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PRACTICAL QUESTIONS ABOUT ILLUSTRATIONS.

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Note.—This article is addressed primarily to young pastors who are beginning their life work. Previous articles have been devoted to the more vital elements of preaching today.—A. W. B.

The popular effectiveness of a spoken sermon depends largely upon its illustrations. The value of the sermon, under God, depends upon the spiritual power of the messenger and of his message, but the effectiveness of a strong man of God with a timely message may be largely lost because the sermon lacks human interest, whereas the absence of a commanding personality and of a spiritual message may apparently be atoned for by the skilful use of illustrations. All of this is doubly true in preaching to the multitude, and so the pastor should become adept in the fine art of using illustrations.

But is it true that the popular effectiveness of your preaching depends largely upon such ability, which at best is but secondary? A careful review of your sermons for the past year should enable you to answer your question affirmatively; and a casual study of other men's sermons, as written in books, should strengthen your conclusion. Who were the most effective preachers in the days of old? The prophets and the apostles, and the greatest of all was the Lord Jesus, Whom the common people heard most gladly, and not least because He was the world's one perfect Master of the art of illustration. Those other popular preachers, from Isaiah and Ezekiel to Peter and Paul, were like their Master in this respect, as

well as in others vastly more important. Here is an opportunity for a new piece of constructive Bible study.

In the history of the Church, who have been the most effective preachers to the common people? Chrysostom and Augustine, Peter the Hermit and Bernard of Clairvaux, Luther and Knox, Chalmers and Guthrie, Bossuet and Bourdaloue, Whitefield and Spurgeon, Parker and Jowett, Palmer and Hoge, Beecher and Talmage, Finney and Moody, Chapman and Sunday. No two of these men were alike in their preaching, but each of them in his own way was a master of the art of illustration. John Knox, for example, was notable for his martial figures. Here is another inviting field for research.

Turn now to your books, and cull out the volumes of sermons representing the most effective preachers. In addition to certain of those named above, your list may run somewhat as follows: Brooks, Robertson, Maclaren, Clow, Morrison, Law, J. D. Jones, Watkinson, McNeill, Stone, Burrell, Shannon, Truett, Vance. A few of these may not appeal to you, at least they do not to me, but these men have been effective preachers, and to no small degree because they have been masters of the art of illustration.

The most effective speaking that I have heard of late was by President C. F. Wishart, of Wooster College, Moderator of the Presbyterian Church, U. S. A. He was addressing the Presbyterian Council of Columbus at a dinner for men, showing us how the history of the Church verifies our claims for Jesus Christ. Stressing the small beginnings of the Church, as reflected in the meager allusions in contemporary literature, our orator led us step by step to the mountain peaks of emotion, where we thanked God for his personal testimony to the faith of our fathers as it centers in our divine Redeemer and Lord.

The immediate effect was tremendous, and it was due, I believe, not only to Dr. Wishart's personality and speaking power, as well as to his message, but also to his illustrations, without which he might have lost many of us in his rapid strides from mountain peak to mountain peak of church history and Chris-

tian experience. With a glint of humor now and then, followed by a touch of pathos; with an allusion to Macbeth and a quotation from Matthew Arnold; with an experience from his pastorate in Pittsburgh and another from his seminary professorship; but with never a "canned anecdote" and never a trite saying culled from Bartlett's Quotations—he captured our eyes and our hearts and he held them more and more throughout sixty minutes of hard thinking and of increasing hope for the future of the Church.

I have no notes of that address, for I did not think of using it as grist, but I remember it all, in substance, and especially the two outstanding illustrations, that of the pyramid and that of the tree. You and I have never seen the pyramids, but we know that they are there. If we did not, we should doubt the written accounts of the ways in which they must have been built. "Impossible!" we should cry. "Perhaps so," would be the quiet rejoinder, "perhaps so, theoretically, but there stand the pyramids!" And so an effective reply to those who question the truthfulness of the old, old story is to point to the visible evidence, "There stands the Church!"

