

**Memorial Service held at Wesley's Chapel, City Road, London
on Wednesday, 17th November, 1943**

Speaker: The Rev. Luke Wiseman.
Readings from: Psalm 23.
Gospel According to St. John, Chapter 14.
Revelation of St. John the Divine, Chapter 7.

ADDRESS:

The passage of scripture that has been in my mind that will refer to very few but refers most closely and aptly to your friend and my old friend, Joseph Rank, is 'So he died in a good old age, full of days, riches, and honour,' and I think that so aptly sets forth the life, the character, and the work of Joseph Rank. He was in old age — had he lived a few days more the first digit would have been turned and from being 80 he would have been 90. The Psalmist said 70, or if you are very strong, 80. Joseph Rank said, "Yes, but the Lord gave me 90 and gave me work to do," for right up to the end of his days he was at his work, and we remember the line of the hymn that sometimes we quote: 'that you should lay down your work and your life together.'

I do not know how you feel, but getting myself to the end of my days I thank God our friend was enabled to go on with his work so long in such strength of mind right away to the end and haleness of body also, and laid down his life with his work. "Oh, may I triumph so. When all my conflict's passed and dying find my latest foe under my foot at last." But was it a foe? That is just a little bit of the Old Testament of man's thoughts that come into the New. No, our friend did not find death his foe. It was rather a sleep, which is the New Testament word, you will remember: 'Our Brother Lazarus sleepeth,' and now there is the awakening to the endless life, the Eternal life, which was his for scores of years, whilst he was upon earth, and is now enjoying to a greater fullness in a nearer approach to God, His Heavenly Father and his glorious and beloved Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Joseph Rank was, of course, a remarkable man. No—one who knew him in those earlier days to which I have referred could hesitate a moment in respect of that. There was a great personality. He was endowed with exceptional — quite exceptional — business ability, and it was united with his Yorkshire shrewdness and it made him a character that one liked to know, and from small beginnings, by his business ability, his shrewdness, his integrity, his diligence, and his remarkable will—power, he was able to build up one of the largest milling organisations in the world, and I remember having read that at the time of the last war Joseph Rank said that he was able to feed one in every seven in the British Isles, and that he did something to keep the price of wheat down, for which, if that be true — and he would not have said it if it were not — then the great multitude of the people ought to give thanks that such a life was given to them and such a man was at the head of affairs just at that time. And I suppose he was one of the wealthiest of men at that time, and I am not going to say he 'was entirely free from the Englishman's failing of love for money, but I will tell you what I can say, he did not let money be his master. He was always the master of his money and he did not allow that money to be spent lavishly upon himself. From early life he came to the deep conclusion that if God was to give him wealth, then he would devote a considerable part of his substance to the work of God and to the advancement of the interests of the Church of Christ and the preaching of the gospel in the world, and what he has done in that way no-one can compute. We only know that with reference, for instance, to the Forward Movement in Methodism which he embraced in his younger days - the Forward Movement dates from 60 years ago and of which he was a great supporter, he enabled the Methodist Conference to place in what has now become, I suppose, about fifty of the large towns of England, large, well—designed halls (not Churches, notice that word please) for this express purpose, that he

made up his mind that what he ought to do was to see that that word of the Saviour was fulfilled as far as he could do it — that he came to preach the Gospel to the poor and to those who were cast out and outside the Churches. The Forward Movement of Methodism was a great effort, a well-designed effort, to bring the outsiders in to hear the Gospel of Christ.

There was then an aversion from the Church for other reasons possibly than to-day, and consequently what was done was to make up a kind of half-away house, and instead of building a Church to build a hall, which I might say was a sort of open air with a roof on from the standpoint of the people, and the people flocked to these halls in the early days. Of course I remember it from the very first — they flocked to the halls, and hardly was a great hall erected than at the Sunday evening service it was crowded to the doors. It was just one illustration of that which I think is perhaps the Glory of his life that he said, 'Well, if I am not endowed with powers of speech that are likely to move the multitude, at any rate I will see that those whom God calls for that special work shall have the best opportunity that I can give them,' and it is thousands upon thousands upon thousands - I know what I am talking about - who have heard the word preached in the halls, and it is hundreds upon hundreds, who have under the influence of the services that were held in our great halls, yielded themselves to the Lord Jesus Christ and become useful citizens of the Great British Empire.

I have been with Joseph Rank chiefly, of course, in what I might call his Missionary and Church activities and I have heard him speak as Chairman of great meetings all over the country. Anything more moving for its humility and modesty, as well as for its conviction, I have never listened to in life. He would depart quite frequently from what you could call the Chairman's address and say that as there were other speakers, what he would do was to tell the story of his own conversion, and then followed a moving story of how he was led to simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

He was greatly afflicted by what was in his youth a frequent doctrine — the doctrine of predestination. I think the word itself — pre destination — will show pretty clearly what is in one's mind. That doctrine that the salvation that is wrought in Christ Jesus is for a certain number called 'the elect', and that as for the others who are not elect, they will go their own way and suffer the fate of their own sins.

Joseph Rank as a young fellow in his teens felt that that could not really represent the God whom he could serve. It was therefore his way to turn to a Methodist Church for the Methodists are supposed to have, and have, another teaching concerning the Redemption that is in Christ Jesus, and that teaching is now universal throughout England, and if I were to sum it up in two lines of Charles Wesley's, I should put it better than in any words of my own: "For all my Lord was crucified, For all, for all my Saviour died,' and Joseph Rank said that is my belief, and if there is a salvation at all it must be purposed for every man, and if one would put his faith in that One who has offered himself for us all, then surely he would come to the favour of God. And now Joseph Rank did come to a very clear sense of the forgiveness of his sins and an assurance that unworthy though he was — as we all are unworthy, of such great honour, nevertheless it was a spiritual fact he was a child of God, and to that God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ he dedicated his life and He saved him from the great snare of getting rich. — 'If riches increase set not your heart upon them.' Don't let them master you, don't let them affect your pride and your self—indulgence, and your love for display, but, on the other hand, do good with that which comes to you and see to it that it is multiplied and bringing in 30, 60, and 100 fold of increase because it is spent so wisely in connection with the Kingdom of God.

You men who are here this afternoon, you might not perhaps believe it as fully as I believe it myself, but I think Saint Paul was right in speaking about the distribution of wealth and the communication and fellowship one with another in the things of money, in saying what had happened amongst the generous people was this - that the whole gift had abounded in thanksgivings to God, and I do not know how many millions of thanksgivings to God have risen up to Heaven in the 60 years I have known him as a result of the determination that he made and the work he did. The thanksgivings have gone up to God and have done something to keep Great Britain sweet. Is there any follower, anyone who is going to follow him in this way, and would it not be the very best memorial of one whose life has been so remarkable in

that one quality of liberality and generosity, if someone were to say, 'I think I should like that way myself'? He came to a good old age, full of days, riches and honour, for we do honour his memory, the single-hearted servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, who in a very remarkable manner showed England what can be done with wealth, for it was not only the Church, it was other good causes that appealed to him, and especially the poor. Before he left Hull he left £300,000 in Trust in Hull for the benefit of the poor and of certain others, specifying what was intended by the gift. It is characteristic. He saw and he did.

Our boasting is this, said St. Paul, speaking of himself, that in simplicity, single-heartedness and Godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom but by the Grace of God, I had manner of life in the World.

God be praised for the life and work of Joseph Rank.