

The Final Unmasking

by George MacDonald

The sermon emphasizes the importance of revelation, authenticity, and the transformative power of truth in the life of a believer.

Scripture: Matthew 10:25-26, Mark 4:22, Luke 8:16, Luke 12:2

Topics: "Revelation Truth", "Righteous Living"

Description

George MacDonald preaches about the concept of revelation, emphasizing that God is a revealer, not a hider. He discusses how God's work is all about revealing truth to His creation, drawing them closer to Him. MacDonald highlights the importance of living in the light of truth, being honest and transparent, and not succumbing to hypocrisy. He also touches on the idea that all things, especially hidden or concealed wrongs, will eventually come to light, urging individuals to embrace humility, truth, and righteousness.

Transcript

For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known.--Matthew x. 26; Luke xii. 2.

God is not a God that hides, but a God that reveals. His whole work in relation to the creatures he has made--and where else can lie his work?--is revelation--the giving them truth, the showing of himself to them, that they may know him, and come nearer and nearer to him, and so he have his children more and more of companions to him. That we are in the dark about anything is never because he hides it, but because we are not yet such that he is able to reveal that thing to us.

That God could not do the thing at once which he takes time to do, we may surely say without irreverence. His will cannot finally be thwarted; where it is thwarted for a time, the very thwarting subserves the working out of a higher part of his will. He gave man the power to thwart his will, that, by means of that same power, he might come at last to do his will in a higher kind and way than would otherwise have been possible to him. God sacrifices his will to man that man may become such as himself, and give all to the truth; he makes man able to do wrong, that he may choose and love righteousness.

The fact that all things are slowly coming into the light of the knowledge of men--so far as this may be possible to the created--is used in three different ways by the Lord, as reported by his evangelist. In one case, with which we will not now occupy ourselves--Mark iv. 22; Luke viii. 16--he uses it to enforce the duty of those who have received light to let it shine: they must do their part to bring all things out. In Luke

xii. 2, is recorded how he brought it to bear on hypocrisy, showing its uselessness; and, in the case recorded in Matthew x. 25, he uses the fact to enforce fearlessness as to the misinterpretation of our words and actions.

In whatever mode the Lord may intend that it shall be wrought out, he gives us to understand, as an unalterable principle in the government of the universe, that all such things as the unrighteous desire to conceal, and such things as it is a pain to the righteous to have concealed, shall come out into the light.

'Beware of hypocrisy,' the Lord says, 'for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed, neither hid, that shall not be known.' What is hypocrisy? The desire to look better than you are; the hiding of things you do, because you would not be supposed to do them, because you would be ashamed to have them known where you are known. The doing of them is foul; the hiding of them, in order to appear better than you are, is fouler still. The man who does not live in his own consciousness as in the open heavens, is a hypocrite--and for most of us the question is, are we growing less or more of such hypocrites? Are we ashamed of not having been open and clear? Are we fighting the evil thing which is our temptation to hypocrisy? The Lord has not a thought in him to be ashamed of before God and his universe, and he will not be content until he has us in the same liberty. For our encouragement to fight on, he tells us that those that hunger and thirst after righteousness shall be filled, that they shall become as righteous as the spirit of the Father and the Son in them can make them desire.

The Lord says also, 'If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household! Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known.' To a man who loves righteousness and his fellow men, it must always be painful to be misunderstood; and misunderstanding is specially inevitable where he acts upon principles beyond the recognition of those around him, who, being but half-hearted Christians, count themselves the law-givers of righteousness, and charge him with the very things it is the aim of his life to destroy. The Lord himself was accused of being a drunkard and a keeper of bad company--and perhaps would in the present day be so regarded by not a few calling themselves by his name, and teaching temperance and virtue. He lived upon a higher spiritual platform than they understand, acted from a height of the virtues they would inculcate, loftier than their eyes can scale. His Himalays are not visible from their sand-heaps. The Lord bore with their evil tongues, and was neither dismayed nor troubled; but from this experience of his own, comforts those who, being his messengers, must fare as he. 'If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household!--'If they insult a man, how much more will they not insult his servants!' While men count themselves Christians on any other ground than that they are slaves of Jesus Christ, the children of God, and free from themselves, so long will they use the servants of the Master despitefully. 'Do not hesitate,' says the Lord, 'to speak the truth that is in you; never mind what they call you; proclaim from the housetop; fear nobody.'