But the Church is not like a pyramid, broad at the base and tapering as it rises towards the peak. The Church is rather like a tree, with its small beginnings, apparently inconsequential. Who would ever expect an oak to grow from an acorn? But that is God's way. It is no wonder, after all, that the beginnings of the Church attracted almost no attention from the world; and that the growth of the Church has astounded that same world, for ever at work in the Church is the almighty power of God. And so the address closed with a tender, moving appeal for us all to preach and teach and live the glorious gospel of our Risen Lord.

When an ordinary pastor, cumbered with much serving, hears an address like that, he begins to wonder whether he is called to preach or not. A man should become a better preacher after such searchings of heart; he should ask himself frankly how he can do better work day by day; and then he should do it, by the grace of God. Forgetting the things behind, he

should press on towards perfection in his preaching, looking unto Jesus. The average pastor is likely to become too pessimistic about the possibilities or even the need for improvement in his preaching. He ought to read again Phillips Brooks' tribute to the two-talent man, who always does his best, and then strives to do better, for the glory of God and the blessing of men.

Taking for granted, then, that a man's effectiveness in the pulpit depends largely upon his ability to use illustrations, and that he need not be a genius in order to become an effective preacher—how can the busy young pastor hope to excel in this part of his work? What sort of illustrations shall he use? How shall he use them? How many in a sermon? More important still, where can he find them, especially when he needs them most? These are practical questions, and my answers must be unsatisfactory, because there are almost no fixed rules in preaching. Each man must be himself, and each of his sermons must be different. One general principle, however, should prove suggestive: a good illustration calls no attention to itself. It is like a good window in your home; the better the window, the less you know that it is there.

Why Use Illustrations in Preaching?

Why do you have windows in your home? For various reasons, best understood after you have dwelt in a dark hovel. Most of these reasons have to do with light and air, and the word "illustrate" suggests the need of more light in your sermons. You do not build windows for their own sake, or primarily for ornament; as Ruskin says, you ornament construction, but do not construct ornament. In like manner you employ illustrations, not to display your ingenuity and your learning, and not to entertain your hearers, but to show them the vision of the Kingdom of God, and to lead them in doing His will upon earth.

The first practical purpose of an illustration is to make some portion of your sermon, it may be all of it, clear. You

would be amazed if you could know how many of your hearers scarcely remember your sermon until Monday morning, because they scarcely understood it. Dr. Wishart told us that after he had poured out his soul for an hour upon a mooted question, one good sister asked him which side he was on! That must have been years ago, before he mastered the art of making deep things clear.

An even more important use of illustrations is to win and to hold attention. Attention is of two sorts, voluntary and involuntary. Voluntary attention is good, but involuntary attention is better by far; in fact, you may judge your success as a speaker by the degree of involuntary attention among your hearers. Some of them will force themselves to listen, no matter how abstruse and dull you may be, and they will receive a blessing, as burden bearers ought to expect, but the persons who most need your message will listen only if you capture their hearts and hold them, without letting them know that they are being held. You ought to plan to hold the involuntary attention of every hearer. Good preaching is always interesting.

The most important reason, however, for using illustrations is to increase your effectiveness. "He that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the Word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit." Many a sermon which makes a tremendous impression at the time is scarcely remembered at the end of the week. The thorns spring up and choke it. Such a failure may be due to the spiritual state of the hearers, as Jesus says in the parable, but it may also be due to the quality of the sermon. Other things being as they should be, the sermon which becomes a power in the lives of men is the sermon which is as human in its form as it is divine in its origin; the sermon in which truth and duty are bodied forth in homely forms not too good for human nature's daily food.

One day in Columbia I was preaching on the ideal Christian home, especially as it relates to children, a theme on which I love to dwell in speaking to young folk who are fixing the ideals of many future homes. Near the close of the sermon I

told that homely tale about the time when the body of Gladstone was lying in state in Westminster Abbey, and an endless procession of men and women of high and low degree came streaming by. A humble working man, clad as he had been at his day's toil, bore in his arms his little boy, to whom he said, "Son, I want you to look upon the face of the greatest and best man that England ever saw." But the lad threw his arms round his father's neck and said, "'Ceptin' you, Dad!"

