

# A LOST ART OF JESUS

By Glenn Clark

## I

Jesus had a power of overcoming trouble, a power of triumphing over the 'prince of this world,' which was unique in the history of mankind. All will agree to this, even the skeptics and agnostics and those of alien faiths. Among the recorded promises which have come down to us as spoken from His lips was one that He would leave us with this power: 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.' Up to now the world in general and His professed followers in especial have failed, as a whole, to experience that power which He said He was going to leave with us. The question that is left unanswered is, What is this power which Jesus promised He was going to leave us, and where shall we find it?

Is Jesus' power of healing the sick, bringing peace to the troubled, and harmony out of discord a lost art? Perhaps nothing in song or story is more alluring to the imagination than the so-called 'lost arts.' What were they and where are they to be found? Like the riddle of the Sphinx, or the oracle of Delphi, they remain shrouded in the veil of mystery which all the king's horses and all the king's men of modern scientific and philosophical research are powerless to uncover.

I have come to the conclusion that the greatest of all the lost arts – lost for these twenty centuries – is the great art of living as Jesus practiced it: living in such a way that trouble fell like scales from the eyes of all those about Him who were in need.

If this art is lost, where shall we go to find it? For if it is truly the greatest of all the arts it is certainly worth the seeking.

Where does one go when he has lost something? Naturally he goes to the place where it was last seen, and makes that the starting-point for his search.

Let us take for an example what is probably the commonest of all lost articles in this athletically ardent nation – the lost golf-ball. Just imagine you are caddying, say, for the greatest of all masters of the game. Stroke after stroke you have seen him drive down the course. Nothing equal to it have you ever seen before. And yet in spite of his marvelous power he does not require you to go on ahead, as a servant in his hire, but he invites you to accompany him at his side - as a companion. 'I call you not servants,' is the beautiful phrase of the Gospel, 'I have called you friends.' And oh, how you glory in this friendship and want to prove yourself worthy of this great trust! And then, in an evil hour, when you should have been giving your undivided attention to the game, you lose sight of the ball for just one moment, and when you try to see it again in its onward flight and you are not able to do so, and when you go down the course to seek it, try your best, you cannot find it.

After wasting precious minutes thrashing through the deep grass of inductive speculation on

one side of the course, and searching among the high trees of deductive speculation on the other, and after poking in the sand traps of logic in the fairway, you are ready to give up in despair. But if you are a good caddy you still have one recourse left. You can return to the tee and take the same stand you saw the master take when he struck the ball, you can take the same grip upon the club, and you can give exactly the same swing that he gave, while you let your eye follow the course such a stroke would inevitably carry the ball. If you do this, and then follow the track that your thought has recharted for you, you will come right to the lost ball.

This is, figuratively speaking, exactly what I did. Having assured myself, beyond peradventure of a doubt, that Jesus meant us to take Him absolutely at His word when He said, 'The works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do,' and having convinced myself that within Jesus' own life lay concealed the secret of doing these mighty works, I went back down the pathway of history to where Jesus stood before He sent the Christ Idea whirling down the ages. I went to where He stood; examined carefully, as best I was able, the way He took His stand upon this earth, the manner in which He gripped the great issues of life, the way He swung the full force of that matchless strength and harmony of thought in the great game of life; and then I let my eye follow the course which the Idea must have followed in its triumphant flight.

And this is what I found – that Jesus' attitude toward life was one of converting everything He saw and touched into parables. He stood on this earth as a symbol of a greater World. He gripped the issues of life as mere symbols of eternal and heavenly Realities. Petty problems and sorrows and disasters He converted into beautiful symbols of eternal and infinite goodness. Thus nothing was petty, nothing was trivial, nothing was without meaning in Jesus' world, for all things combined to reveal the Kingdom – the Kingdom of Heaven in which He lived and moved and had His being.

