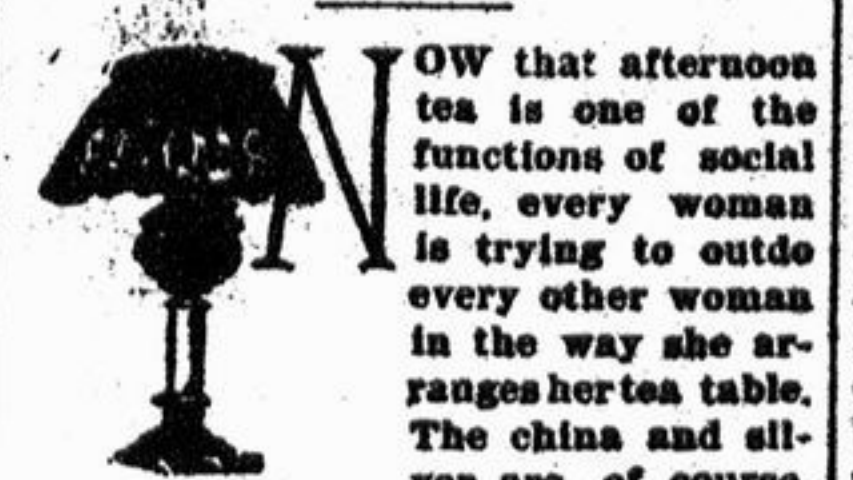
God's spirit will not always strive With hardened, self-destroying man; Ye who persist his love to grieve May never hear his voice again.

May God Almighty this hour move upon your soul and bring you back from the husks of the wilderness to the Father's house, and set you at the banquet, and "put a ring on your hand."

WOMAN AND HOME.

UP TO DATE READING FOR DAMES AND DANSELS.

The Arrangement of the Tea Table—Winning a Man's Affection—A Tulle Gown—Henry Crinkled Crepon—Notes of the Modes.



Now that afternoon tea is one of the functions of social life, every woman is trying to outdo every other woman in the way she arranges her tea table. The china and silver are, of course, more or less alike, but there can be many an individual and distinctive touch given by the placing of the cups on the tray, and, above all, by the lighting of the table. Electricity and gas are not to be thought of, but there is an infinite variety of the daintiest little lamps and shades to choose from. China, glass and silver lamps are all fashionable, and the little Empire shades are singularly pretty. They are all of the one shape, of course, but are of different materials, the parchment hand-painted being the smartest. Some are embroidered with opalescent spangles on silk, and these are very showy. Pink is the favorite color, for it casts the most becoming light.

A Tulle Gown. Now that the festive season of balls and parties is well under way, evening gowns principally are engaging the attention of the dress-makers and leading the topic of dress. Gowns which were worn last year and have quite lost their charm of freshness are brought out for renovation to eke out the variety required, and those who cannot go to the high-priced modistes for their dresses may glean a few ideas from some picturesque models. It is wise to make the most of the money expended on evening gowns, for their usefulness is fleeting, and effect of color and style are more to be desired than expensive materials. Tulle gowns are very fashionable this season, and it is a use-



RECEPTION GOWN OF CLOTH AND VELVET.

ful style, since the old silk gown can be made to appear new by an overdress of tulle, which entirely covers the skirt and waist and forms the sleeves. When the tulle is not needed in the skirt it may be draped on the bodice and made into pretty sleeves of wide tucks, forming frills overlapping each other. Artificial flowers, satin ribbon and silver-spangled trimmings are very effective



on tulle gowns, the last being especially so on white. Heavy Crinkled Crepon. There is life and verve about our American girls altogether undisturbed. Nowhere else can be seen so much beauty, dash and go as in our own beloved country. One of the roots and branches of it all is their consciousness

of their perfect grooming. Very few Americans have the atrocious taste of many of the foreigners, and then the American mamma has the good sense to allow their daughters a voice in the governing of their fair selves. No girl of good taste will commit the crying sin of wearing flashy things on the street, as many of our English cousins do, even though they are reputed as dressing soberly. It is only those of vulgar taste who never have an opportunity of wearing an evening gown who in their anxiety to "show" splurge these things on the street to the infinite disgust of their more refined neighbors. The heavy crinkled crepon in wool are much in vogue for street dresses, and are enriched by applications of fur. A very smart street or shopping gown of dull lead green crepon, with silky black threads running through, is smartly combined with trimmings of tan-colored leather. The skirt of crepon is entirely plain. The short reefer-coat has a flaring ripple back and unusually wide, melon-shaped sleeves, finished at the wrist by a wide, deep cuff of smooth



tan leather. There is a very wide, deeply pointed collar of the leather, and sharply pointed revers of leather, setting out over the collar. Small leather-covered buttons ornament the front. A jaunty little flat-shaped hat of dull green felt is made smart by the spiky black wings set upright directly in front.

OUR WIT AND WISDOM.

LATEST PRODUCTIONS IN FUNNY SPEECHES.