In my study I had hesitated whether to tell such a homely tale or not, for I was young, and in awe of the giants who had graced that pulpit, but I determined to run the risk, and learn whether I dared to be myself, and not an echo. The next morning I met one of our deacons, a quiet man, who has since fallen asleep, and as he grasped my hand, he said, "Pastor, I have always tried to be a good father, but yesterday morning I saw, as never before, how I ought to be to my boy what my Heavenly Father is to me. And do you know what it was in your sermon that helped me most? It was that story, 'Ceptin' you, Dad'!"

What Sort of Illustrations to Use?

"The poorest illustrations are stories," says Dr. Snowden, in his helpful book, "The Psychology of Religion." He says that such masters of illustration as Brooks and Watkinson use no stories. He must be speaking of those sentimental, goody-goody tales, some of which are known as sob-stories, and all of which you could get cheap from books prepared for preachers only. But where you get the story from the life of a man or a woman whom your hearers know and love, and where you can throw a new and pleasing light into some dark corner of your sermon, you will dare to do in this homely fashion what the giants would do in some other way. You will remember, too, that the Master was the world's greatest teller of stories.

Every preacher ought to become an expert censor of his illustrations. The late John Watson suggested that each of us prepare an Index Expurgatorius, in which he may place all

illustrations worn out through valiant service, and ready to be retired. At the head of your list you would place those sophomoric allusions to the stone cast into the middle of the pool, and to the silly girl rescued just as her frail bark is about to be hurled over the foaming rapids. You will also refrain from telling about Washington and the cherry tree.

You may be the first by whom the new are tried, but not the last to lay the old aside. And you will be careful about parading your own pet illustrations. Joseph Cook constantly referred to Lady Macbeth's washing her bloody hands, and a certain well known divine to-day almost never makes a public address outside his own pulpit without recounting with glee a most amusing incident, which begins to sound familiar after you have heard it six or eight times. Such repetition is wise only when you are repeating something tremendous, like the Commandments or the Creed.

But what sort of illustrations shall you select from your boundless store? Be sure, first of all, that every one is true, lest you gain a hearing by false pretense. Truthfulness is a matter of veracity, rather than imagination, and of accuracy, not guess work. If you relate a touching experience as your own, be sure that it happened to you, and that the fish was as large on the hook as it is in the telling. If you refer to the rings of a certain planet, be sure that you mention the proper planet. If you quote from a poet, quote from him word for word. Unless you have an unusually good memory for words, you will do well to read your quotations, and then perhaps you will use them more sparingly.

You will verify every allusion to history or science, and you will not exaggerate, learning a lesson from the Youth's Companion, which employs a master of English to verify every statement of fact before it appears in print. "Assay all things; hold fast that which is good." In your audience are persons who know the facts about any subject to which you may refer, and if you forfeit their respect by careless handling of facts known to them, you will find it hard to convince them that you are telling the truth about facts known to you. If you

tell them earthly things, and they believe not, how shall they believe if you tell them heavenly things? It would be better not to tell them so many things than to tell them things that are not true.

You will be careful, also, to employ illustrations which are interesting to your audience. If you were a peripatetic lecturer, you could hold the attention of all sorts of people by dwelling on facts of universal appeal; but since you are preaching from year to year to the same persons, you must find out what interests them and what does not. Like your Master, you must know what is in man, especially what is in these particular men and women. You must likewise know what is in their children, for when you hold the attention of growing boys and girls, in a worthy fashion, you are holding the attention of their fathers and mothers. But if you patterned after the books of sermons prepared for children, you would talk about everything save religion; and you would quote more often from Aesop than from the Bible, and tell them more tales from Hans Christian Andersen than stories about the Lord Jesus Christ. All of this would be interesting, but would it be preaching?