'And in . . . parables spake he unto them . . and without a parable spake he not unto them.' Jesus was one above all others who never let His lips say what His mind and heart did not authorize. 'For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.' If Jesus talked in parables He thought in parables; if He thought in parables He felt in parables – the parable point of view of the universe was at the heart and centre of His being. From somewhere about the beginning of His ministry He adopted this parabolic method of looking at the universe and thenceforth He never departed from it. There is something tremendously significant in this fact. It reveals that this method of thinking and talking about life for Jesus was not a halfway method. He did not use it occasionally as a means to an end, but continuously, exclusively, utterly. Perhaps no teacher in all history has so completely given himself to one particular method as Jesus did to this.

To me this was the greatest discovery of my life. It took its rank, in my little universe at least, beside Newton's and Watt's discoveries that apples fall downward and steam rises upward. And I am firmly convinced that when the religious world as a whole awakes to the full significance and meaning implied in these simple words the result will be just as transforming to the spiritual life of the world as the discovery of gravitation and steam has been to the scientific and material life of the world. For just as the discoveries of Watt and of Newton awakened man to the presence of a new world of physical and material forces outside of him, so the discovery of Jesus'

way of looking at life will awaken man to the presence of a new world of cosmic and spiritual forces within him.

## II

Somewhere back in my memory I can recall seeing two books side by side on a library shelf, one entitled *The Parables of Our Lord* and the other entitled *the Miracles of Our Lord*. Either for this reason or for some other reason I early associated these two words as one would associate two companion pictures that have hung on the wall in his childhood home, such as Sunrise and Sunset, the Parting and the Reunion, or those other heirlooms of our childhood memories – the Dictionary and the Family Bible, that use to grace the centre table of the old living-room.

But it was not till I made the discovery that I have just referred to that there came to me a realization of the deeper and closer association of cause and effect which existed between the parables and the miracles of our Lord. For in Jesus' parabolic interpretation of life actually lay the secret of the signs and wonders that signalized His healing and teaching ministry.

If all this is implied in Jesus' parabolic view of life it behooves us to consider carefully just what manner of thing this mystery is that we call a parable – this thing that is so filled with moral and spiritual dynamite.

'A parable,' says the dictionary at my hand, 'is an allegorical relation of something real.' There we have it; a parable deals first of all with Reality,. Second, it translates this Reality in terms of the imagination. *Jesus looked at Reality through the lens of the divine----- imagination*. By means of that fact troubles vanished around Him, obstacles fell away, the lost became found, the sick became well, sinners became redeemed, and rough places became smooth. Moreover, He promised that those who followed Him and used the way He used should have similar dominion over all things on earth and that greater works than He did should they be able to do also.

The imagination is the power we all possess of seeing harmonies, unities, and beauties in things where the non-imaginative mind sees nothing but discords, separations, ugliness. It is the tool of the mind with which we build up our affirmations – the 'staff' of the Shepherd Psalm that comforts us when all other faculties fail us. To look at life imaginatively, then, to see everything about us as a great parable full of deep inner meanings, - meanings of love, joy, wholeness, symmetry, and perfection, - is to see life truthfully, that is to say, spiritually. It brings us into a condition of continuous prayer – a condition of cosmic consciousness that is conducive, above all else, to bringing into our life those larger harmonies and unities that to our physical eyes appear to be miracles.

I am aware that I have here dug up from the ash-heap the stone which the theologians and the metaphysicians have for the most part rejected. And in setting it to be the head of the corner I know I shall meet with the scoffs and jeers of many who maintain that we should confine our attention to those things that can meet the test of logic and are capable of objective analysis. But the imagination is of all qualities in man the most Godlike – that which associates him most closely with God. The first mention we read of man in the Bible is where he is spoken of as

image. "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." The only place where image can be conceived of is in the imagination. Thus man, the highest creation of God, was an imaginative creation of God's imagination. The source and centre of all man's creative power – the power that beyond all others lifts him above the level of brute creation, and that gives him dominion over all the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and the animals that move and creep on the earth – is his power of making images, or the power of the imagination.

