

## LIVING BREAD.

31

"I am the bread of life." John 6:48.

He taught us to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread." He recognized the need of food as one of the vital problems of man. It was one of the first serious problems that man faced on this earth. He early learned, with many a hard and bitter lesson, that if he did <sup>not</sup> provide food for himself he might starve in a very short time. He learned that storms, floods, drought and fire could destroy his source of supply in a few hours and leave him starving. In his early days he often had to leave one land and travel to another one far away to find food.

Here on the North American continent man found the most abundant food supply ever provided by nature. The pioneers of America seldom went hungry long if they had a good rifle and some ammunition. Such is not the case in many lands. Teddy Roosevelt and his son and party almost starved in the Amazon valley, in the richest part of South America, although they were well armed and were expert hunters. Here in North America the pioneers found food so plentiful they slaughtered it wastefully. It is doubtful if there ever was a more shameful and useless waste of life than the slaughter of the American bison. Yet before the last bison was slain our western plains were covered with vast herds of cattle, flocks of sheep and droves of wild horses. Our land is so friendly to life that a new source sprang up as soon as the first was destroyed. Food is still our main problem, not for its scarcity, but for the surplusses. Was there ever a land so blessed as ours?

With the abundance of bread in our blessed land there are still many who are hungry. The warehouses are full of grain that cannot be sold, the packing houses are full of meat, the storage bins are full of butter. Yet there are still hungry people. The failure is in our system of distribution; it is not for lack of food that they go hungry. We have not yet found a way for the abundance to reach the man in need.

When George Rogers Clark was a young man he won one of the richest sections of the nation with his own sword and presented it to his country. When he was an old man and no longer able to work he was without money or food. In his hour of extremity the state of Virginia presented him with a very fine sword as a reward for his valor. He broke the sword in anger and said, "When Virginia needed a sword I gave her one. Now I need bread."

Our old age pensions and unemployment insurance have provided food for many in the last year, who, without it, might have gone hungry. Not only have the <sup>needy</sup> been fed, but our own economy has been sustained. Had it not been for these two sources of income we could easily be facing another '29. Our President acknowledged this fact in his recent message to Congress. He recommended a cut in the military budget, a cut in foreign aid, a cut in departmental expenses, but he recommended that old age pensions and unemployment insurance be increased.

The Lord had just fed five thousand with a few loaves and two fishes. After this miracle He could not hide from the multitudes. No matter where He went they followed Him. He said, "Ye seek me, not because of the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled." They wanted Him to do this again and again. They thought they had found a source of bread without labor. This is what men in all ages

have sought. If they had found it, they would have brought ruin on the race. Jesus knew this was not the Father's way. Had He provided them food without labor, they would have ceased all useful toil and taken His favors with no more gratitude than swine eating acorns under a tree.

Here in America where the supply of food is so abundant men are working just as hard as they are in lands where most of a man's labor is to provide food for the day. Here we spend a lot more time keeping up the payments on the car, the television set, the radio and the refrigerator than we do to provide food. Had man found an easy way to a source of food the abundant life we now know never would have been.

"Your fathers ate manna in the wilderness, and they died." The marvelous thing about the bread of life is, that those who eat do not die. We all want to live forever. If we eat this bread we will. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have no life in you."

The Roman church teaches that the wine and the bread are actually changed into the blood and flesh of the Lord in the holy Sacrement. Many devout Catholics believe this. Their faith may make the sacrement more sacred to them. But surely intelligent people do not need to be told a fable to make the sacrement sacred. For the wine to become blood and the bread flesh a physical and chemical change would have to take place that could easily be detected in the laboratory. A few drops of blood on a garment leaves a trace that can be so positively identified that criminals have been convicted on such evidence. Any laboratory test of the bread and wine after the priest has

blessed it shows it is still bread and wine. It is like Galileo recanting on the fact that the planet Jupiter has moons. After he was forced to say they are not there, he murmured under his breath, "They are still there." It is still bread and wine even if ten thousand priests and the Pope swear it is flesh and blood.

Symbôlically the bread and wine is the flesh and blood of the Lord. It is faith in Him that gives life to the soul. We do not need to think it is the actual flesh and blood of the Lord when we receive these simple elements. The most faithful follower of the Lord did not actually eat His flesh and drink His blood while He was living or after His death. They knew what He meant when He told them this would make them live forever. They understood Him when He said, "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life. When He said, "Will ye also go away?" Peter answered, "Lord, to whom shall we go?" If we do not find life here, where will we find it?

"How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" Here was materialism in the raw. These men knew no food except material bread and flesh. They knew no life except the life of an animal. They rejected all thought of life that is sustained by the spirit. Is not the Roman church bowing to materialism when they tell the devout that the wine and bread are the actual flesh and blood of the Lord? Cannot intelligent men and women discern between the material and spiritual? The life He was talking about is just as real as the material life we know. It was a deep wound to the Lord when they asked this foolish question. He knew these men had failed to get His meaning. The spiritual life is the destiny of all human life on earth. We cannot fully live the material till we have tasted the spiritual

Spiritual life is just as real as material life. When one man tells us something we believe it just as much as if we saw it with our own eyes. We do not believe all men with this same assurance. It is the same material life that gives us the facts in each case. The difference is in the spirit.

I am telling the following story from memory; I may get some of the details mixed: When the survey for the Seaboard Railway from Tampa to Miami was being made they crossed some alligator-infested swamps. If I remember correctly the engineer was named Ball. Some one in the crew had a small dog that was the mascot for the whole crew. He found a big bull alligator lying in an old lagoon and started barking at it. The alligator gave a flip with his tail, knocked the little dog into the water and started backing away with him in his mouth. Mr. Ball ran in and hit the alligator across the head with a branch of a tree. The alligator turned the dog loose and grabbed Mr. Ball by the leg, then started backing into deeper water with him. One man ran up and hit the alligator with a machete, which broke in two like it had been thrown across a rail road iron. The men stood by wringing their hands in despair as the alligator backed away into deeper water and beat the lagoon into a froth with his lashing tail. Then they saw one of the Negroes of the crew leap over the lashing tail and land on the alligator's back. With his hands he started climbing toward the animals head. When he reached it he jammed one thumb in each eye. The alligator released the man's leg and started for deeper water with the Negro on his back. In the mean time Mr. Ball had fainted from the terrible pain in his leg, and was about to drown. The men rushed up to help the Negro with the alligator, but he cried, "Ketch Mr. Ball. I got the 'gator." When he saw that Mr. Ball

was safe he jumped off the alligator and ran for land, while the alligator went to deeper water. When Mr. Ball had been given first aid the men gathered around the hero. They told him he had certainly saved Mr. Ball's life and that the act was one of the bravest they had ever witnessed. He said, "Shucks, it ain't nothin' to tnum' a' gator. That's the only way to handle 'em."

Would any one claim that such a deed as this is the act of two hundred pounds of flesh and blood? What is it that makes heroes of men and women? What is it that gives a woman such devotion for her babe that she will starve herself that it may have food? It is spirit, not flesh.

Do we have to see the bloody foot prints of the heroes of Valley Forge to know what these men suffered for our liberty? Would the heroism of these men be any more real to us if one of the bloody foot prints could have been preserved? These elements are the bloody foot prints of the greatest Hero that ever died for men. When we take them we know they are symbols, but what holy symbols they are!