Except to take a chew. And when he wasn't chewing The air with smoke was blue.

He bought a big plantation, So well he loved the weed, And planted every acre With fine Havana seed.

One day, when very weary, He laid him down to sleep Amid the green tobacco, when The caterpillars creep.

They swarmed about and over him, With ceremony scant, And ate him—body, bones and all— For a tobacco plant.

Not Always a Blotter. Irats Uncle—Gallagher, I told you all along that education 'd prove yer cur-r-ree, an' I am not a bit surprised at yer bein' here. If yer hadn't never learnt to write, yer had never bin arrested for forgery. Look at me, wid no education at all, can't even scarcely write me name, and has bin an Alderman an' a Police Justice. Yer cousin have done the same, but, no! Yer must have an education. Gallagher, I'm ashamed of you!

What Made Him Think of It? Barber—Hair cut, sir? Customer—No; just a shave. Be as quick as you can, too. "Yes, sir. (Pause.) Got to make a train, sir?" "No. Got to go to a lecture." (Another pause.) "Scientific lecture?" "No. Bob Ingersoll." (Still another pause.) "Liks to have your hair singed, sir?"

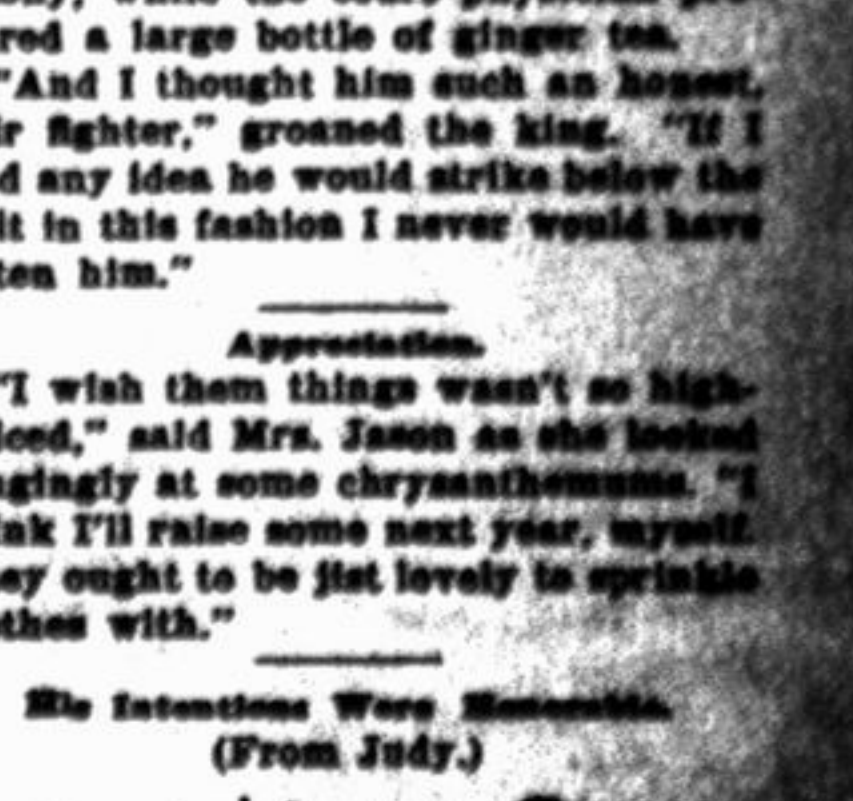
Not Professionally Interested. Alarmed Wife (waking him)—Henry, get up! The ground's all in a tremble! Houses are rocking, chimneys are falling, and everybody is out in the street. It's either an earthquake or the world's coming to an end! Henry (of the Daily Bread reporting staff)—Let it come, blame it! I haven't any assignment to write it up. (Snores.)

Not a Fighter. "How did your great unknown pug out?" asked the sport. "We had to drop him," replied the trainer. "What's the trouble?" "At almost the last minute he became incapacitated for work." "How?" "He lost his voice."

Deceased. The cannibal potentate writhed in agony, while the court physician prepared a large bottle of ginger tea. "And I thought him such an honest, fair fighter," groaned the king. "If I had any idea he would strike below the belt in this fashion I never would have eaten him."

Appreciation. "I wish them things wasn't so high-priced," said Mrs. Jason as she looked longingly at some chrysanthemums. "I think I'll raise some next year, myself. They ought to be just lovely in sprigable clothes with."

His Intentions Were Misunderstood. (From Judy.)



"Miss Brown, may I press you to jelly?"

Old Soldier Returns. "We use us Joe so much we've said the indignant Kamboung they do anywher's else—but we don't."

Why? Herds—We are told that silver is golden. Selds—Then why don't the boys age people shut up?

The Landlady—One of these days this turkey! Marketman—I can't give you no turkey, that's all.

He Never Said a Word. The Landlady—One of these days this turkey! Marketman—I can't give you no turkey, that's all.

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