

We commenced this story with a beautiful empty tomb in the King's dale. Let us now think for a moment concerning the vacant tomb in Joseph's garden. The first tomb speaks of wrecked ambition, but the second speaks of glorious triumph. The first speaks of one who sought to exhault himself, and the second of one who humbled himself.

Again and again the Master had need to rebuke his disciples for self-seeking spirit. When he was asked who is greatest in the kingdom of heaven, he set in the midst of them a little child, and said, whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest.

This same spirit was present at the institution of the Lord's Supper. There was strife among them as to who was the greatest. It is a sad sight when within a family group there is such selfishness.

Matt. 20:26-28 presents the story of a mother who made a petition to Jesus for one son to sit on his right hand, the other on his left, Jesus did not condemn the spirit of ambition, but he pointed out what would make a person truly great. It is proper that people should have ambition, and this mother, grasping for power, perhaps in her request was really being selfish.

Selfishness causes sin and sorrow and disturbance. The request of these sons had no regard for other people's rights. Only thinking of self, this was largely the sin committed in the garden of Eden, and also by Cain.

Christianity is always unselfishness. The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister. It is not the talents one has that makes him great, however brilliant,--it is not shining social qualities, it is not the accumulation of wealth. This is not God's standard of measuring. All power is to be used in ministering to others. Paul said, "I am debtor both to the Greeks and to the barbarians". Moses and Abraham and all of the great men of the Bible, are spoken of as servants. Man's unselfish service exhaults him, but selfishness is despised and rejected.

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THE VACANT TOMB II Sam. 18:18

Intro: All kinds of tombs and shrines have been erected. Across the Potomac River from Washington, D. C., stands a magnificent temple, erected by Masons in memory of George Washington. This country is literally covered with monuments and statues, memorializing individuals.

At Crew, Va., is a little monument, or marker, which signifies the resting place of Lottie Moon.

On the battlefield of Saratoga stands a great monument, memorial. Around the base are bronze generals who commanded there during the American revolution. In the first niche stands Gates, in the second Schuyler, in the third, Morgan, in the fourth, it stands empty. The soldier who won fame, forfeited his right to be remembered. Below the empty spot is a name. And you might see this young officer leading in the battle of Quebec and charging the British line, and yet see him on the Hudson making a bargain with Satan. Then go to London and find an old man dying, friendless, homesless, and Godless,--Benedict Arnold a hero and a traitor.

Here is another beautiful, unoccupied, monument. As we consider Absalom.

I. Why was this tomb built

1. Out of a natural desire to be remembered. If we know the large amount of space is given to the life and conduct of Absalom, this is in order that men might learn of these bold characters. This was natural for Absalom, perhaps the same desire that all people have. *Not to be forgotten*

as soon as laid in dust

II. 2. To preserve self.

Some seem to think it was erected following the death of his three children in infancy and probably their mother also. It is

It is dangerous to let our purpose be self. Absalom had a definite end in view. He wanted to be famous in life and remembered in his death. But this tomb was never occupied.

This drive leads to unworthy endeavour.

Hayes's Tomb Stone "He fought a good fight but this is no good deed"

No young person should be discouraged from entertaining the highest ambitions. There is no reason why some of the highest places in this nation should not be occupied by young people out of this congregation. They should make their aim as high as possible.

Absalom treated everybody,--even his own father, as a means to an end. His aim was to glorify and exalt himself. and the costly pillar was erected. Men of high quality and highly gifted climb to great heights. The main ambition that we should have is to rear a character which would be worthy of men's trust. People are ruined because of selfish aim. So there stands a pile of stones in the woods of Ephraim.

II. Why was this tomb vacant?

1. A lost feeling of sonship

Absalom was destitute of any feeling whatsoever of his obligation to his parents. He did not honor his father or his mother, but went against his father in taking up arms. Thus we see again the promise of God, being true and sure concerning the commandment to honor his father and mother.

