

# REV. DR. TALMAGE.

## The Eminent Brooklyn Divine's Sunday Sermon.

Subject: "Mending the Nets."

TEXT: "James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets."—Matthew iv., 21.

"I go a fishing," cried Simon Peter to his comrades, and the most of the apostles had hands hard from fishing tackle. The fisheries of the world have always attracted attention. In the Third century the queen of Egypt had for pin money four hundred and seventy thousand dollars, received from the fisheries of Lake Moeris. And if the time should ever come when the immensity of the world's population could not be fed by the vegetables and meats of the land, the sea has an amount of animal life that would feed all the populations of the earth, and fatten them with a food that by its phosphorus would make a generation brainy and intellectual beyond anything that the world has ever imagined. My text takes us among the Galilean fishermen. One day, Walter Scott, while hunting in an old drawer, found among some old fishing tackle the manuscript of his immortal book "Waverley," which he had put away there as of no worth, and who knows but that to-day we may find some unknown wealth of thought while looking at the fishing tackle in the text?

It is not a good day for fishing, and three men are in the boat repairing the broken fishing nets. If you are fishing with a hook and line and the fish will not bite it is a good time to put the angler's apparatus into better condition. Perhaps the last fish you hauled in was so large that something snapped. Or if you were fishing with a net there was a mighty floundering of the scales, or an exposed nail on the side of the boat which broke some of the threads and let part or all of the captives of the deep escape into their natural element. And hardly anything is more provoking than to nearly land a score or a hundred of trophies from the deep and when you are in the full glee of hauling in the spotted treasures through some imperfection of the net they splash back into the wave.

This is too much of a trial of patience for most fishermen to endure, and many a man ordinarily correct of speech in such circumstances comes to an intensity of utterance unjustifiable. Therefore no good fisherman considers the time wasted that is spent in mending his net. Now the Bible again and again represents Christian workers as fishermen of men, and we are all sweeping through the sea of humanity some kind of a net. Indeed, there have been enough nets out and enough fishermen busy to have landed the whole human race in the kingdom of God long before this. What is the matter? The Gospel is all right, and it has been a good time for catching souls for thousands of years. Why, then, the failures? The trouble is with the nets, and most of them need to be mended. I propose to show you what is the matter with most of the nets and how to mend them. In the text old Zebedee and his two boys, James and John, were doing a good thing when they sat in the boat mending their nets.

The trouble with many of our nets is that the meshes are too large. If a fish can get his gills and half his body through the network, he tears and rends and works his way out and leaves the place through which he squirmed a tangle of broken threads. The Bible weaves faith and works right together, the law and the Gospel, righteousness and forgiveness. Some of our nets have meshes so wide that the sinner floats in and out and is not at any moment caught for the heavenly landing. In our desire to make everything so easy we relax, we loosen, we widen. We let men after they are once in the Gospel net escape into the world and go into indulgences and swim all around Galilee, from north side to south side and from east side to west side, expecting that they will come back again. We ought to make it easy for them to get into the kingdom of God, and as far as we can, make it impossible for them to get out. The poor advice nowadays to many is: "Go and do just as you did before you were captured for God and heaven. The net was not intended to be any restraint or any hindrance. What you did before you were a Christian, do now. Go to all styles of amusement, read all the styles of books, engage in all the styles of behavior as before you were converted." And so through these meshes of permission and laxity they wriggle out through this opening and that opening, tearing the net as they go, and soon all the souls that we expected to land in heaven before we knew it are back in the deep sea of the world. Oh, when we go a-Gospel fishing let us make it as easy as possible for souls to get in, and as hard as possible to get out.

There should be no rivalry between churches. Each one does a work peculiar to itself. There should be no rivalry between ministers. God never repeats Himself, and He never makes two ministers alike, and each one has a work that no other man in the universe can accomplish. If fishermen are wise, they will not allow their nets to entangle, or if they accidentally get inter-twined, the work of extrication should be kindly and gently conducted. What a glad spectacle for men and angels when on our recent dedication day ministers of all denominations stood on this platform and wished for each other widest prosperity and usefulness, but there are cities in this country where there is now going on an awful ripping and rending and tearing of fishing nets. Indeed, all over Christendom at this time there is a great war going on between fishermen, ministers against ministers.

