

Two Circles

Luke 23: 23 — "And when *they were come to the place* which is called Calvary, *there they crucified Him.*"

John 12: 1, 2 — "Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom He raised from the dead. *There they made Him a supper.*"

N. Anderson.

We have read of two very contrastive circles, and though they were extremely different, being poles apart in disposition, yet they had one common interest — their focal point was Jesus.

However, and wherever, we view Him He fills the central place. In the passage in Luke the circle was one of hatred. In the passage in John the circle was one of love.

In each case Jesus was the Object; in Luke, "they crucified *Him*"; in John, "then made *Him* a supper." In the one He was despised and rejected; in the other He was loved and adored. The first circle is that of this world; of such is the Scripture written, "They hated Me without a cause" (John 15: 25 and Psalm 69: 4). They had seen and heard Him, and surely "the charm of a man is his kindness" (Proverbs 19: 22 N. Tr.) and He, "went about doing good, healing all that were oppressed of the devil." Had He not cried, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"? (Matthew 11: 28). Also, "him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6: 37). Yet they crucified Him. What a company! What a place! How dreadful the sin they then committed! Thank God, we know that at that place, in spite of the wicked hands which crucified and slew Him, God's "determinate counsel and foreknowledge" were fulfilled. "Surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee" (Psalm 76: 10). God's will was established at the Cross. Redemption was accomplished there. And at that same place a righteous way of approach into the presence of God was opened for men.

None can fully assess all that Christ suffered at the hands of men for righteousness' sake when they crucified Him, and certainly none shall ever know fully what He suffered for sin at the hands of God when He, who knew no sin, was made sin for us. Praise God, for He has fully assessed it all. The sufferings of our blessed Lord at the place called Calvary shall be fully answered in the glorious day of display when He shall have His rightful place as universal Lord; but we can truly say now that the glory to which he has been exalted has measured the depths of suffering which He endured. As the hymnologist has written: —

Every mark of dark dishonour
Heaped upon the thorn-crowned brow,
All the depths of Thy heart's sorrow
Told in answering glory now.

Having looked at the awful circle of which it is written, "when they were come to the place which is called Calvary there *they crucified Him*", how refreshing it is for our spirits to turn to this other circle at Bethany to which Jesus came, six days before the passover, which was to have its fulfilment in Him, for truly He was to be its antitype and we now read, "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us" (1 Corinthians 5: 7).

What a scene at Bethany, the evidence of His love was there and also that of His death-conquering power, for Lazarus was there, witness to the resurrecting glory of the Son of God. This

indeed was a circle of love, for we read in an earlier chapter, "Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus." His was a well known love, for had not the sisters sent to Him saying, "He whom thou lovest is sick"? Jesus then came to Bethany and "there *they* made *Him* a supper."

Love ever delights to expend itself on its object, and so they feasted Him, giving Him the chief place. Martha served; Lazarus was one of those who sat at the table with Him. Mary brought forth her store of very costly ointment and lavished it on His holy feet. Thus she took her place in adoring worship, gladdening His heart under the impending shadow of the Cross, and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment. Hated by that circle which shortly was to crucify Him, here in the home at Bethany, within six days of His crucifixion, He is loved, adored, and honoured.

Whether the circle be of love or hate, He holds the central place and the day is surely coming when all who have hated and rejected Him shall see Him, the once uplifted Son of Man, as the Centre of a universe of bliss and glory. Then, compelled by might, they shall bow the knee to Jesus, and their lips shall confess Him Lord of all.

May your heart and mine, dear reader, wherever we may be, as coming under the attraction of His glory and the drawing power of His undying love, join in spirit with all who love Him in sincerity, and gathering to His name in the recognition of the fact that He is the Assembly's only Centre of gathering, let *us make Him* a supper. Let us partake of the Lord's Supper with loving and worshipping hearts. May we remember Him as we gather to His Name, in the hope of being for ever with Him, "for as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, do ye shew the Lord's death until He come."

Take Thou our hearts, and let them be
For ever closed to all but Thee;
Thy willing servants, let us wear
The seal of love for ever there.