

CHRIST ... and the breaking of the bread
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(LUKE 24: 35)

Many delightful touches in the ministry of Christ were best seen in retrospect. When the Saviour did certain things, His disciples were often too preoccupied to realize the true value of His actions. Yet in after days, when they reviewed the life of their Lord, they were able to compare spiritual things with spiritual, and see things in their true perspective. They remembered certain little characteristics and said, " Only Jesus could have done that-just like that." And perhaps one of the foremost of these was the way in which He took bread and brake it. It is not without significance that the Emmaus travellers who had failed to recognize the Stranger Christ, confessed afterward " that he was known of them in the breaking of the bread."

A Gracious Parable

"And when he had taken the five loaves and two fishes, he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and brake the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before them ; and the two fishes divided he among them all " (Mark 6:41). Many years later the disciples remembered the exquisite grace with which He handled the meagre supplies. All through the heat of the day the great crowd had followed Him. Morning had given place to afternoon, and the setting sun had turned the west to crimson. Shadows were lengthening across the fields when Jesus indicated that He desired to feed the hungry. (i) A Great Scarcity. It seemed ludicrous to place a little boy's lunch before such a crowd, and the disciples may be excused for muttering, "What are five loaves and two fishes among so many?" (ii) A Great Saviour. " He took the loaves, and blessed, and brake them," and immediately thousands of people partook of it and were fed. (iii) A Great Satisfaction. When the meal was finished, no one remained hungry unless he had refused to stretch out his hand. Thus did Christ begin to reveal His eternal purpose to feed hungry souls with the bread of life.

A Grain Prediction

"And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19). The setting sun had lain down to sleep in its bed of shadows, and the glory that had been day had given way to night. The crowds had gone home and, alone with His disciples, the Lord proceeded to endorse His earlier teaching. He lifted the loaf, and as He divided it He said, " This is my body which is broken for you." With His benediction, He handed the bread to them, and commanded them to eat. They remembered how He had said, "The bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. . . . I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger ; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. . . . I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever " (John 6: 33-51). And very thoughtfully they lifted the broken bread to their lips.

A Glorious Presentation

" And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him " (Luke 24: 30, 31). Perhaps the vanishing Christ smiled as He left them spell-

CHRIST ... and the breaking of the bread bound at the table. He had put the finishing touches on their tuition ; they had graduated at God's university. Did He possess some delightful way in which He handled the bread, or were the nail-prints visible to the watching host and hostess? Excitedly they returned to their colleagues in Jerusalem; but whereas they might have cried, "We saw the wound-prints in His hands," they preferred to say, "He was known to us in the breaking of the bread." In retrospect they saw how that He had thrice acted similarly. Viewed together in their proper sequence, the occasions suggested progression. A gracious parable; a grim prediction; a glorious presentation. He had longed to feed the hungry souls of men and women ; He had died to make this possible ; He had risen again to finish His task. They realized also that in each of these three scenes, one underlying, truth had been important. At the great feast, the hungry people had been required to take the bread from the hand of the disciple-server. At the last supper, they had been required to accept the bread from the hand of their Lord ; and outside their little village, the Saviour had continued on His way until they invited Him to enter their home. God may provide a sumptuous banquet, but if my arms be paralyzed, I may easily starve.

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