Now I have noticed a man cannot fish and fight at the same time. He either neglects his net or his musket. It is amazing how much time some of the fishermen have to look after other fishermen. It is more than I can do to take care of my own net. You see the wind is just right, and it is such a good time for fishing, and the fish are coming in so rapidly that I have to keep my eye and hand busy. There are about two hundred million souls wanting to get into the kingdom of God, and it will require all the nets and all the boats and all the fishermen of Christendom to safely land them.

Oh, brethren of ministry! Let us spend our time in fishing instead of fighting. But if I angrily jerk my net across your net, and you jerk your net angrily across mine, we will soon have two broken nets and no fish. The French revolution nearly destroyed the French fisheries, and ecclesiastical war is the worst thing possible while hauling souls into the kingdom. I had hoped that the millennium was about to dawn, but the lion is yet too fond of the lamb. My friends, I notice in the text that James, the son of Zebedee, and John, his brother, were busy mending somebody else's nets but mending their own nets, and I rather think that we who are engaged in Christian work in this latter part of the nineteenth century will require all our spare time to mend our own nets. God help us in the important duty!

In this work of reparation we need to put into the nets more threads of common sense. When we can present religion as a great practicality we will catch a hundred souls where now we catch one. Present religion as an intellectuality and we will fail. Out in the fisheries there are set across the

waters what are called gill nets, and the fish put their heads through the meshes and then cannot withdraw them because they are caught by the gills. But gill nets cannot be of any service in religious work. Men are never caught for the truth by their heads; it is by the heart or not at all. No argument ever saved a man, and no keen analysis ever brought a man into the kingdom of God. Heart work, not head work. A way with your gill nets! Sympathy, helpfulness, consolation, love, are the names of some of the threads that we need to weave in our Gospel nets when we are mending them.

Again, in mending our nets we need also to put in the threads of faith and fear out all the tangled meshes of unbelief. Our work is successful according to our faith. The man who believes in only half a Bible, or the Bible in spots; the man who thinks he cannot persuade others; the man who halts, doubting about this and about that, will be a failure in Christian work. Show me the man who rather thinks that the garden of Eden may have been an allegory, and is not quite certain but that there may be another chance after death, and does not know whether or not the Bible is inspired, and I tell you that man for soul saving is a poor stick. Faith in God and in Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost, and the absolute necessity of a regenerated heart in order to see God in peace, is one thread you must have in your mended net or you will never be a successful fisher for men. Why, how can you doubt?

The hundreds of millions of men and women now standing in the church on earth and the hundreds of millions in heaven, attest the power of the Gospel to save. With more than a certainty of a mathematical demonstration, let us start out to redeem all nations. The rottenest thread you are to tear out of your net is unbelief, and the most important thread you are to put in it is faith. Faith in God, triumphant faith, everlasting faith. If you cannot trust the infinite, the holy, the omnipotent Jehovah, who can you trust?

Oh, this important work of mending our nets! If we could get our nets right we would accomplish more in soul-saving in the next year than we have in the last twenty years. But where shall we get them mended? Just where the old Zebedee and his two boys mended their nets—where you are. "James, why don't you put your oar in Lake Galilee, or hoist your sail and land at Capernaum or Tiberias or Gardara, and seated on the bank mend your net? John, why don't you go ashore and mend your net? No, they sat on the quails of the boat, or at the prow of the boat, and they took up the thread and the needle, and the ropes and the wooden blocks, and went to work: sawing, sewing; tying, tying; weaving, weaving; pounding, pounding, until the net mended, they pushed it off into the sea and drop paddle and hoist sail, and the cutwater went through amid the shoals of fish, some of the descendants of which we had for breakfast one morning while we were camped on the beach of beautiful Galilee. James and John had no time to go ashore. They were not fishing for fun, as you and I do in summer time. It was their livelihood and that of their families. They mended their nets where they were, in the ship.

"Oh," says some one, "I mean to get my net mended, and I will go down to the public library, and I will see what the scientists say about evolution and about 'the survival of the fittest,' and I will read up what the theologians say about 'advanced thought.' I will leave the ship awhile, and will go ashore and stay there until my net is mended." Do that, my brother, and you will have no net left. Instead of their helping you mend your net, they will steal the pieces that remain. Better stay in the Gospel boat, where you have all the means for mending your net. What are they, do you ask? I answer all you need you have where you are, namely, a Bible and a place to pray. The more you study evolution, and adopt what is called advanced thought, the bigger fool you will be. Stay in the ship and mend your net. That is where James the son of Zebedee and John his brother staid. That is where all who get their nets mended stay.

