

J Sheatsley

Sermons on the Eisenach Gospels



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"The history of the Church confirms and illustrates the teachings of the Bible, that yielding little by little leads to yielding more and more, until all is in danger; and the tempter is never satisfied until all is lost. – Matthias Loy, *[The Story of My Life](#)*

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SERMONS
ON
THE EISENACH GOSPELS

By REV. J. SHEATSLEY, D. D.

SECOND EDITION



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FOREWORD

THESSE sermons were prepared for publication at the request of the Publication Board. It may be proper to state that they are the fruit of three annual efforts of study and preaching through the entire series, once in St. Mark's Church, Delaware, Ohio, and twice in Christ Church, Columbus, Ohio. Whatever the worth of these sermons may therefore be, it cannot be said that they were "shaken out of the sleeve." Next to declaring the whole counsel of God, the aim was to make them plain, direct and practical.

May the Lord of the Church bless them to the eternal glory of His great name.

THE AUTHOR.

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FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT

LUKE 1: 68-79

Blessed *be* the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us, in the house of his servant David; As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began: That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; To perform the mercy *promised* to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; The oath which he sware to our father Abraham, That he would grant unto us, that we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life. And thou, child, shalt be called the Prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord, to prepare his ways; To give knowledge of salvation unto his people, by the remission of their sins, Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, To give light to them that sit in darkness and *in* the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.

WE enter today upon a new church year. May it be for us another blessed year! May the Word of God, in all its gracious power, be abundantly proclaimed among us, and the blessed sacraments savingly administered.

The design of the church year is to live and work through all the great truths and facts of man's redemption and salvation. If you desire to prepare yourself for some new business in life, you would need to learn about it. Your great business is to live Christian lives. The church year gives you instruction in this great work. It sets before you in their order the great historical facts and the saving truths of redemption, and admonishes you to make them your own.

The church year is divided into two parts, the festival half and the non-festival half. In the festival half are set forth the great redemptive acts, namely, the birth of Christ, His circumcision, His suffering, death, resurrection, ascension and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. In the non-festival part of the year the great truths of redemption and salvation,

based upon the historical facts, are more fully brought out and applied for the conversion of men and for their edification in Christ.

The festival part of the church year begins with the Advent season. Advent means "coming" and it refers to the coming of Christ. It is a season of preparation on the part of His people. "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." This preparation must begin with true repentance, "Repent ye," was the cry of the Baptist. But it is repentance unto forgiveness of sin, and hence the very keynote of this preparation is joy. "Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say, Rejoice." For the people who "sit in darkness and in the shadow of death" see a light above the horizon, even the "Sun of righteousness" arising with healing in His wings.

This rejoicing we find beautifully expressed in the *Benedictus*, Zacharias' song of thanksgiving at the circumcision of his son. It starts the church year in the right way, intoning the dominant note of hopefulness and joy. We shall find, too, that the contents of the song are thoroughly practical, touching our every-day life and experience. In this

SONG OF ZACHARIAS

We find, first, Lively expectation; secondly, Heartfelt thanksgiving; thirdly, Strong faith.

1. *Lively expectation*: The people of Israel expected a Messiah; their covenant God had promised Him and the prophets had foretold His coming. But Israel had gone wrong and had become worldly, as is the mass of people today. They dreamed of a Messiah after their own heart, who would set up an earthly kingdom and restore again the splendor of the Jewish monarchy. The Jews of that day were by no means free from the strong trend of human nature to choose the pleasures of a material life, rather than the joys of the spiritual world.

Nevertheless there was a remnant at that time, whose heart had not departed from the Lord. These persons had a truer conception of the person and work of the promised

Messiah. The trend of their heart was spiritual. Not money, nor pleasure, nor power was the object of their ambition, but to discover and lay hold of the good things of God and of His kingdom. It had not been fully revealed just how the Messiah would come, nor how His work would be done; but there were men who were spiritually inclined, and therefore they could discern spiritual things. The lover of nature sees beauty in the flowers by the roadside, while the miser finds pleasure only in the gold that glitters. Through the spiritually minded persons the Holy Spirit could speak and reveal more fully the character of the coming Messiah. Such an one was the aged Simeon who was "just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him." At the presentation of Jesus in the temple, Simeon took the child up in his arms and said, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel."

