

The Ministry of Well-Wishing

by J.R. Miller

The sermon emphasizes the importance of speaking kindly and cheerfully to others, and of living out our good wishes in order to make them a reality.

Scripture: Proverbs 16:24, Matthew 5:16, Romans 12:2, Galatians 5:22-23, Ephesians 4:29, Philippians 4:8, Colossians 3:12-14, 1 Thessalonians 5:11, James 1:19, 1 Peter 4:10

Topics: "The Power of Words", "Transforming Good Wishes into Action"

Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes the importance of expressing well-wishes and kind words to others, noting that many people harbor good intentions but fail to vocalize them, which can lead to missed opportunities to uplift those around us. He highlights that true blessings come from heartfelt wishes that are transformed into actions and prayers, rather than mere empty words. Miller encourages believers to cultivate a heart filled with Christ's love, which will naturally overflow into their interactions, providing light and joy even in difficult circumstances. He warns against the tendency to wait until it's too late to express love and support, urging that we should actively share our good wishes to strengthen and inspire others. Ultimately, he asserts that true happiness and fulfillment stem from a heart aligned with Christ, allowing us to shine brightly in the world.

Transcript

There are few hearts in which there do not lie kindly wishes for others. The man must be depraved indeed, who has only malign thoughts and desires for his fellow-men. Every Christian at least wishes others well, since love is the law of the regenerated life. There are occasions, too, when the good wishes find their way to the lips in kindly words. We say "Good-morning" when we meet a neighbor, and "Good-by" when we part from him. When our friends' birthdays come, we are in the habit of finding many delicate and pleasant ways of expressing our good will. The Christmas-time and the New-Year usually thaw out of our hearts the laggard good feelings, prompting us to many acts and words of kindness. It is well that our hearts have their seasons of generous blossoming, even if they are so brief, and are fixed by the almanac. It is well that anything whatever has power to touch our lips with fire from the altar of love, and teach us to speak the gentle words which the lives about us are so hungry to hear.

One of the saddest things about life is, that, with such boundless power to give cheer to others by our speech, most of us pass through the world in silence, locking up in our own hearts the thoughtful and helpful words which we might speak, and which, if spoken, would minister so much strength and

inspiration. Hearts are breaking with sorrow; men are bowing under burdens too heavy for them; duty is too large, battles are too sore. On every hand, and in every life, there is need for love's ministry, that men and women may not fail.

Nor is it large and costly service which usually is needed--the kindly utterance of a kindly feeling, will often give all the impulse and inspiration required. And the feeling is always close at hand, needing but to be put into honest words, and spoken where the struggle is going on. Yet many of us let the good will lie in our heart unuttered, and stand by in silence while our brother beside us goes down in defeat which one word of ours would have changed into victory. It is not the lack of love that is our fault--but the stinginess which locks up the love, and will not give it out to bless others. Is any miserliness so base? We let hearts starve to death close beside us, when in our hands is the food to keep them living, and make them strong! Then when they lie in the dust of defeat, we come with our love to make funeral-wreaths for them, and speak eloquent eulogies to their memory!

How much better it would be if, at all times, we gave freer rein to our lips in speaking kindly and cheering words! It is truly very sad when nothing less than the death of our friends, can draw from our slow and selfish hearts--the debt of love and of helpfulness that we owe them. The warmest utterances then of love's good, cannot stir again the heart's chilled currents. It is too late to cheer the defeated spirit to new and victorious struggle. There is a time for the angel ministry; it is when the conflict is waging. When death has come, or failure or defeat, the opportunity is past forever.

The good wishes of friends do not, by their mere utterance, become realities in our lives. If they did, how rich most of us would be, and how happy! Good wishes, however, may be made to come true; they may be turned into prayers by those who make them, and, passing through the hands of Christ, may be changed from mere empty breath into choice blessings which shall enrich our lives, or feed our souls; or shine like sparkling gems upon our brows. The best way for our friends to get good things to us, is to pass them through Christ's hands.