These dear brethren of all denominations, afflicted with theological fidgets, had better go to mending nets instead of seeking them. Before they break up the old religion and try to foist on us a new religion let them go through some great sacrifices for God that will prove them worthy for such a work, taking the advice of Talleyrand to a man who wanted to upset the religion of Jesus Christ and start a new one, when he said: "Go and be crucified and then raise yourself from the grave the third day." Those who propose to mend their nets by secular sceptical books are just like a man who has just one week for fishing, and six of the days he spends in reading Isaac Walton's "Complete Angler," and Wheatley's "Rod and Line," and Scott's "Fishing in Northern Waters," and Pullman's "Vale Mecum of Fly Fishing for Trout," and then on Saturday morning, his last day out, goes to the river to ply his art, but that day the fish will not bite, and late on Saturday night he goes home with empty basket and a disappointed heart.

Meanwhile a man who never saw a big library in all his life, has that week caught with an old fishing tackle, enough to supply his own table and the table of all his neighbors, and enough to suit down in barrels for the long winter that will soon come in. Alas! Alas! If, when the Saturday night of our life drops on us it shall be found that we have spent our time in the libraries of worldly philosophy, trying to mend our nets, and we have only a few souls to report as brought to God through our instrumentality, while some humble Gospel fisherman, his library made up of a Bible and an almanac, shall come home laden with the results, his trophies the souls within fifteen miles of his log cabin meeting house.

In the time of great disturbance in Naples in 1649 Massaniello, a bare footed fishing boy, dropped his fishing rod, and by strange magnetism took command of that city of six hundred thousand souls. He took off his fishing jacket and put on a robe of gold in the presence of howling mobs. He put his hand on his hip as a signal, and they were rent. He waved his hand away from him, and they retired to their homes. Armies passed in review before him. He became the nation's idol. The rapid rise and complete supremacy of that young fisherman, Massaniello, has no parallel in all history. But something equal to that and better than that is an everyday occurrence in heaven.

God takes some of those, who in this world were fishermen of men, and who toiled very humbly, but because of the way they mended their nets and employed their nets after they were mended, and suddenly hoists them and robes them and scepters them and crowns them and makes them rulers over cities, and He marches armies of saved ones before them in review, Massaniello's unboned on earth, but radiated in heaven. The fisher boy of Naples soon lost his power, but those people of God who kept their nets mended and rightly swung them shall never lose their exalted place, but shall reign forever and ever and ever. Keep that reward in sight.

But do not spend your time fishing with hook and line. Why did not James, the son of Zebedee, sit on the wharf at Capernaum, hanging over the lake and with a long pole and a worm on the hook dipped into the wave, wait for some mullet to swim up and be caught? Why did not Zebedee spend his afternoon trying to catch one eel? No; that work was too slow. These men were not mending a hook and line; they were mending their nets. So let the church of God not be content with having here one soul and next month another soul brought into

the kingdom. Sweep all the seas with nets—scoop nets, seine nets, drag nets, all encompassing nets—and take the treasures by hundreds and thousands and millions, and nations be born in a day, and the hemispheres quake with the tread of a ransoming God. Do you know what will be the two most tremendous hours in our heavenly existence? Among the quadrillions of ages which shall roll on, what two occasions will be to us the greatest?

The day of our arrival there will be to us one of the two greatest. The second greatest, I think, will be the day when we shall have put in parallel lines before us what Christ did for us and what we did for Christ—this one so great, the other so little. That will be the only embarrassment in heaven. My Lord and my God! What will we do and what will we say when on one side are placed the Saviour's great sacrifices for us and our small sacrifices for Him—His exile, His humiliation, His agonies on one hand, and our poor weak, insufficient sacrifices on the other? To make the contrast less overwhelming, let us quickly mend our nets and like the Galilean fishermen may we be divine help to cast them on the right side of the ship.

### QUAINT AND CURIOUS.

An Angora cat is worth \$100.

A Halifax (Vt.) woman secured from thirty-two hens in four months 5112 eggs.

The Chinese are credited with being the most diligent gardeners and tillers of the land.

Two acres of land adjoining the English Houses of Parliament "are offered for sale at \$5,000,000.

