

Sweetness and Joy. -- a Sparkling Service.

by Gwilym Hughes

The sermon emphasizes the importance of obedience and duty in keeping the Holy Spirit present, and encourages the congregation to remember Jesus and His promise to be with us always.

Scripture: Matthew 25:23

Topics: "Spiritual Revival", "Christian Obedience"

Description

Gwilym Hughes preaches at the Crescent English Congregational Church in Liverpool, where Evan Roberts's powerful revival meeting takes place. The congregation is filled with enthusiasm and joy, with prayers, hymns, and testimonies igniting a spiritual fervor. Evan Roberts challenges the audience to reflect on their duty to Jesus, emphasizing the importance of obedience and fidelity. The service is marked by emotional moments, powerful testimonies of transformation, and a call to action to work for Jesus and surrender fully to Him.

Transcript

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LIVERPOOL, Wednesday, April 5, 1905.

To-night we are assembled in the Crescent English Congregational Church, Everton Brow, which normally provides accommodation for 1,200. When this morning it was decided to substitute this building for the Welsh Tabernacle, which it was originally arranged Evan Roberts should visit to-night, the committee, with the consent of the Crescent-Church deacons, had a huge platform erected at the pulpit end running up almost to the ceiling. This increased the sitting capacity of the building by many hundreds.

Since four o'clock this chapel has been packed to suffocation; so have six others, all in Everton, and at each the proceedings are at fever heat. This is Evan Roberts's seventh meeting since his arrival in Liverpool, and he has ten more to address ere his mission ends. It is by no means certain that at the end of that time the revivalist will return to Glamorgan. He is being inundated with urgent appeals by letters and telegrams to visit North Wales, and a tour through Flintshire is already being arranged. Carnarvonshire and Anglesey are also likely to be visited, and a strong desire is expressed that the revivalist should visit Rhos, near Wrexham, where a remarkable revival broke out last November simultaneously with that at Loughor. By the way, the Rhos converts are very prominent at this meeting to-night. The Rev. Jonah Hughes, who comes from that district, has just concluded an address of great

power, describing the marvellous changes he has witnessed in that corner of Denbighshire during the last few months.

The revivalist is late tonight. It is 7. 20, and he has not yet appeared. Can it be that we have been misinformed, and that this is not the meeting selected for his visit? Presently we are reassured on the point, for we learn that this afternoon, accompanied by the Rev. John Williams, he unexpectedly appeared at a ladies' Dorcas meeting at the David-street Chapel, where he delivered a short address. Then he was driven to West Derby for a short rest at the residence of Councillor Henry Jones, one of the secretaries of the local revival committee.

But here he is. It is 7. 30, and the meeting is in full swing. Never have I seen the revival tide rise higher. The prayers, the hymns, the testimonies, are all aglow. The word enthusiasm is hopelessly inadequate to describe the tone that prevails, and certainly it is not frenzy. There is an influence abroad that thrills the strongest.

"The Spirit is here!" are the revivalist's opening words. Is this the explanation of the phenomenon we witness? "But," he continues, "the great thing is to keep Him here, and the way to keep Him here is to give obedience." Presently he is speaking of duty. Had all present done their duty that day in their respective spheres? Could they look to Heaven without trembling? Could they look every man in the face without blushing? Could they look up to Jesus and say, not "our," but "my" Jesus? Were they always ready to listen to His Voice?

Duty was the porch of Heaven. Christ walked along the path of duty to the bitter end, and then could look back, happy in the thought that all was finished. Christians often put off duty until they were compelled to attend to it. But Christ was in Bethany ready waiting six days before that memorable Passover.

After a pause, and looking up and down, he continued. "Is there no one here ready to say a word in His praise?" At once a man is on his feet in the body of the chapel. "Yes," he cries, "Dyma fi" (Yes, I am), and forth-with, in words of burning eloquence we are told of how the speaker -- who, it seems, hails from Bethesda -- has been rescued from a life of sin. The instrument of his conversion was Dan Roberts. "God be praised for raising Evan and Dan." "Amen" responds the whole congregation. "Ond Iesu bia'r coron" (Let Jesus be crowned) we hear exclaimed in a woman's voice, and suddenly with one accord the congregation bursts into a rousing hymn of praise. A glorious meeting this.

When next he essays to address the meeting the revivalist, who has been visibly trembling for some minutes, appears unequal to the effort. Since yesterday morning, he declares, he has been yearning to see more of the glory of the Lord. He has been overwhelmed with the thought of the Kingship of Christ. Christ spoke as a Saviour He also spoke as a king. Further the speaker fails to proceed. His voice becomes choked with emotion.

