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Public Speaking Contest Announced by Legion

A province wide public speaking competition for elementary and secondary school pupils with branch, zone and district elimination contests, was announced last week by the Education and Citizenship Committee of the Ontario Command of the Canadian Legion. This competition replaces the essay contest on Empire subjects which has been sponsored by this committee for the past few years. The final competition for the Provincial Championship awards, in which the district winners will compete, will be held at the Ontario Provincial Convention of the Legion in Sudbury on August 2nd. The district winners will each receive a free trip to the Sudbury Convention to take part in the final event.

A list of subjects, stressing the importance of the Empire and the significance of the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, has been drawn up by the committee and the contestants must choose their subjects from this list. There are two separate competitions, one for elementary school children and one for secondary school children. Subjects for the elementary school pupils are: "The Coronation", "Our Town", "Our School Section" and "Our Queen".

Secondary school pupils may choose from the following subjects: "The Significance of Coronation Day", "Canadian Commonwealth Resources", "Canada's New Frontiers", "Conservation of Natural Resources", "Canada's Dollars, the Best in the World", "Canada's Place in the Empire", "The Commonwealth—The Empire", "What the Coronation Means to Me".

Branches all over Ontario have been asked to organize their local contests in co-operation with the educational authorities. The local branch contest winners will then take part in the zone contests, and the winners of these will in turn go on to the district competitions, winners in which will be eligible for the final competition in Sudbury.

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THIS WEEK'S SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

JESUS CONDEMS FALSE LEADERSHIP

Golden Text. — Whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted. —Matt. 23:12

Approach to the Lesson

Our Lord's hatred of hypocrisy is positively terrifying. It is difficult to realize that the speaker of the burning, withering words addressed to the Pharisees in this chapter of our lesson is the same person who extended the gracious invitation to the weary and heavy-laden to come to Him and rest (Matt. 11:28-30), or the same of whom it was said, "He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the street" (chap. 12:19). At the same time, without the passion of holy wrath manifest in this fiery denunciation of hypocrisy and cant, all the tenderness and gentleness would have been only weakness. They are simply different expressions of the same strong, righteous, divine character. If we have never known righteous anger firing our blood, all our pretended love is mere sentimentality.

Another thing we should bear in mind as we come to this chapter. Our Lord had a right to deal with the beam in the eyes of the Pharisees, for there was no mote in His eye. Generally we try to deal with the mote in our brother's eye under the handicap of a beam in our own (Matt. 7:3-5). Here was no prejudiced view of things, but the inerrant judgment of Him who "knew all men and needed not that any should testify of man; for he knew what was in man" (John 2:24, 25).

This chapter should banish forever the "sissified" impression of Christ that is too often conveyed in religious art. None was more loving, more kind, more compassionate; but none could be more stern, more unbending, more withering in His fearless judgment.

As for us, we had better be slow to use such denunciatory language. We might be wrong. It is better to leave judgment in the hands of Him who cannot err. At least let us never engage in such denunciation unless the sob of verse 37 is in our heart.

And let us make sure that we ourselves do not come under the lash of His whip.

Verse by Verse

Matt. 23:1.—"To the multitude, and to his disciples." Jesus addressed the crowd in verses 2 to 7, and addressed His disciples in verses 8 to 12. See a similar situation in chapter 13.

Verse 2.—"The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat." The word "seat" (cathedral) is used in an official sense, as Roman Catholics speak of the chair of Peter. However unworthy the occupants of the office, Christ recognized the office.

Verse 3.—"Whosoever they bid you do; but do not ye after their works." The command to obedience could apply only insofar as the scribes represented Moses, in whose "seat" they sat. But their example was contrary to their precepts, and Christ warned against copying them.

Verse 4.—"For they bind heavy burdens . . . but . . . will not move them with one of their fingers." They did not accept for themselves the obligations which they imposed on the people, but acted as if the teacher were exempt from his own precepts.

Verse 5.—"To be seen of men . . . phylacteries . . . borders of their garments." They were punctilious regarding the external formalities of religion, those things which would call attention to their "piety." Jesus warns against this religious parade in Matthew 6:1-18.

Verse 6.—"The uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues." The Pharisees and scribes always coveted the places of preference, at social or religious functions. By "rooms" is meant "places." See Luke 14:8-11.

Verse 7.—"Greetings . . . Rabbi, Rabbi." Always the thirst for recognition, and to be thought important. Rabbi is "one of the official titles for a teacher."

Verse 8.—"But be not ye called Rabbi . . . all ye are brethren." Christ's followers must not be covetous of titles. Titles are not generally used in the family circle. The words "even Christ" should be omitted from this verse. They belong to verse 10. For "Master" in this verse, read "Teacher."

Verse 9.—"And call no man your father . . . for one is your Father."

The Heart of the Lesson

After completely routing the various groups of Jews who tried to corner Him with their questions, Jesus addressed Himself to four different audiences. First He spoke to the multitude (chap. 23:2-7), then to His disciples (vs. 8-12), then to the scribes and Pharisees (vs. 13-33), then to the city of Jerusalem, represented by the leaders present (vs. 34-39).

Addressing the crowds, the Lord bade them respect the office of their religious teachers, but warned them against the hypocrisy of those who filled it. Their hypocrisy was manifest in two ways: their failure to practice what they preached and their inordinate thirst for public recognition. Utterly unrighteous in their conduct, they covered their wickedness with a great show of piety, and required the people to address them with titles of honor.

The Lord Jesus will not have those who go forth to teach in His name fall into the same snare. So He turns to His disciples, and warns them against carnal ambition and worldly display. They are not to covet the rabbinical titles; they are not to elevate any man to a place of supremacy as if he were the father of the saints; and they are to lead by serving. Surely these instructions apply to all the Lord's people, not only to the apostolic band. We are brothers, and brothers treat one another on the basis of family equality. An older brother may bear paternal responsibilities toward the younger children if the father is removed by death, but our Father is not dead! We do not need a Father in Heaven and another in Rome, or on the banks of the Hudson (Father-Divine). Even our great leader, Christ, exercised His leadership by serving, and he will lead best who serves most.

The longest section of this chapter is addressed to the scribes and Pharisees, and is the most fiery and most sustained indictment of men that ever fell from the sacred lips. We tremble as we listen to these words from the "meek and lowly" Jesus. There is nothing vindictive in them. They only express the wrath of the divine holiness and the divine love against sham and hypocrisy and spiritual tyranny. Some have lightly affirmed that Jesus never despised of any man. That is not true. He is here speaking to men of whom He despised, men whom He was giving up—giving up to their apostasy and their reprobacy and their hypocrisy. Here is no call to repentance, no offer of mercy, no plea to come to Him. His last word to these men is, "How can ye escape the damnation of hell?"

He turns to the city, represented by these men. He prophesies how she is going to bring to the full her iniquity, not only by slaying Him (He does not mention that), but by mistreating His messengers, the prophets of the New Testament. Then He pronounces the doom, in words so full of sorrow that we can scarce read them without the lump in the throat and the tear in the eye. But, if there was no hope for that particular group of Pharisees upon whom He passed judgment, there is hope for Jerusalem. She will yet acclaim her King: "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

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