The imagination of man is but the window or door which, when thrown open, lets the divine life-stream into our lives. When it is thus thrown open man is brought into a condition of consciousness which, for want of a better word, is called inspiration. This heavenly inspiration is what links man to the divine and brings into existence our poets, composers, prophets, mystics, seers, and saints. This is the power that Jesus Christ had and that lifted Him above all other men, - a power that He, however, in His immeasurable compassion and His infinite humility, wished to bestow upon others and share with them, that greater works than He had done they might do also.

And these works – these mighty works, these miracles, if you will, are the direct outcome of Jesus' converting everything that He saw into parables. And a parable, we find, is merely 'an allegorical relation of something real.' Looked at from this angle, the performing of a miracle is not such an impossible task. It consists merely of looking at Reality through the lens of the imagination, and then letting this parable, or imaginative way of looking at Reality, bring to pass that thing which is spoken of as a miracle.

And what is Reality? Reality, in the eyes of the practical man, is made up of cold, hard facts. And what are the hard, cold facts of life? As we look about us in this world what we see first of all are the quarrels, bickering, unhappiness, unfaithfulness, treachery, covetousness, worry, and materialism everywhere. These are the facts of life. But what are facts? Fact comes from the word *factum*, meaning something that we do or make. Are these facts of life identical with the realities of life? Not according to Jesus. To Him Reality does not consist of that which is *made*, but of that which eternally *is*. *Love is* – quarrels are made; *joy is* – unhappiness is made; *truth is* – lies are made; *loyalty is* – betrayals are made; *purity is* – impurity is made; *life is* – sickness is made. So Jesus went through life seeing no quarrels, no unhappiness, no lies, no impurity, no sickness. Where they appeared to be He turned the lens of His divinely inspired imagination upon them; He converted them into parables, and behold they stood forth revealed as mere shadows or reflections – upside down – of the reality. And every time that Jesus converted a fact into a reality the people exclaimed that a miracle had been wrought.

Bear in mind I do not mean to imply that Jesus went about disregarding and overlooking the facts of life. Rather He looked at them so much more steadily, so much more understandingly than the rest of mankind that He *looked right straight through them* into the underlying Reality of which they were the mere counterfeits or reflections. This is what the parabolic point of view consists of. He looked steadily at the dead girl until He could utter with absolute conviction based upon perfectly clear understanding this startling parable: 'She is not dead, but sleepeth,' He looked through the palsied sufferer until He could pronounce with conviction another parable, 'Thy sins are forgiven thee.' For to Jesus a parable meant simply the going back behind

the fact to the Reality that the fact represents. It does not mean watering the leaf that is waving conspicuously in the sunshine, but watering the roots that no one can see. It does not mean healing a man's skin, but healing his soul. It does not mean dealing with the seen, but with the unseen; not with the carnal, but with the spiritual. Once perform the inner watering, the inner cleansing, and the outer healing will follow as a matter of course. 'Whether is easier, to say . . . Thy sins are forgiven; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk?'

And here let me pause a moment to clear up a misunderstanding in regard to the imagination that may have cropped up in the thought of many of my readers. There are some who have always thought that the imagination was something which makes believe that which is not. This is fancy – not imagination. Fancy would convert that which is real into pretense and sham; imagination enables one to see through the *appearance* of a thing to what it really *is*. Let me illustrate.

You who are reading this essay are probably sitting in a room with a perfectly flat floor beneath you. A carpenter, a contractor, and an architect brought their combined skill into action to see that the floor was flat – set plumb with the world. When you look out of the window you see that the streets and gardens about you are also flat. For three thousand years – and perhaps far longer – all mankind believed the world was flat. Why? Because they believed the evidence of their eyes. At last there came a man who looked at the world with his imagination, and he saw that it was round.

As you are reading this essay you look out of the window and see the sun setting behind the western hills. You say the sun is going down. For thousands of years all mankind believed that this was so – in short, that the earth was the centre of the universe, and the sun, moon, and stars revolved around it. At length there arose a man who used his imagination sufficiently to see through the appearance of things to the Reality. Because he insisted that the sun stood still and the earth revolved around it – in short, tried to duplicate Joshua's miracle of making the sun stand still – his theory was regarded as a heresy.