He spoke the words to the men to whom he looked first to spread the news of the kingdom of heaven; but they apply to all who obey him. Few who have endeavoured to do their duty, have not been annoyed, disappointed, enraged perhaps, by the antagonism, misunderstanding, and false representation to which they have been subjected therein--issuing mainly from those and the friends of those who have benefited by their efforts to be neighbours to all. The tales of heartlessness and ingratitude one must come across, compel one to see more and more clearly that humanity, without willed effort after righteousness, is mean enough to sink to any depth of disgrace. The judgments also of imagined superiority are hard to bear. The rich man who will screw his workmen to the lowest penny, will read his poor relation a solemn lecture on extravagance, because of some humblest little act of generosity! He takes the end of the beam sticking

out of his eye to pick the mote from the eye of his brother withal! If, in the endeavour to lead a truer life, a man merely lives otherwise than his neighbours, strange motives will be invented to account for it. To the honest soul it is a comfort to believe that the truth will one day be known, that it will cease to be supposed that he was and did as dull heads and hearts reported of him. Still more satisfactory will be the unveiling where a man is misunderstood by those who ought to know him better--who, not even understanding the point at issue, take it for granted he is about to do the wrong thing, while he is crying for courage to heed neither himself nor his friends, but only the Lord. How many hear and accept the words, 'Be not conformed to this world,' without once perceiving that what they call Society and bow to as supreme, is the World and nothing else, or that those who mind what people think, and what people will say, are conformed to--that is, take the shape of--the world. The true man feels he has nothing to do with Society as judge or lawgiver: he is under the law of Jesus Christ, and it sets him free from the law of the World. Let a man do right, nor trouble himself about worthless opinion; the less he heeds tongues, the less difficult will he find it to love men. Let him comfort himself with the thought that the truth must out. He will not have to pass through eternity with the brand of ignorant or malicious judgment upon him. He shall find his peers and be judged of them.

But, thou who lookest for the justification of the light, art thou verily prepared for thyself to encounter such exposure as the general unveiling of things must bring? Art thou willing for the truth whatever it be? I nowise mean to ask, Have you a conscience so void of offence, have you a heart so pure and clean, that you fear no fullest exposure of what is in you to the gaze of men and angels?--as to God, he knows it all now! What I mean to ask is, Do you so love the truth and the right, that you welcome, or at least submit willingly to the idea of an exposure of what in you is yet unknown to yourself--an exposure that may redound to the glory of the truth by making you ashamed and humble? It may be, for instance, that you were wrong in regard to those, for the righting of whose wrongs to you, the great judgment of God is now by you waited for with desire: will you welcome any discovery, even if it work for the excuse of others, that will make you more true, by revealing what in you was false? Are you willing to be made glad that you were wrong when you thought others were wrong? If you can with such submission face the revelation of things hid, then you are of the truth, and need not be afraid; for, whatever comes, it will and can only make you more true and humble and pure.

Does the Lord mean that everything a man has ever done or thought must be laid bare to the universe?

So far, I think, as is necessary to the understanding of the man by those who have known, or are concerned to know him. For the time to come, and for those who are yet to know him, the man will henceforth, if he is a true man, be transparent to all that are capable of reading him. A man may not then, any more than now, be intelligible to those beneath him, but all things will be working toward revelation, nothing toward concealment or misunderstanding. Who in the kingdom will desire concealment, or be willing to misunderstand? Concealment is darkness; misunderstanding is a fog. A man will hold the door open for anyone to walk into his house, for it is a temple of the living God--with some things worth looking at, and nothing to hide. The glory of the true world is, that there is nothing in it that needs to be covered, while ever and ever there will be things uncovered. Every man's light will shine for the good and glory of his neighbour.

'Will all my weaknesses, all my evil habits, all my pettinesses, all the wrong thoughts which I cannot help--will all be set out before the universe?'