You will determine, again, to employ illustrations in keeping with the particular occasion. "For everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under the heaven." At a men's dinner you can do what you should not do in the pulpit; and in many a sermon, what you would never dream of doing just before the Lord's Supper. You may have a delicate sense of humor, and you may employ it in your work, but if your gleams of humor from the pulpit make it harder for some of the saints to worship God, then you will refuse to shine. Speaking broadly, your problem is to preserve the reverence and the dignity of public worship, without becoming stiff and cold. If you hesitate whether to use a particular illustration or not, do not use it until you are sure. "He that willeth to do His will shall know."

Remember that the chief purpose of every portion of your sermon is to bring your hearers closer to the goal set before them in that hour, and so you will judge this illustration or

that by its practical helpfulness. In football parlance, you will judge the success of this play or of that, not by its brilliancy and daring, but by the way in which it advances the ball. Sometimes in preaching, as in football, a particular movement is so beautiful that it calls undue attention to itself, and thus defeats its own purpose. A good illustration may be altogether too good.

A little boy was talking to his grandmother about Charles Lamb's Essays of Elia. "Do you remember the time, long ago, when papa preached about Roast Pig?" "Yes, I remember the illustration, but I do not remember the sermon; do you?" "No; but I came home and read about Roast Pig, and it's great!" That sermon had been about the Kingdom of God (Matt. 6:33), showing the folly of specializing on the by-products of life, and that illustration was intended to show that you need not burn down your house to get something to eat. "Your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." This is a message which our people needed to hear, but evidently they did not hear it that day. When a lad and his grandmother both forget such a sermon, but remember such an illustration, the preacher is not successfully seeking first the Kingdom of God.

Such a failure is often due, not to the unfitness of the illustration, but to the bungling way in which it is introduced. Jesus talked about God in terms of the mother hen and her brood, but without letting the mother hen obscure the vision of God. Watkinson could use that Dissertation upon Roast Pig to throw light upon an unfamiliar fact, but without letting his illustration outshine his sermon. He would not sound a trumpet before him when about to cast a new and pleasing light upon our pathway, but he would quietly prepare the way for his coming reference to literature or science, and then he would take us on with him towards his goal.

This English divine is not our most helpful preacher, but he is master of almost every preaching art, and he is especially gifted in handling illustrations. His method is first to state the truth which he wishes us to see, or the duty which he wishes

us to perform, and then by an illustration he shows how this principle works in daily life. He never apologizes, and he never calls our attention to what he is doing, but he does it so well that we never see how. By using the fewest, the clearest, the simplest words possible, he opens up his new window, and lets the sunlight pour into our souls.

The value of an illustration, as of a witticism, depends much upon its brevity, but it may be too brief. John Watson suggests that in speaking to persons of limited culture, and to children, one ought to go more fully into detail. For the success of an illustration usually depends upon its appeal to the heart. Study the picture words of Jesus, or even of Bushnell, and note how they speak to your heart. Note how a master preacher cultivates a wholesome variety; how he seldom says exactly what you expect; how he keeps you in suspense until his tale is told. But remember that the value of such methods, after all, depends upon whether they help you or not in making the final impression which you desire.

How Many Illustrations to Use.

Use as many as you need, and no more. There are two extremes: the modern extreme is to tie together an assorted collection of anecdotes, with only a tiny thread of thought to bind them together, like beads on a string; and then to call the thing a sermon. The older extreme was to try to banish from the sermon all things human, in the hope of making it heavenly, in the sense of the scoffer who said that preaching is using heavenly words with no earthly meaning. But between these two extremes is the method of the preacher who first decides what he wishes to accomplish, and then uses whatever materials will help him to attain his end. The present tendency, at any rate, is to use more illustrations than the fathers used.

Let the sermon seek its own illustrations, and determine the number. Be careful not to explain the obvious. If your message is clear and interesting, why attempt to make it so by

superfluous adornment? If it is already accepted by your hearers, why attempt to win their assent by indirection? But if a certain truth calls for more light, and if yonder duty is scarcely accepted, then you have a fascinating opportunity to throw upon the point in question all of the light and beauty that earth and sky afford. This is no small element in the romance of preaching.

