

*"THEY CRIED THE MORE."*

ST. MATT. XX. 31.

ARE our prayers ever obtrusive? Can our insistence be a fault before God? Blind and burdened men, groping in a dark world, cry for the light to Him who makes it, for mercy to the Father of Mercies. They are told that they interrupt the orderliness of the march of things—of religion, of providence. The Lord is on His way from Jericho, having done His work there. Other cities wait for Him. The crowd is in motion. It is a type of the church in its collective movement, as a great organization, militant, impressive. Christ is guiding the course of events, the development of humanity. Should two blind men with their cries be allowed to arrest His advance? Is not their blindness insignificant compared with the purpose the Saviour has in view and the majesty of His progress? The great Christ has great things to do; but it is little to open these blind eyes. Soon they will be closed again in death. Let the men hold their peace. If the Lord passes them by, let them have faith that He is doing the best for the world nevertheless.

But that would not satisfy. There is an insistent personality in man which will not be hushed. If it is an error to be one's self, to seek perfectness for one's self, even in respect of the senses, if the first virtue is to suppress one's self, then God has indeed made us strangely, and Christ should not have answered those men's prayer. One says, "The world is to be redeemed, you tell me. But I am sorely vexed with a devil. If God cares not for me, He is nothing to me." "Israel is to have its glory through this Jesus of Nazareth, who is the Christ." "But we are blind," say the two men; "A Christ who minds us not is no Christ for us."

They speak truly. Is salvation self-neglect? Is the

great duty of a man to care for the rest, for the whole, to be content to be nothing for the sake of humanity? A man begins really to believe when he asks and trusts God to make him a complete man according to His gracious purpose. If blindness is the defect he feels most, let him cry for sight; and if others rebuke him, let him cry the more. Yet, let him learn while he cries. The two men had not heard Christ proclaiming the salvation of the soul. We have heard. We know that the soul is first in us—not made for the body, but the body made for it. Would we ask the Lord insistently to mend an empty casket, when He offers the jewel?

Let prayer be insistent. Never rebuke prayer. But our prayers must be instructed; each must, like that which was taught verbally by Christ, be a "Lord's prayer." Listen to the sermon on the mount, to the parables of the kingdom, and then pray. Keep in view of the cross while you pray.

The importunity of the blind and the maimed and the leprous is no offence to God; nor should it be an offence to us. The church is not to press on as if it could save humanity without serving individual men. Its movement should be so ordered that the cry of one soul might arrest the advance. Men do not exist for the church, but the church for men. So the Lord taught. He stood still, and called the men, and said, "What will ye that I should do unto you?"

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