Yes, if they so prevail as to constitute your character--that is, if they are you. But if you have come out of the darkness, if you are fighting it, if you are honestly trying to walk in the light, you may hope in God your father that what he has cured, what he is curing, what he has forgiven, will be heard of no more, not now being a constituent part of you. Or if indeed some of your evil things must yet be seen, the truth of them will be seen--that they are things you are at strife with, not things you are cherishing and brooding over. God will be fair to you--so fair!--fair with the fairness of a father loving his own--who will have you clean, who will neither spare you any needful shame, nor leave you exposed to any that is not needful. The thing we have risen above, is dead and forgotten, or if remembered, there is God to comfort us. 'If any man sin, we have a comforter with the Father.' We may trust God with our past as heartily as with our future. It will not hurt us so long as we do not try to hide things, so long as we are ready to bow our heads in hearty shame where it is fit we should be ashamed. For to be ashamed is a holy and blessed thing. Shame is a thing to shame only those who want to appear, not those who want to be. Shame is to shame those who want to pass their examination, not those who would get into the heart of things. In the name of God let us henceforth have nothing to be ashamed of, and be ready to meet any shame on its way to meet us. For to be humbly ashamed is to be plunged in the cleansing bath of the truth.

As to the revelation of the ways of God, I need not speak; he has been always, from the first, revealing them to his prophet, to his child, and will go on doing so for ever. But let me say a word about another kind of revelation--that of their own evil to the evil.

The only terrible, or at least the supremely terrible revelation is that of a man to himself. What a horror will it not be to a vile man--more than all to a man whose pleasure has been enhanced by the suffering of others--a man that knew himself such as men of ordinary morals would turn from with disgust, but who has hitherto had no insight into what he is--what a horror will it not be to him when his eyes are opened to see himself as the pure see him, as God sees him! Imagine such a man waking all at once, not only to see the eyes of the universe fixed upon him with loathing astonishment, but to see himself at the same moment as those eyes see him! What a waking!--into the full blaze of fact and consciousness, of truth and violation!

To know my deed, 'twere best not know myself!

Or think what it must be for a man counting himself religious, orthodox, exemplary, to perceive suddenly that there was no religion in him, only love of self; no love of the right, only a great love of being in the right! What a discovery--that he was simply a hypocrite--one who loved to appear, and was not! The rich seem to be those among whom will occur hereafter the sharpest reverses, if I understand aright the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. Who has not known the insolence of their meanness toward the poor, all the time counting themselves of the very elect! What riches and fancied religion, with the self-sufficiency they generate between them, can make man or woman capable of, is appalling. Mammon, the most contemptible of deities, is the most worshipped, both outside and in the house of God: to many of the religious rich in that day, the great damning revelation will be their behaviour to the poor to whom they thought themselves very kind. 'He flattereth himself in his own eyes until his iniquity is found to be hateful.' A man may loathe a thing in the abstract for years, and find at last that all the time he has been, in his own person, guilty of it. To carry a thing under our cloak caressingly, hides from us its identity with something that stands before us on the public pillory. Many a man might read this and assent to it, who cages in his own bosom a carrion-bird that he never knows for what it is, because there are points of difference in its plumage from that of the bird he calls by an ugly name.

Of all who will one day stand in dismay and sickness of heart, with the consciousness that their very existence is a shame, those will fare the worst who have been consciously false to their fellows; who, pretending friendship, have used their neighbour to their own ends; and especially those who, pretending friendship, have divided friends. To such Dante has given the lowest hell. If there be one thing God hates, it must be treachery. Do not imagine Judas the only man of whom the Lord would say, 'Better were it for that man if he had never been born!' Did the Lord speak out of personal indignation, or did he utter a spiritual fact, a live principle? Did he speak in anger at the treachery of his apostle to himself, or in pity for the man that had better not have been born? Did the word spring from his knowledge of some fearful punishment awaiting Judas, or from his sense of the horror it was to be such a man? Beyond all things pitiful is it that a man should carry about with him the consciousness of being such a person--should know himself and not another that false one! 'O God,' we think, 'how terrible if it were I!' Just so terrible is it that it should be Judas! And have I not done things with the same germ in them, a germ which, brought to its evil perfection, would have shown itself the canker-worm, treachery? Except I love my neighbour as myself, I may one day betray him! Let us therefore be compassionate and humble, and hope for every man.