A colored girl has been sentenced at Rome, Ga., to ninety-nine years' service in the convict camp for arson.

The original spring which supplied the first settlers of Boston 260 years ago still bubbles up beneath the foundations of the postoffice.

Londoners are complaining about the duplication of street names. There are King streets, and Queen streets and Prince streets all over London.

The man who hauled the first load of sand used in building the Polk County, Iowa, penitentiary has just been sentenced to that institution for six months.

Physicians of this country are paid annually nearly \$1,500,000 for medical examinations for life insurance companies. Three companies pay over \$250,000 each.

The total length of the streets, avenues, boulevards, bridges, quays and thoroughfares of Paris is set down at 600 miles, of which nearly 200 are planted with trees.

In the formation of a single locomotive steam engine there are nearly 6000 pieces to be put together, and these require to be as accurately adjusted as the works of a watch.

British India embraces a territory of 1,500,000 square miles. The native population is about 240,000,000 and the English residents, soldiers and civilians do not number more than 250,000.

In order to "boom" Ben Lomond, Santa Cruz County, Cal., the local lumber company built a meeting-house and offered it as a free gift to any denomination that would provide stated preaching in it. The Presbyterians spoke first.

A variety of coffee which is said to be pleasant in taste, though rather bitter, is grown in the neighborhood of Ascholtshausen, Bavaria, in sandy soil. It is sown in spring, and the sky-blue blossoms appear in July. The fruit is gathered in August and is pale yellow, resembling Bourbon Island coffee.

The dam porpoises are said to help their young in their efforts to breathe by bearing them up to the surface of the water on their flippers. The spiracle, or blowhole, appears to be a sensitive part of the head, for when touched with the hand the porpoise invariably shows signs of great discomfort by lashing the tail very violently.

One of the smallest clubs in the world is the Anglo-American Club of Dresden, Germany. Its present membership, exclusive of the associate, honorary and reserve lists, is only forty-nine. Its active membership is confined to persons of British or American nationality, or who have married into British or American families.

The late Mary Cash Cheairs of Bolivar, Tenn., predicted two years ago that she would die on her ninety-fourth birthday and she did so. She was a remarkable woman in many ways, being able to play the harp and sing ballads almost to the day of her death, and to quote long passages from the Greek and Roman poets with whose writings she was quite familiar.

## A MARVELOUS FIBER.

### The Great Things That Are Expected of Ramie.

#### A Splendid Opportunity For an Inventive American.

"I had a talk the other day with Mr. Burgess, the famous Boston yacht builder," said Charles Richards Dodge to a writer for the Washington Star, "and he remarked incidentally that he thought ramie fiber was likely to be utilized in the not distant future as a material for yacht sails. He seemed to think that such a fabric might be produced as light and strong as silk, which would serve for the purpose better than any kind of stuff thus far employed. I myself would not be surprised if it should so turn out, though I hazard no prediction. One advantage claimed for ramie sail cloth is that it will not mildew.

"Ramie is a provoking substance to deal with. It is a most beautiful fiber, susceptible of use in making ever so many sorts of exquisite fabrics. The world wants it, but unfortunately, though the plant that produces it is one of the most easily grown and prolific vegetables known, no machine or process has thus far been devised for reducing the raw material to marketable shape at a cheap enough rate to pay. There would be no end of the material obtainable, but at present it costs more to turn out the fiber in condition for manufacture than it will sell for. Fortunes have been spent in trying to devise a machine capable of separating it from the stalks and leaves at an economical price, but thus far in vain.

"The Department of Agriculture has just received, through the Department of State, samples from China, forwarded by United States Consul Henry W. Adams at Hankow, of all the six kinds of ramie grown in that country, where alone it is cultivated at a profit, though the production is limited. From this source the commercial supply of the fiber that reaches Europe and the United States is obtained. Labor, of course, costs almost nothing there, and the operation of preparing the material for market is performed by stripping the fresh cut stalks of the leaves, scraping off the outer bark and then peeling off, with bamboo knives, the fibrous inner bark, which yields the marketable article in small ribbons. Finally, these ribbons are boiled for a while in lye water and spread upon the roofs of the houses to dry. Thus obtained, the ramie is delivered here and purchasable, in small quantities, at 8 1/2-2 cents a pound. By this method, it is said, less than two pounds of the ribbons can be produced by one man's labor for a day. The samples we have secured include four varieties besides the white and the green ramie, which reach our shores through commerce. We shall carefully preserve them in the fiber collection for comparison.