No doubt, many of the good wishes that fall from the lips of those we meet, are but empty forms, thoughtlessly uttered, with neither real desire nor fervor in the heart. Many of them, also, that are sincere enough--are wishes for very empty things. Happiness is the word into which so often the wish is coined--yet mere happiness is not by any means life's best blessing; it is but the ripple of laughter on life's surface. One may be happy, and never have one deep thought of life. Happiness is the product of merely earthly blessings--friends, honors, pleasures, riches--and these are the cheapest, and least valuable, and least satisfying things life can give. Wise and holy friends will wish better things for us--things that we can keep, things that will live on in us through all life's changes, and last over into the eternal years.

It is in such qualities as these that we should seek to grow. Happiness is but like the sparkling dew that shines on the leaves and grasses in the summer morning--but is gone as soon as the sun's heat touches it! Life itself is deeper than happiness, and true blessings are those that are carved in life's own fibre. The good wishes that are of most worth, are those that are for qualities of character, which we can carry with us through the pearly gate. The friends who think only of this world's beauties and honors and possessions and attainments when they wish us well, do not understand the table of values by which heaven estimates everything.

How to get these great things into our lives is the question. Our best and truest friends cannot put them into our lives by any power of love. They may utter the wishes, and may translate them into prayers--but

only we ourselves can take the benedictions and the answered prayers into our life. This we cannot do by mere resolving and purposing. New-Year or birthday resolutions are good enough as such; but unless they are gotten into the heart and life--as well as down in neat lines on paper--they will amount to little.

Intentions may be very fine--but they must be lived out to become of practical worth. Rainbows are splendid pictures as they arch over the meadows and fields--but they vanish while you gaze at them; no hand is alert enough to grasp them, and hold them down upon earth. It is so with the lovely visions of excellence or of beauty which glow before us in our better moments--unless we set ourselves at once to work them into life--they will vanish into air. We must get our rainbows down out of the skies, and into our hearts! We must take the good wishes of our friends, and turn them into life! We must let them into our spirits, as the plant in the garden lets the sunshine and the rain into itself, and transmutes it into blooming, fragrant roses.

Just how to do this, is an important question. The Bible emphasizes the fact that all growth of character must begin within. We are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. Our hearts make our lives. What we are in heart, in spirit, in the inner life--we are really before God; and that, too, we shall ultimately become in actual character, in outward feature. The disposition makes the face. Every creature builds its own house to live in, and builds it just like itself. Coarseness builds coarsely; taste builds tastefully. A corrupt heart works through in the end--and changes all without into moral decay like itself. Jealousy, envy, bitterness, selfishness, all write their own image and signature on the features, if you give them time enough. A pure, beautiful soul builds a holy and divine dwelling for itself.

In one of Goethe's tales, he tells of a wonderful lamp which was placed in a fisherman's hut, and changed it all to silver. In reality, the lamp of Christ's love, set in a human heart, transforms the life from sinfulness and earthliness--into the likeness of Christ's Himself. To make good wishes come true, we must first get them into our heart, and then they will soon become real in our life.

No wish is more commonly expressed than that we may be happy--but true happiness depends altogether on the heart. A heart at peace--fills our world with peace. Light shining in the bosom--gives us light wherever we may be. The miners carry little lamps on their caps; and, wherever they move in the dark mines, there is light. So it is with us, if in us the lamp of joy shines in our hearts. The world may grow very dark sometimes--but round about us there is always light. We shall surely be happy in the truest sense, if we have Christ's joy in our hearts. This is a lamp which shines through the longest night--no storm blows it out; indeed, its beams grow brighter--the denser the gloom about us, and the fiercer the storm. Christ's joy was, in his own life, a lamp which was not quenched, even by the awful darkness of the cross.

If we would realize the wishes of our friends for joy, we must be sure to get the love of Christ into our hearts--and then we shall always have our own lamp, and shall find gladness wherever we go. We need not, then, in any case greatly worry about our circumstances; if we are right within--all will be well. If the lamp is kept burning within the chamber--it will be light there, however deep the gloom outside.

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