

Samuel Chadwick
Things! Things! Things!

‘A man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesseth.’ Luke 12:15.

I have ceased to wonder that Jesus Christ was crucified. For many years it was impossible to imagine how men could so misunderstand and hate Him. But a fuller understanding of His teaching and wider knowledge of the world have led me to the conclusion that there is only one end to a ministry like His – and that is a Cross.

There are woes enough in these two chapters to account for all that happened. He unmasked iniquity where it was least suspected; and attacked the vices of the wealthy and powerful in terms of liquid fire; He shocked and angered the most religious people of his time; called them ‘whited sepulchers’, and defied their traditions; He hurled woe upon woe in all directions. His own friends understood Him but little better than His enemies. He talked of His Kingdom, but rebuked their determination to make Him King. He denounced sin in terrible terms, but would not let them call down fire from heaven.

He preached righteousness and justice; poured scorching scorn upon hypocrisy and oppression, but when actual cases were brought to Him He declined to interfere or even to pronounce judgment. He condemned wrong, but refused to take sides. Here is one of many cases that might

be cited. A man, perhaps a follower, has been wronged by his brother, and appeals to this preacher of righteousness to secure him his rights. Instead, He rebukes the petitioner, and asks, Who made Me a judge or a divider over you? Disappointment was inevitable. To preach sternly and then refuse the responsibility of practical application to particular cases always brings provocation. The explanation of His attitude is plain enough now.

He came to establish a world-wide spiritual kingdom. He laid down principles that are universal, not precepts which were local. He sought to correct the dispositions of men rather than to secure their rights. He would destroy wrong, not by direct attacks upon vice, but by saving the sinner. That is His method. A new world through a renewed humanity. So here, instead of interfering in the quarrel, He reads the motive behind the appeal, and warns against covetousness. He detects the undue eagerness to gain possessions, and corrects the false estimate of the things of this world. And in so doing incidentally states one of the profoundest truths concerning the true philosophy of life. 'A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesseth.'

The World's Estimate Of Things

To the world things are everything. It longs for them, works for them, fights for them, lies for them, lives for them. Its one ambition is to possess abundance of things. To secure them it will pay any price, endure any hardship,

suffer any obloquy, sacrifice any thing. Its homage and its envy are reserved for those who have the most things. It never troubles about how they got them, nor what they do with them, it is enough that they have won for themselves piles of things!

The cry of the world is for things, things, things; always more things. This is a purely pagan view of life. After these things do the heathen seek. Pagan philosophy is based upon the supposed supremacy of things. Heathen religions find their heaven in the abundance of things. And, alas, most of us are pure pagan. We live for the things. We toil and strive for the possession of things. Our only idea of heaven is a place where we shall have undreamed abundance of glorified things. We call ourselves Christian, but our lives are heathen.

Christ's Teaching Concerning Things

He declares that true life does not depend upon things at all. Indeed the only way into life is by the renunciation of things. We must forsake them, sacrifice them, die to them if we would live. Not only He, but all the world's greatest have proved that life is not measured by the possession of the world's things. The greatest of all had not where to lay His head. Things are an encumbrance to the man who would rise.

They cannot secure for their possessors the best even of this life. Even here the best things cannot be bought with

money. Wealth can give much. Solomon says, ‘it answereth all things.’ But its limitations are as marked as its power. It can give you doctors, but not health; a good table, but not appetite; houses, but not homes; followers, but not friends; envy, but not love. An abundance of things becomes a useless burden. You can only use a few of them, the rest are a care and a snare. You may have many carriages, but you cannot ride in all of them at once. You may have many houses, but you can only live in one at a time. You may have many courses, but you can only eat till you are full.

Wealth consists not in the abundance of things. For the greatest needs of life they are utterly useless. They cannot even ensure existence, let alone life. And it should never be forgotten that the world can only be secured at the cost of the man himself. He who wins the world loses his soul. To live for things is to die to all that is spiritual and divine. Life is being, not having. It is what a man is, not what he has, that really matters. What you have will perish, what you are abides forever. Seek not things. They perish, they corrupt, they pass away.

Seek to be! To be manly, honest, brave and good. ‘Seek first the Kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you.’ Seek God first, always first. In Him only is the true life

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