As a general rule, with certain exceptions, you will employ only one illustration at a time, and that the best. As the lawyer said when he was congratulated upon freeing his client by means of a skilful alibi, "Yes, it was the best of all that were suggested to me." However it be in law, it is the rule in preaching that one illustration should not follow hard upon the heels of another. First state the truth in question, or explain the duty, adding an illustration, if need be, to fix it in mind and heart; then go on to something else. First drive your nail, clinch it well, but only once, and then drive another nail. "As nails well fastened are the words of the masters of assemblies."

Now and again you will employ a single dominant illustration to impress upon heart and life the entire message of the hour, being careful to keep your illustration secondary to your main purpose. If you are preaching from Matt. 28:20b, "Lo, I am with you all the days," your theme may be, "The Every-Day Jesus," and your crowning illustration may be from the life of David Livingstone in the heart of Africa, drawing from this verse the comfort and strength to support him in the long way which he was treading alone. Or if you are preaching from II Cor. 12:9, "Divine Power for Human Needs," you may tell how Spurgeon found here the way to escape from blackest despair. The best illustration, in brief, is the one which helps you to fasten in every mind and heart the message of the hour.

Where to Find Such Illustrations.

With many of us the question is not,—how many illustrations shall we use, or which one of two shall we prefer? It is rather this,—where shall we find even one? We should use more illustrations than we do, oftentimes many more, if only we knew where to find them. Perhaps the poverty of our resources in the study explains our habit in the pulpit of indulging in personalities. In a public gathering, especially if it be formal, a gentleman never needlessly drags his wife and children into the light, and he is as careful of the feelings of other women and children as he is of his own. Sometimes we wonder why we receive so few pastoral confidences; perhaps it is because our friends fear that the yearnings of their hearts will quickly be exposed to public view from the pulpit. As the old Scotch woman said to John McNeill, when she lay a-dying, “Dinna ye mak me an anecdote!” And he did not, until after she was dead.

Where then can a preacher who is also a gentleman find his illustrations, as many as he needs, and suitable? Let him turn to his Bible. Phillips Brooks says that we ought to use the Old Testament to throw light upon the New, because the two have an intimate connection. Thus we should be reviving popular love for the Bible; and we should not be starting all sorts of cross currents of thought and feeling, as we do with our frequent references to contemporary men and women, however worthy. Brooks says that we might almost as well build our houses out of green timbers, which will sprout and begin to grow. For such reasons the best preachers draw their illustrations largely from the Bible.

People who love the Bible never grow weary of learning something new about Joseph and Daniel, and people who do not know the Bible ought to expect something religious when they come to church. They can get everything save religion somewhere else, and when they come to church they ought to hear about truth and duty in religious terms. They will understand the forgiveness of sins when they see the paralytic

whom Jesus healed, and the forgiveness of wrongs when they learn about Joseph's treatment of his brethren. They will be more interested in the sins which crucified Jesus when they learn about the similar sins which sent Joseph into Egypt. And as the years go by they will grow in their love for the Christ of the Bible.

The hymn book, also, is a storehouse of illustrations. As Dr. Breed says in his good book, "The History of Hymns and Hymn Tunes," a real hymn must be scriptural, both in sentiment and in expression. In preaching from any familiar passage, therefore, why not look for the hymns which have been quarried from this rock? "Nearer, My God, to Thee," "Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah," "Abide With Me," "Tarry With Me, O My Saviour"—who does not recognize the basic Scriptures? Why not use these hymns to illustrate these passages? Would not this sort of preaching tend also to heighten the value of these hymns in the service of praise?

