

Inspirational Word Gifts from Mrs. Stanford

The breathtakingly beautiful Stanford Memorial Church in CA contains twenty-eight inspirational sayings from the founder of the university, Mrs. Jane Stanford. Collected over the years from many sources, Mrs. Stanford had these enclosed in intricately carved stone frames and placed on the walls and various other locations throughout the church.

These words of wisdom represent her religious faith and convictions. She desired to share them with all who would enter this beautiful church. They are definitely worth pondering. The original authors of these inscriptions are unknown although some have speculated that some originated with Mrs. Stanford herself.

Here are a few of these inspirational inscriptions. A reflection on the inscription is contained below.

On the North Wall

"There is no narrowing so deadly as the narrowing of man's horizon of spiritual things. No worse evil could befall him in his course on earth than to lose sight of Heaven. And it is not civilization that can prevent this; it is not civilization that can compensate for it. No widening of science, no possession of abstract truth, can indemnify for an enfeebled hold on the highest and central truths of humanity. *'What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?'* [Mark 8:37, Matthew 16:26].

"A noble ambition is among the most helpful influences of student life, and the higher this ambition is, the better. No man can work well unless he can speak as the Great Master did of the joy set before Him."

Reflection:

The author obviously had Hebrews 12:2 in mind, *Jesus...for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

Jesus had a goal. He endured the cross knowing that joy - the saving of our souls - would be the result. On His way to the cross, He told His disciples that His pain and suffering would be so that *"My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full"* (John 15:11). In the parable of the talents in Matthew 25, those who were faithful stewards were told to *enter into the joy of your master.*

There was no higher ambition than our Lord's. He invites us to share in His work and His joy.

On the Wall of the East Clerestory

"The world is new to every soul when Christ has entered into it."

Reflection: How true it is that *if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new* (2 Corinthians 5:17). This may be the truest test of a Christian. We shed our sin and keep shedding it daily as God reveals it to us. We get a new start. We strive to be conformed to the image of Christ. We see the world with new eyes.

"The highest service may be prepared for and done in the humblest surroundings. In silence, in waiting, in obscure, unnoticed offices, in years of uneventful unrecorded duties, the Son of God grew and waxed strong."

Reflection: God sees. God knows. God cares. There is nothing done for Him that He does not notice.

On the Walls of the East Transept

"God knows what His Children want before they ask, but it proves their faith in Him to pray for what they want."

Reflection: God is sovereign, can do and does do His will. What a blessing that He wants to use us to participate in it.

"A man may have great intelligence and yet have nothing of the Christ life within him."

Reflection: We will not be judged by our worldly knowledge, but our relationship with Christ.

Before he became a Christian, the apostle Paul was highly regarded by others and himself. He had much confidence in His standing: *circumcised the eighth day of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.*

He didn't lose his intelligence when he met Jesus on the road to Damascus. He just redirected it to the cause of Christ. *But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord...that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death...(Philippians 3:5-10).*

Before His conversion, He was a man of great intelligence and had nothing of Christ in him. After His conversion, His greatest desire was to *know Him*. One of his favorite expressions was "in Christ."

"Therefore, I have reason to glory in Christ Jesus in the things which pertain to God" (Romans 15:17).

Below the Pulpit and the Lectern

"It is by suffering that God has most nearly approached to man; it is by suffering that man draws most nearly to God."

Reflection: Any suffering born subject to the will of God and trusting in His mercy, goodness and love helps us identify with His precious Son. Like Jesus, *for the joy that is set before us*, it is worth it.