2. A perversion of talent.

He used his eloquence and every faculty of his nature in scheming and in dark plans. He resolved to get rid of all authority. His royal father must be dethroned. For a while it seemed that he was succeeding.

The great misfortune of many a life has been the want of a aim. Absalom possessed talent and gifts but he had no well defined objective. A real purpose in life stirs ones talents and martials all of his powers. Thousands are drifting aimlessly. When high purpose takes possession of a man, he has real defense against evil habits which waste his powers.

Such a purpose enables a man to endure hardness and cheers him on to sacrifices. Napoleon is a noble model, as a student in the military school, he gave himself to studies. He separated himself from those companions whose habits interfered with his purpose.

3. Absalom, an irreverence.

He was first of all not reverent toward himself. He was ambitious still, a great place in life, but even a greater place in his death. He had no reverence for himself. Esau is the chief example of a man, who lost all thought of reverence. He is described as a profane person. Nothing was sacred to him,--not even his own birthright. His appetite was above all else.

Absalom had no reverence for others. For their rights and their feelings and their sufferings, he was unconcerned.

Absalom broke the father's heart of his father,--drove him from his capital, cast a whole nation under the fear of civil war.

Had no respect for anything except his own feelings and his own desires. We will see later that in Ephraim woods, there was none to comfort him or give a farewell message,--he was the loneliest man in all the world. He is like a coffin,--room for himself and no one else. He wanted to claim both worlds as his empire. How different it would have been if he had had a little bit of religion and had tried to seek first the kingdom of God.

Roger Babson told about one of his friends, who started out as a young man with the object of making enough money to retire and then to spend the rest of his life in leisure. He started at the bottom, worked hard; soon became an important executive of his company. He married, and finally the day came when he had enough money so that he and his wife could retire. The couple planned a trip to Europe and intended to be gone 2 years, but 6 months later they returned home. The friend told Dr. Babson what had happened. "I've spent my best years exclusively in making money. I cannot be charged with dishonesty, but I've left the better things of life entirely out. I've had no time for religion, friends, such things I thought could wait. When the day of retirement finally came, I discovered that I could enjoy riches alone, and I am sadly disappointed."

Dr. Chalmers, a marvelous spirit, spent much of his time going through alleys and lanes with groups of ragged children clinging to him, as he gathered them to train for their benefit.

Gladstone, who wrestled with problems of his day, was unselfish with his life. Would go to poorest section of his community that he might read for them God's word and pray for them.

The celebrated painter, J. W. Turner, was designated as a member of the hanging committee for exhibition at the royal academy. All of the wall space had been assigned and it was discovered that a painting submitted by an unknown artist had been overlooked. Mr. Turner insisted that the picture be shown; but the members of the committee were unwillingly to make the necessary adjustment. Mr. Turner waited until his committee had left the gallery. He then moved one of his beautiful paintings and in its place hung the picture that had been overlooked. This was just the opposite of Absalom's spirit.

In the cemetery in Savannah, Ga., there is a monument which reads, "Dr. George L. Touchton, 1824-1949. He longest lives, who most to others gives, himself forgetting" This beautiful monument witnesses to the affection of a beloved physician. He lived not for himself but for others.

Day by day his tender mercy,
Healing, helping, full and free,
Sweet and strong, and ah! so patient,
Brought me lower, while I whispered,
"Less of self, and more of thee?"

Higher than the highest heavens,
Deeper than the deepest sea,
Lord, thy love at last hath conquered;
Grant me now my soul's desire,—
"None of self, and all of thee!"

—THEODORE MONOD

IV. The final resting place of Absalom.

Branches always stretch out—Absalom was cut down from the limb of an Oak tree. *His much admired gets tangled. Hook's judgement always reaches out to catch up with us*

He was cast into a great pit. How different from the way Absalom had planned. He planned that his death had a great parade and speeches. But he is cast like a dead dog into a pit in the forest, that is covered with stones, there is no one to mourn his passing except his broken hearted father. Instead of a monument, we have a great heap of stones.

The wicked are cut off — only enduring order is Kingdom of God

Wailing — wailing of truth —