Missionary biography is another field abounding in living illustrations. In fact, this is often the best way to preach Missions. When I entered my first pastorate I determined to prepare a missionary sermon once a month, and I did so for half a year, but now I am striving to preach Missions every Lord's Day; to give Missions in the Church the place that salt has in the sea. Needless to say, I fail, in large measure, but still I am striving to saturate my sermons with the spirit of Missions by using missionary illustrations, whether I am preaching upon the Deity of Jesus or the Parable of the Good Samaritan.

Is the gospel still the power of God unto salvation? Let the recent history of Honolulu and of Elat give answer, not in shadowy outlines, but in living men and women. What is forgiveness of wrongs? Look back upon Bakumba in Montreal, and tell how she came to be there. Read the biographies of Chalmers and Mackay, of Judson and Mackenzie, of Mary Slessor and Christina Forsyth, of the growing host of heroes and heroines; use their experiences to throw light upon many a misunderstood truth, such as total depravity, and many a

neglected privilege, such as sacrificial giving, and you will find a new power and a new joy in your preaching.

Here is a missionary illustration for your next sermon on Prayer. The Christian Science Monitor in October devoted a special article to Mary Slessor, and the memorial window recently unveiled in her honor in the Dundee Art Gallery. This article quotes the following from a letter written by her to an old friend in Dundee, for inclusion in his book, "Our Faithful God: Answers to Prayer."

"My life is one long, daily, hourly record of answered prayer. For physical health, for mental overstrain, for guidance given marvelously, for errors and dangers averted, for enmity to the gospel subdued, for food provided at the exact hour needed, for everything that goes to make up life and my poor service—I can testify with a full and often wonder-stricken awe that I believe God answers prayer. I have proved during long decades, while alone, so far as man's help and presence are concerned, that God answers prayer."

Turning now to other fields, each man must follow his own bent. Watkinson makes large use of science. Some of us are more at home in fiction, but we must be careful not to refer often to books unfit for growing boys and girls to read. Why do we give so much free publicity to mud and slime, such as *Main Street* and *The Inside of the Cup*? Why do we not rather encourage our young folk to read Dickens and Scott, Hawthorne and George Eliot? In *Adam Bede*, for example, we find an amazing wealth of illustrative material, and even more in "Scenes of Clerical Life."

Here again we must beware lest our illustrations call attention to themselves. A pastor visiting in a home where the daughter is a college graduate, found her reading *The Heart of Midlothian*, his favorite among the tales of Scott. He was pleased when she told him that she had determined to read up in English literature in order to follow him better in his preaching. But as the days went by he began to wonder why he did not find his people reading the Bible, in order to follow him in his preaching. And so he began to make a more

sparing use of literary allusions, while turning more often to the Bible. Is not the term "a literary preacher," after all, a misnomer?

Books of history, especially the history of the Church, afford the wise preacher many a feathered arrow. Biography is even better, because the facts about well known men and women are clear and interesting to the average man. Fortunately for us, the best books written of late are in this field. The most telling illustration of the sort of home life which should surround the growing boy came to me from the brief Memoirs of the late Dr. Jacob Henry Smith. The biographies of Thornwell and Palmer, of Hoge and Dabney, not to speak of Broadus and others, should be well known to every man who preaches in the Presbyterian Church, U. S. For example, the influence of Thornwell over his students shows something of the meaning of personality, human and divine.

A man's biographical interests should not be merely local. Every pastor should know Phillips Brooks and Henry Drummond, Queen Victoria and Helen Keller, Walter H. Page and Edward Bok. In preaching about God, one may turn to the experience of Helen Keller when Phillips Brooks told her about the Heavenly Father, and she replied that she always had known there was such a Person, but that she had never known what to call Him. Or if one is preaching about the inner satisfactions of Christian faith and hope, one may turn to those brilliant, melancholy confessions, "The Education of Henry Adams," or to the recently issued Letters of Franklin K. Lane.

The memoirs of Henry Morgenthau, "All in a Life-Time," contain two notable tributes to the value of Missions. Mr. Morgenthau was our Ambassador to Turkey under President Wilson, and what he says about our mission work is all the more remarkable because he is not a Christian, but a Hebrew, and because he frankly confesses that prior to 1913, when he began to be familiar with the facts, he attached small importance to Christian Missions. Mr. Taft has made a similar

confession about his change of opinion after he saw what the Christian Church is doing in the Philippines.