Now, did Columbus create a miracle by proving that the earth was round when all the kings and all the kings' men 'knew' it was flat? And when he proved it was round did he actually make it round? No. It was round all the time – he merely demonstrated to mankind that it was round. Did Copernicus make the sun stand still and the earth revolve around it? No, he created no miracles – he merely demonstrated and proved what was actually so. And, like Jesus, 'he marveled because of their unbelief.'

And in like manner we can ask, Did Jesus perform a miracle when He said the leper was made whole? No, He merely demonstrated it. Did He break a natural law when He said, 'She is not dead but sleepeth'? no, He merely demonstrated that Life is the Reality, and Death is merely a shadow or counterfeit of Life.

Then can we create miracles? Yes, we can if we use our imaginations and look steadfastly through appearances of things to the Reality behind them. We cannot create miracles by our fancy, and by trying to make believe we see things that we do not and cannot see because they do

not exist. We can create miracles by faith – by knowing the Reality that exists behind the things that only seem to exist. Faith will indeed move mountains.

And what is the greatest of all Realities, the Reality around which all lesser Realities centre, as it were? The Great Reality, the realization of which as at the core of all Jesus' miracles, was the truth that Man is eternally united with all that is good – in other words, with God and His Kingdom – and eternally separated from all that is bad. Merely to see this Reality and see it clearly enough will make the sick whole, the sorrowful happy, the sinful redeemed, and the lost found.

### III

I come now to where all this has led me: If Jesus talked, thought, and felt in parables, He must also have prayed in parables. In other words, when He asked for physical and material and financial blessings He must first have translated these needs into symbols of spiritual values and prayed not for material facts but for the spiritual Realities which these facts represented. When He prayed for things that are seen He used language of the unseen. Interesting evidence for believing that this is exactly what Jesus did is furnished us in some old records unearthed in Egypt which contain a saying ascribed to our Lord: 'Ask for great things, and the small things will be given unto you; ask for heavenly things, and the earthly things will be given to you.' I can paraphrase this as follows: Seek spiritual values, and earthly things, expressing those values, will be given to you. Or, as Paul would put it: 'Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.' Which is simply to say in another way, 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you.'

Let us apply this method of prayer to two of the commonest things in American life, two things that are quite generally thought to be so worldly and mundane that they fall outside the proper scope and field of prayer. I refer to our sports and our business. Here, if anywhere, we will certainly agree, the parable method will be brought to its severest test. How can a man in either of these fields with any sense of propriety go to God in prayer unless he can first pass his desires through the filter of Jesus' parabolic vision and bring them forth purified of all dross and sediment of personal desire – that is to say, of Self? Imagine two rival athletic coaches praying for victory, or the presidents of two rival business firms praying for a monopoly of trade. How can their prayers be answered without disregarding, annulling, or violating the hallowed sanctity of the high office of prayer?

Just let us imagine the scene enacted up in Heaven when two such conflicting prayers are received there. God gathers his angels together and says, 'Down there are two earnest men asking for victories. Search through our stockrooms and our treasuries and gather together all the victories you can find and send them down to them.' Presently the angels come back and report, 'We don't find any such thing up here as victories. But we did find an old record which relates how an angel, the most beautiful of all those who sang before Thee, once made the request to be first in Heaven. If memory serves us right Thou didst recommend that he journey down to a lower realm where such requests might more appropriately be granted.' Needless to say that the prayers of the two men, while not meeting with so emphatic a reproof as the request

of Satan, nevertheless remain unanswered.

Then how can one pray for athletic victories?

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Joker. But no one at any time has ever accused God of being an ignoramus or a fool. He knows our practical modern needs better than we do ourselves. But not until we set our affection on things above, not on things on the earth, will He grant the requests of His children. "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

#### IV

And now I am called upon to answer a very sensible and very sincere question.

