

The King's Garden. The Perfect Fruit

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THE PERFECT FRUIT

"A man there was (though some did count him mad),
The more he gave away, the more he had."

Did you ever hear of such a man? John Bunyan tells about him in "The Pilgrim's Progress." This man had learned the secret of true riches—"Thou shalt not covet."

To "covet" is to desire to have things that belong to others, and to grasp and try to keep to ourselves what we already have we have found that Love is the summing up of the law of God. God is love; and, so the law of God to the law of love. Love is the beginning and the end of the law. The first commandment, Jesus said, is "Thou shalt love." Love is "bond of perfectness."

But "love seeketh not her own;" love does not covet the things of others, nor even seek to keep that which is its own. Love gives all, "God so loved that He gave." "The Son of God loved me, and gave Himself for me."

So the tenth commandment, "Thou shalt not covet," is but the first in another form: "Thou shalt love," for it is love alone that can keep as from coveting.

This commandment is plainly written for us in God's great Book of Nature. You may read it in the garden in every plant that grows. For that plant would not be there if some other plant had not given away something precious—the seed from which it has springing.

Do you think that the beautiful flowers in the garden are put forth by the plant for its own adornment? It is not so; they are a part of a wonderful scheme of love.

Last week we told you that the bright colours and the scent of the flowers attract the bees to gather the honey that is in them. But all these things, the beauty, the perfume, and the honey are love-lures, for the purpose of perfecting the needs which the plant has set apart to be given away. For in gathering the honey the wings and legs of the insects become powdered with pollen—the yellow, fertilising dust of the flower. This they carry with them and leave in the heart of the next flower that they visit, and it is this that perfects the seeds and makes them fruitful.

So the beauty of the flowers is not for its own sake, it is all for use,—to help the plant to produce and give away precious seeds which shall make the earth beautiful in coming years. The flower does not covet anything for itself; all its work is for others.

The law of God's life is written in His Book of Nature, the law of love, which "seeketh not her own." So in all nature we may read the commandment, "Thou shalt not covet," for love shows itself in giving; this is the law of life.

"Living is giving; giving is living,
All things would die if only receiving,
Give!
This is the law of love by which we live."

Satan was the first to break this law of love. He coveted the riches and glory that belonged to Christ. This was the glory of the self-sacrificing love that was always giving itself out for others.

The crowning glory of the plant, the beautiful flower, comes through its self-sacrifice,—its gift of life contained in the precious seed that it gives away.

And all the glory of Christ, "The Rose of Sharon, and the Lily of the valleys," was not for His own sake, but for others. All things that He received from God He took not for Himself, but that He might give them forth to all the creatures that His hands had made.

But Satan sought for his own glory and honour the high place that Christ alone could fill. In seeking to grasp it, he lost all that he had before, and was cast out of heaven.

Jesus coveted nothing for Himself, but freely gave up all that He had so that we might share it. "Though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich."

"Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus: who being in the form of God thought it not a thing to be desired to be equal with God, but emptied Himself, and took upon Him the form of a servant."

In this He was fulfilling the law of love, the commandment "Thou shalt not covet." But this is the secret of wealth, and the one who has it in his heart has all riches, for the more we give away the more we have. "Therefore God also has highly exalted Him, and given Him a name that is above every name."

"There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, and it tendeth to poverty."

Perhaps you have learned already that the way to get plenty of flowers in the garden is to pick and give away as many as you can. Have you not noticed but the more they are picked, the more they grow? This is another way in which the same lesson of love—"Thou shalt not covet"—is written for us in the Book of Nature.

We have had many talks together about the King's Garden, and the flowers that bloom there from the precious seed of the Word that He sows in it. And the lesson

which this last commandment teaches us is how the Garden may be kept ever fresh and green, and full of lovely flowers, sweet perfumes, and pure honey. It is by giving. Every flower blooms for the sake of the seed within it, which is set apart to be given away. And every flower that grows in the King's Garden has within it a seed that is to be dropped into the heart garden of another.

Does the flower of love shed forth its fragrance in your heart? Its attractiveness is to draw others, that, they may receive from it seed that shall cause the same flower to spring up in their hearts, making them lovely and loving.

The bright flowers of joy are to scatter their seeds over the barren ground of joyless lives, to make the wilderness like Eden—the Garden of Delight.

When the forget-me-nots that grow in the heart gardens of His children, please the King by their continual incense of grateful remembrance, it is that others also may be made happy by being reminded of Him who made them, and who still loves and cares for them. Then their hearts shall bring forth the same tokens, and they too shall sing:—

“Bless the Lord, O my soul.
And forget not all His benefits!”

Thus it is with every one of the fair flowers that beautify the King's Garden. The seed multiplies by being sown, and there will be no end to the beauty and the brightness and sweetness that shall gladden the lives of others from the seed which grows in your heart, for the pleasure and praise of the King.

Do not be afraid to give away what God gives to you, for “if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul . . . Thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.”

“IMMORTAL Love, for ever full,
For ever flowing free,
For ever shared, for ever whole,
A never-ebbing sea.”