A man may sink by such slow degrees that, long after he is a devil, he may go on being a good churchman or a good dissenter, and thinking himself a good Christian. Continuously repeated sin against the poorest consciousness of evil must have a dread rousing. There are men who never wake to know how wicked they are, till, lo, the gaze of the multitude is upon them!--the multitude staring with self-righteous eyes, doing like things themselves, but not yet found out; sinning after another pattern, therefore the hardest judges, thinking by condemnation to escape judgment. But there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed. What if the only thing to wake the treacherous, money-loving thief, Judas, to a knowledge of himself, was to let the thing go on to the end, and his kiss betray the Master? Judas did not hate the Master when he kissed him, but not being a true man, his very love betrayed him.

The good man, conscious of his own evil, and desiring no refuge but the purifying light, will chiefly rejoice that the exposure of evil makes for the victory of the truth, the kingdom of God and his Christ. He sees in the unmasking of the hypocrite, in the unveiling of the covered, in the exposure of the hidden, God's interference, for him and all the race, between them and the lie.

The only triumph the truth can ever have is its recognition by the heart of the liar. Its victory is in the man who, not content with saying, 'I was blind and now I see,' cries out, 'Lord God, just and true, let me perish, but endure thou! Let me live because thou livest, because thou savest me from the death in myself, the untruth I have nourished in me, and even called righteousness! Hallowed be thy name, for thou only art true; thou only lovest; thou only art holy, for thou only art humble! Thou only art unselfish; thou only hast never sought thine own, but the things of thy children! Yea, O father, be thou true, and every man a liar!'

There is no satisfaction of revenge possible to the injured. The severest punishment that can be inflicted upon the wrong-doer is simply to let him know what he is; for his nature is of God, and the deepest in him is the divine. Neither can any other punishment than the sinner's being made to see the enormity of his injury, give satisfaction to the injured. While the wronger will admit no wrong, while he mocks at the idea of amends, or while, admitting the wrong, he rejoices in having done it, no suffering could satisfy revenge, far less justice. Both would continually know themselves foiled. Therefore, while a satisfied justice is an unavoidable eternal event, a satisfied revenge is an eternal impossibility. For the moment that the sole adequate punishment, a vision of himself, begins to take true effect upon the sinner, that moment the sinner has begun to grow a righteous man, and the brother human whom he has offended has no choice, has nothing left him but to take the offender to his bosom--the more tenderly that his brother is a repentant

brother, that he was dead and is alive again, that he was lost and is found. Behold the meeting of the divine extremes--the extreme of punishment, the embrace of heaven! They run together; 'the wheel is come full circle.' For, I venture to think, there can be no such agony for created soul, as to see itself vile--vile by its own action and choice. Also I venture to think there can be no delight for created soul--short, that is, of being one with the Father--so deep as that of seeing the heaven of forgiveness open, and disclose the shining stair that leads to its own natural home, where the eternal father has been all the time awaiting this return of his child.

So, friends, how ever indignant we may be, however intensely and however justly we may feel our wrongs, there is no revenge possible for us in the universe of the Father. I may say to myself with heartiest vengeance, 'I should just like to let that man see what a wretch he is--what all honest men at this moment think of him!' but, the moment come, the man will loathe himself tenfold more than any other man could, and that moment my heart will bury his sin. Its own ocean of pity will rush from the divine depths of its God--origin to overwhelm it. Let us try to forethink, to antedate our forgiveness. Dares any man suppose that Jesus would have him hate the traitor through whom he came to the cross? Has he been pleased through all these ages with the manner in which those calling themselves by his name have treated, and are still treating his nation? We have not yet sounded the depths of forgiveness that are and will be required of such as would be his disciples!

Our friends will know us then: for their joy, will it be, or their sorrow? Will their hearts sink within them when they look on the real likeness of us? Or will they rejoice to find that we were not so much to be blamed as they thought, in this thing or that which gave them trouble?

Let us remember, however, that not evil only will be unveiled; that many a masking misconception will uncover a face radiant with the loveliness of the truth. And whatever disappointments may fall, there is consolation for every true heart in the one sufficing joy--that it stands on the border of the kingdom, about to enter into ever fuller, ever--growing possession of the inheritance of the saints in light.

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