"Here are some articles made of ramie that may interest you. These are laces for curtains, of very beautiful texture, as you may see; and these are white goods of various kinds, closely resembling fine muslins and other such stuffs. Here is a bundle of dress goods samples of many patterns; take notice how sheer and silky some of them are. Are not these napkins so like linen that you could not have told they were not such if I had not informed you? Tablecloths, bed spreads and all similar household articles can be made of ramie. In this package are plushes and upholstery goods, for hangings, lambrequins and so forth. Even carpets of the same material are most handsome and serviceable, the latter made in this country.

"What is ramie? Why, it is a plant belonging to the nettle family, sometimes called the stingless nettle, which has been cultivated in China from time immemorial. It is also known as China grass. When full grown it attains a height of from four to eight feet. The fiber is formed in the bark of the stalk, which has a pithy center. So fast does it grow that three and even five crops a year have been obtained without replanting. In China it is manufactured not only into cordage, fish lines, nets and like coarse products, but also into numerous most delicate and lovely fabrics.

"It has been estimated that an acre of ramie one year old will produce 27,600 pounds of stripped stalks, but to separate the fiber from the products of fifty years, a single machine of the best pattern thus far devised would require a year and a half—simply for one cutting, mind you. Cultivating at this rate is out of the question, inasmuch as the machines are very expensive, costing \$1000 apiece or more, and the farmer could not afford to buy and use very many. The problem is one to which American inventors will do well to turn their attention. Ramie, in the raw, can be raised in unlimited quantities at a small expenditure. In its marketable shape there is already a considerable demand for it at reasonable prices, particularly in Europe. Let some ingenious Yankee find out how to transform the raw material into fiber cheaply and his discovery will make him rich, unless perchance he disposes of it prematurely to the capitalist, who commonly devours the fruits of a poor man's inventions. Let the proper contrivance for the purpose be once rendered available, and immediately the raising of ramie will become one of the foremost agricultural industries of this country, as well as abroad."

#### How the Chinese Emperor Was Chosen.

The state of affairs in China which led to the placing of the present emperor upon the throne was a very peculiar one. When the throne was left vacant by death nearly twenty years ago there was no direct heir to the succession, and the two dowager empresses—one of them the mother of the deceased emperor's father—undertook the regency. With them rested the power of choosing who should be the next emperor; and, instead of selecting one of the brothers of the emperor lately dead, they appointed an infant son of Prince Ch'un, one of those brothers. The elder of the two empresses was considerably older than the younger, was rather stupid, and had never borne any children. She had been the original empress, the younger one being only a secondary wife; but the latter had had a male child—namely the deceased emperor referred to—and had been for that reason promoted to full royal consideration. She, the younger one, was a very remarkable woman, and it is to be presumed that her object in choosing an infant nephew for emperor was that she might be able during his minority to be in fact the ruler of the land. This result was accomplished and up to within two years of the present time, when the emperor came of age, she has governed with a sagacity that has excited the admiration of the civilized world. Even now her power and influence are very great in the control of affairs. She has had not a little to contend with during her regency, inasmuch as the anomaly of a reigning sovereign having a father living has been productive of many inconveniences difficult to get over. Obviously, the forms of respect which Chinese law and custom prescribe for a son toward his father could not but clash with the obedience due from the subject to the monarch.—[Washington Star.

#### Saved by His Wife's Ready Wit.

The Rev. Dr. Clinton Locke, the popular Episcopal clergyman of Chicago, made a bad break the other day, but was helped out by the quick wit of his wife.

On the day in question he saw a lady about to call whom he was anxious not to meet. So he said to his wife: "Now, I'm off, my dear. I'll run upstairs and escape till she goes away." After about an hour he quietly tiptoed to the stair landing and listened. All was quiet below. Reassured, he began to descend, and while doing so, he thoughtlessly but emphatically called out over the balustrade:

"Well, my dear, has that old bore gone at last?"

The next instant a voice from below caused the perspiration to bedew his ministerial brow and rooted him to the spot. There came a response which sounded inexpressibly sweet to him just then. It was the voice of his wife, who with true womanly tact, replied:

"Yes, darling, she went away over an hour ago, but here is our good friend, Mrs. Blank, who I am sure you want to meet."—[Cleveland Plain Dealer.