Is there not a certain amount of hypocrisy and subterfuge in asking one thing in secret, as it were, and desiring another things to be given to us openly? In asking for ideas, for instance, and desiring money; in asking for love and joy, and desiring victory. There is the very issue, my friend. As long as one asks for one thing and *desires* another his prayers remain unanswered. Not until the athletic coach has persuaded himself in his own heart that the pearl without price that he desires above all other things for his athletes is that they be filled to overflowing with love and joy, entirely regardless of whether victory or defeat shall accompany this love and joy, can he begin to see the real *Power* that such love and joy can release in his men. Not until the college president actually desires first and foremost that actual ideas shall come to his college, if need be from teachers in homespun talking to boys on broken benches, and ceases to press down on the thought that these ideas *must* be presented in great million-dollar buildings and paid for by great million-dollar endowments, can he begin to see the full supply contained in the *spiritual Idea* made manifest.

But how can I explain why so many petitions asked in the old way – without a parable – have been answered? Always for this reason and for no other; they were always first translated – if not consciously in the mind, then unconsciously in the heart of the petitioner – into a parable. The petitioner was looking at the inner spiritual Reality and not at the outward material manifestation of Fact or Thing. In other words, such prayers were answered only when they were offered in simple trust and always with that complete surrender to the will of God – uttered or unexpressed – contained in the simple words, 'Not my will, but thine, be done.' 'Thy will' – whether the seeker knows it or not – is always the spiritual will, just as 'my will' is always the material will. Thus this simple statement, when uttered from the heart, - and not from the lips only, - is a veritable Aladdin's lamp for converting a petition for material things into a petition for spiritual things. In other words, it grants to God the privilege of substituting His will for ours – that is to say, of translating our literal language of the flesh into the parabolic language of the spirit, and thus releasing the spiritual powers and forces so that they may become manifest in whatever way seems necessary to meet the need that our petition contains.

What I am trying to make clear is that we must pray *not in another language so much as in another*

*spirit.* I am convinced that Jesus Himself used *both* the *new spirit* and the *new language*, as His continuous use of the parable in both His thinking and His speaking gives us good reason to infer. Moreover, I am convinced that He has given us good authority for following His example and using the new language as well as the new spirit when He said, 'Neither do men put new wine into old wine-skins: else the skins burst, and the wine is spilled, and the skins perish: but they put new wine into fresh wine-skins, and both are preserved.'

And this assurance I can offer to all those who are willing to give themselves to the Jesus method of prayer: you will find yourself lifted into a purer realm where it will be easier to let the gross material of this earthly world drop from your consciousness, and where you can more easily give your thought, not to the Facts, which are *made*, but to the Realities, which are *not* made, but which are *eternal*. You will find yourself lifted into a rarer atmosphere where you will soon be seeking, not for treasures upon earth, where moth or rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal, but you will be seeking – in language as well as in thought – for those treasures which are in Heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. For where your language and your treasure are, there will your heart be also.

Greater than the prayer is the spirit in which it is uttered. Greater than speaking in parables, than thinking in parables, yes, even than praying in parables, is *living* in parables. This is the secret underlying the parable method of speech of Jesus – it is the parable method of living. He allied Himself spiritually or, if you will, mystically with the universe, just as a scientist allies himself with it mentally. And as a scientist talks of and about the great powers of nature that are unseen, Jesus lived, moved, and had His being among powers that are unseen, and give expression to them in His life. He moved amid these spiritual forces with a grace and ease that are the marvel of the ages.

And this art – which He mastered in such a magnificent manner – upon the testimony of Jesus Himself can be ours if we are willing to pay the price: to take up our cross, follow in His footsteps, and look upon life as He looked upon it. And He looked upon life imaginatively – that is to say, sympathetically. For the imagination sees things not in the flesh but in the spirit; not in imperfection but in perfection; not in ugliness but in beauty; not in discord but in harmony; not in parts but in wholes. Jesus came to make men spiritual, beautiful, harmonious, and whole. To that end, and to that end only, He talked to them in parables, He thought for them in parables, He *prayed* for them in parables; 'and without a parable spake He not unto them.'