Time would fail me even to name the other fields in which the busy pastor may find his illustrations, but apart from the Bible, the best of them all is the home parish. The worthy pastor is a good listener, and a still better seer. If he lives in the country, he loves to talk about God in terms of the flowers and the birds, as Jesus did. And even if he dwells in the city, he finds that many of his people were born in the country, and that nearly all of them love the green earth and the open sky. So he helps them by speaking of the common things that round them lie, by pointing out the unfamiliar aspects of the most familiar things; by finding tongues in trees, sermons in stones, books in the running brooks, and good in everything.

Many a pastor, however, is like Paul, a city man, who drew his illustrations almost wholly from city life. He talked of the athletic games and of the court room, of the temple and of other city buildings. And so will you make much of what the artists style local color. In a certain city the best piece of architecture is the Public Library, which bears across its portals this inscription, "My treasures are within." The most prominent statue on the State House Grounds shows the massive figures of the greatest sons of the State, and bending over them is a symbolic figure, with an inscription, "These are my jewels." In preaching on the theme, "What Are You Laying Up for Your Children?" (II Cor. 12:14d), a local pastor turned to these inscriptions for his local color, saying that, under God, the welfare of the State rests not in the hands of her dead heroes, but of her boys and girls; and that, under God, our hope for building a better world is in making better men and women.

How to Find Illustrations Quickly.

When a man comes to Saturday noon and sits staring blankly at two uninteresting sermons, what can he do? If he were

a genius, he might do what a genius does, and if he were a fool, he might strive to do it anyway, but since he is a two-talent man, he knows that he could find illustrations more easily if he understood exactly what to illustrate. And so he wishes that he had begun his preparations early in the week and long before. If he has been doing God's will with his time, he quietly trusts God to increase the light of the tiniest candle, but he learns anew that ordinarily time is of the essence of his contract in preaching. God gives him time to prepare his sermons; his people give him time; and he should give himself time. What else is his time for?

But this is not the whole difficulty. Some of us have wasted many weary hours, filled with worry and fear, while vainly searching for ways to open up windows into dark corners of our sermons, and we have resolved to accumulate such materials at our leisure, however laboriously. So we have resorted to our scissors and envelopes, with all sorts of patent indexes, only to discover at last that weary builders lose their pains. As Dr. Kelman says, the longer a man preaches the less he relies upon that sort of thing, because it takes too much time, it is sheer drudgery, and it is too mechanical. Doubtless he would say that it is better to learn where to look for illustrations when you need them, and then to pluck them fresh from the garden, while the dew is still gleaming.

The best way, perhaps, is to let your illustrations find you; to begin working upon your sermon long before you expect to preach it, and then to let it grow in peace, while you are busy about other things. In your parish work, and in your reading, whenever you find anything which belongs in this corner of your garden, transplant it and let it grow, until at last you have growing there so many things of beauty, large and small, that you must begin to select those which you can use, leaving the others for a rainy day. You will greatly enjoy the results of this kind of horticulture, and so will your people.

I might go on with suggestions more or less practical, but I have written enough to remind you that no one else can tell

you how to preach, or even how to use illustrations. Only **the** Spirit of God can do that. Perhaps I ought to confess **that** for years I have been increasingly conscious of my own **limita-**tions here, and if any of you are disheartened by reason of the ideals which I have been setting up, I am your **sympa-**thetic friend, because of the things which I have suffered **in** my quest for the better way. But I am learning, I **trust**, that all such gifts are from above, and that they are **given** freely to those who will use them for the glory of God. **The** Spirit of God is waiting to guide you and me into the **vision** of the light and the truth that we ought to see and to **love**, that we may become more and more like the Lord Jesus, **Who** in the days of His flesh was the Ideal Preacher.