

THE EXCESS OF CHRISTIANITY.

MATT. 5:40.

"If any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also."

This verse comes between these two other notable passages in the Sermon on the Mount which are as follows: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth,' but I say unto you, resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also."----- Then the text. Beyond the text the other verse "And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain."

Such words as these, even from the lips of Jesus, sound strange, and in the interpretation of ordinary conduct, seem to be beyond all reasonable practice. We preachers get all kinds of things in our studies. A man came in one day and was bothered about a passage of Scripture. "It is a passage" said he, "That exhorts me to a liability after a suit in court." He meant that after he gave up what he had/ been sued for the verse would have him give up something else. The verse is our text. "If any man shall or will sue thee at the law and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also." This man said, "The man who sues me, gets only what the law allows." Jesus knew that was the attitude of people.

One of the outstanding distinguishments of the things Jesus said is to be found in the manner in which He lifted into universal interpretation the ordinary actions of ordinary folk. This should hearten us in our little lives. With divine fingers He would touch some ordinary or common place action and so interpret it that it would stand up in an immortality of meaning.

a. Woman with Alabaster box of ointment.

b. A widow came timidly down the corridors of the great temple, to drop in her two mites.

Jesus pictured the court in action. Men were mad there. Men were in sharp contests for their rights. Men are not convinced at law they are compelled. People go to law to get justice. I go there to hold tight the last right due me or to compel the last ounce of flesh coming to me. Jesus saw all of that so He wanted to put by the side of that sort of life the kind that a Christian should live. He says to us that when we go into court and the man sues us for our coat (And by way of parenthesis he must think that he has a claim to the coat or else he would not bring it to court) and the court says he gets it, get right up and hand it to him. Then you are straight with the law. But you are a Christian. When the law is met then you have a chance as a Christian.

So when the law empowered man reaches out his law exhorted hand and takes your coat, do not let him get away with only that. If you do it will be only a case at law. Exceed the verdict. "Hold on brother! Come back one minute. Do not hurry out with your coat, here is a cloak that goes with it. The coat looks better with the cloak. It was intended that the cloak be worn with the coat."

There must be an excess in religion. It is that cloak after the coat which creates that peculiar atmosphere in which Christian character can mature. No man at his best is satisfied with doing just what he is compelled to do. Illustration of Carnegie's flower garden. The gardener came in and told

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the financier that the townspeople were going through the garden pulling all the flowers since he had instructed that no signs "Keep off the grass" be put up. Carnegie said, "Humm Ah I understand you I believe. My neighbors are fond of the flowers are they? They keep the bushes plucked do they? Tehn you will have to plant more reses."

Excess then is to mark our religion. We are to be a peculiar people. We may be called strange. Nevertheless do not forget this he can win your coat you can give him your cloak. The coat is his the cloak is yours.

There is a tinge of injustice in the man who is always wanting justice. Shylock and the pound of flesh. Strict justice may be turned into a sentence.

You can not be arrested while you keep the law. But our religions should mean so much more than just keeping out of jail. The cloak that I can give is far more expressive of my life than the coat which you can take from me.

The cloak stands for all these finer expressions we cherish in each other. All our littleness and meanness and unworthiness can keep their places in our hearts while we accept the findings of the court. But just as soon as the verdict is rendered, and our coats are taken away, then in the realm where we offer our cloaks also, all these little things begin to fall behind.

God Himself practices the EXCESS. This is God's world and He could not make a cheap world and keep His own personality. Neither can you. This universe was not let out to the cheapest bidder. God did not need to make a diamond in order that the land produce a living. He did not need to make the flowers for man can not eat them. Along with making the utility of the world God gave excess, in diamond, rubies, flowers, and sunsets. Not only so but after all these things on which man ought to get along and have much joy God gave His Son to teach us to exceed the courts, and showed us the way of life and then laid down His that we might receive ours. The finest thing any one can do with the abundance of life is to bestow it, and Jesus did that very thing. Go on then dear people, that cloak is your opportunity. Living the life that is beyond compulsion is the drum beat of life's real march. WILL YOU CATCH THE STEP?

