

# From The Pulpit

by Rev. Donald M. Clark

A SEASON to "KNOW" CHRIST

Text: "That I May Know Him, and the Power of His Resurrection, and the Fellowship of His Sufferings."

In this text we find two ways in which Christ becomes a living factor in our lives. Let us take them in reverse order.

"The Fellowship of His Sufferings." What gives Christ His tremendous appeal to the human heart is just this: we know He has "been through it." He is the divine Lord but He knows what it is to be exposed, as we are, to danger, pain, separation from friends--even that final agony when God Himself seems to be hidden from us.



REV. D. M. CLARK

We can never forget that the Christ whose victory we celebrate on Easter morning is also the Christ who hung in agony for six hours on Good Friday on the cross where human wickedness had nailed Him. The mysterious appeal of that cross through human history lies surely in the fact that here He speaks our own language. We know, in greater or lesser degree, what it is to suffer. And to know this Lord is to know "the fellowship of His sufferings."

Sometimes I think that a man may miss the experience of knowing Christ simply because he wants to skip this part of the story. He will not face the element of suffering in life but wants the Resurrection story without the Calvary that gives it its deepest meaning.

When you are in deep trouble, to whom do you turn? Is it to the radiant happy person who seems to ride always on the crest of the wave? I do not think so. I believe you want the friend who has been through it, who knows the darkest valley as well as the mountaintops. This is the Lord who is alive and who offers you His friendship--a Savior who knows, for He has been there, and has been there for us.

If you have ever truly shared in the sorrow of a friend or had a friend stand by in the hour of your own greatest need, you know the meaning of these words that tell us what it means to know Christ--"the fellowship of his sufferings."

The other deep meaning of knowing Him is hidden in these great words: "The Power of His Resurrection." I say "hidden" because this Resurrection Power is not an open, obvious, dazzling power like the waters of Niagara or the lights of Times Square. It is a power that works quietly in the recesses of the human heart. It is a power that is celebrated on Easter day in great cathedral services, with pageantry and the sound of trumpets, and also in quiet, secret rooms in other parts of the world where Christians still are meeting in prayer in times of persecution. Although the outward celebration will vary around the world, the inward truth will be known to all who seek the friendship of Christ.

Resurrection Power. What is this power? It is nothing less than the divine power that raised Jesus from the dead, the power of love that proved stronger than human hatreds; the power of hope that was stronger than despair; the power of goodness that demonstrated its



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mastery over evil. This is "the Power of the Resurrection" and it is this that is offered to those who know Him.

I asked what kind of friend we need in trouble. It must be a friend who has "been through it," yes, but it must also be a friend who has known how to triumph. The one who sympathizes so much and so deeply that he drags us still lower into the depths of little use to us. We need one who is not only a fellow sufferer but is able to raise us up--one who, in fact, has Resurrection Power. It is this alone that can penetrate the depths and lift us out of ourselves and set us on the way to hope and health. And it is this that is supremely offered by the risen Christ.

When we are linked in faith, in prayer, in worship to our Lord, the power that raised Him from the dead is made available to us. Silently the tides of His spirit operate within and lift us from the mud of our sins and follies, delivering us from the grip of our despair. "Because He lives, we shall live also."

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This will be the happiest of all Easters we have ever known if we permit Jesus, Himself, to draw near to us and we "know Him, and the Power of His Resurrection and the Fellowship of His Sufferings."



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ELECT

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