"Dyma Gariad fel y moroedd" -- The singer is Annie Davies. Liverpool audiences have not seen her in this mood before. To-night she sings Hiraethog's grand hymn extolling the Saviour's love as one inspired. The congregation catches her spirit, and again we are carried away on a great overwhelming wave of ecstasy. Prayers and praise, hymns and testimonies fall from hundreds of lips, so that we are unable to distinguish one from another. I look around, and am unable to detect one dry eye and yet there is not a face in all this vast congregation that is not lit up with smiles.

Again the revivalist essays to speak and again he fails. What ails him? "Help him. O Lord." It is not one that offers the prayer. We hear it from all parts of the building. An hour ago it was a feast of music. Now it is a feast of prayers. No, the annals of the revival in South Wales have no more magnificent meeting on their records than this.

"What have you done for Jesus?" At last the missionary has found voice. "Some of you here have not even asked Him for forgiveness. Remember Jesus, think not of man. remember the promise, 'I am with you always.' He not only strengthens, He watches over you too, The Christian should have no time for leisure. Be up and doing, going onward, forward, ever following Jesus in His footsteps, looking to Jesus in all things. Would you have a lesson in fidelity? Look to Jesus."

For forty minutes the revivalist speaks. He is in marvellous form. There is nothing he cannot do with this congregation. It is completely, absolutely under his spell, and is reflecting as a mirror his every mood. Now we smile, anon we are in tears, now a ripple of merriest laughter rings through the building every countenance flushed with joy. A second later the tears flow, again they are wiped away, and we are swept off in a mighty torrent of song. And the missionary cries "O! rwy'n Diolch i Dduw, dyma dyrfa yn addoli" (Praise God here we have pure worship).

Presently we are lost in admiration of a mellow tenor voice rendering with exquisite finish a Welsh sacred solo. Who is this white haired minister at prayer? He comes from Rhos so much is clear. Someone whispers in my ear, "The Rev. Robert Jones." His prayer commands attention. It is a psalm in praise of "a God that sings," a God that saves "dan ganu" (while singing). "Our young men of Rhos have been returning from Liverpool ere this helplessly drunk; to-night they will return rejoicing, filled with new wine."

Is this meeting to be wrecked? A young lady in the gallery, lost in prayer, is treading dangerous ground. "Thou knowest, Lord, we are in mortal terror of seeing Evan Roberts leave Liverpool before the old feud is healed. Oh, the breach in our churches is terrible! Remember the Welsh ministers in this town and bend them." As at Birkenhead, so here, this sore point being alluded to, someone starts a hymn, and the voice is drowned. The incident is not lost on the missionary, for presently he alludes to it -- "We cannot avoid, I suppose, one bitter drop in our cup of sweetness. But no more if you please. One thing only we need here, the name of Jesus; that will sweeten and perfume everything."

Next comes the test, and this at the start is entrusted to the Rev. John Williams. Not for long, however, for the missionary, who is wonderfully aggressive to-night, takes the audience again in hand. The congregation is standing with hands raised, and the revivalist from the pulpit orders every church member to Work. "Look about you," is the imperative command, and say a word for Jesus to those who sit." Presently convert after convert is declared, and "Diolch Iddo" ascends again and again in an ever increasing swell of melody. "Here is one who declines." It is a jarring note, and comes from the gallery. "Ah," retorts the missionary, "let him praise heaven that God has not yet rejected him. Come, offer Jesus again. Do your best. The Holy Spirit is doing His best."

More converts, more jubilation. With both hands pressed on his perspiring temples, the missionary presently declares, while the congregation marvels, "There is somewhere in the audience one church member who is idle; he is ashamed to offer Jesus, and beside him there is a Welshman or Welshwoman in need of help to surrender." And at once, without a second's interval, the shrill voice of a woman rings in our ears. "Dyma fi'n d'od" ("Here I am coming.").

Then comes a second prediction. "There is still another to come. Look around," and turning swiftly around, facing the crowd on the gallery behind him, the missionary, while still speaking, discovers another convert there. A voice in the gallery exclaims, "Here is one that cannot come." "Has he said he 'will not?'" asks the missionary. "No," is the reply; "he says nothing." "Christ was silent once," is the rejoinder of the young preacher, "but He was right."

In a pause between the hymns of exultation Mr. Evan Roberts observes: -- "Let us rejoice. The divine heart is a-thrill with joy tonight. If you see a man who rejoices not, depend upon it he 'has neither prayed nor worked! We can all rejoice, because we have to-night worked, and have given obedience. We have seen some miracles of His love to-night. Thank God for this great wave."

In compliance with the revivalist's request, the congregation sing the inspiring old hymn, "Ymgrymed pawb i lawr," Evan Roberts himself conducting. Then, after a united rendering in Welsh and English of the Lord's Prayer, the Rev. John Williams pronounced the benediction, and this remarkable service, which has been marked all through with joy and delight, is brought to a close by the singing of the Doxology. So far as could be ascertained the converts numbered between 15 and 16.

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