Such a person also was Zacharias of our lesson. He was a priest and with his wife Elizabeth walked "in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless." That he with great expectation scanned the spiritual horizon is clearly seen in his song of thanksgiving, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David." He was expecting great things from the promises made to his fathers. As a God-fearing priest Zacharias had carefully studied the Law and the Prophets; he had done this too in the spirit of faith and humility and therefore he had discovered their true spiritual meaning. He was seeking the great things of God as a naturalist may seek God in the things of nature. But the object of greatest interest and longing for him was the promise of the Savior and the realization of that promise in his own lifetime.

However, there was something else here which must not be overlooked. The divine promise alone does not ex-

plain the eager waiting of a Zacharias, or of a Simeon, or of an Anna. The same promise was given alike to all Israel, yet few hearts were greatly moved by it. There was something lacking on the part of the mass of the people, namely, a knowledge and sense of sin and of their lost condition. Either the people of Israel were altogether worldly-minded and did not consider their spiritual interest, or else they believed themselves already righteous and in no need of a Savior. In Zacharias we find neither the one nor the other. He was not a man of the world, but spiritual and heavenly minded, for he was righteous and walked in the ways of God blameless; but neither was he self-righteous, for he knew that his walk was not perfect, that he was a sinner and needed a Savior. While the mass of the people therefore expected nothing or at most an earthly monarch, Zacharias looked for a Messiah who would heal the soul and satisfy its spiritual longings.

These are marks which we should find in ourselves. We have entered upon a new church year. What is today the thought of our heart, its inclination, its expectation? In the joyous season that is rapidly approaching, is it the earthly, the transient, the merely social, the pleasures of the flesh that chiefly interest us? Is it to be only a jolly season of conviviality, sobered with a little human sympathy and passing help for the unfortunate? Is this not a correct characterization of the holiday season as it is observed in the world about us, without speaking of the license and the orgies into which its festivities often sink?

But we are not of the world; we are the children of light, let us walk therefore in the light. Learn of Zacharias how to prepare rightly for this joyous but holy season. He was righteous and feared God and walked in all His commandments and ordinances blameless. But that did not suffice for him. He could boast of an upright life and of faithfulness in his calling. But that was not enough. For him the whole human race was like a caravan lost in the desert and overtaken by night. What eager waiting for the break of day! So here on the part of the spiritually minded, what a fixed scanning of the horizon for the dawn

of the day of redemption! As for you, the Savior has already come and you have received Him by faith. But how much of Him do you really enjoy? A man may have fine pictures in his house and yet not enjoy them; he may have little love for art and even less ability to appreciate it. You should again and again review your experience of repentance and waiting — that awful sadness of the soul when it first awakens to a knowledge of its sin and its lost condition — so that you may not forget what great things the Lord has done for you, and that there may be awakened a desire for a still greater measure of the grace and power of Christ. Without this sense of need there will be no blessed Advent for you, no right waiting for the Savior, and no thanksgiving that the time of His coming is at hand. But this brings us to the second part of our subject, namely, in the song of Zacharias we find also:

2. *Heartfelt thanksgiving*: The occasion was the circumcision of the child John. It was a most joyous occasion for Zacharias; his heart was full to overflowing. One is reminded of the happy birds in springtime after the long dreary winter. Long had Zacharias waited. At times he may have thought that God had forsaken him and his people. Moreover his own home was sad and lonely, for the Lord had denied him the joy of children. But now, even this want of a happy home is removed. A child is given him in his old age; a child too, not only for earthly, but above all for heavenly comfort. This child of his old age is not an ordinary child, but the prophet of the Highest, who should go before the Lord to prepare His way before Him.

Here then could be no longer any room for doubt. If the forerunner be here, then the King of peace Himself must be near; the kingdom of God must be at hand, the day of redemption dawning. All the promises made to the fathers must be in the way of fulfillment, "to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; the oath which he swore to our father Abraham." No wonder the aged priest rejoiced, for even his tongue which had been tied because of lack of faith at Gabriel's visit, was now loosed, and so became another proof of the

certainty of God's promises and of the nearness of their fulfillment.

And now, over what did Zacharias particularly rejoice? Much is indicated in his song of thanksgiving, but we cannot speak of it all. He begins with the fact that the Lord hath "visited and redeemed his people." Long was the time since God had visited His people through a prophet. Malachi was the last, and it was about four hundred years since he had declared the coming of the Messiah. This had been a trying time for faith. Has God forgotten His people, since He no more visits them by prophets and new visions and promises? But in the birth of his own son and in the miraculous conception of a virgin, Zacharias sees a new visitation of the Lord. So sure is he of the fulfillment of all the promises that he speaks in the perfect tense, as though everything were already accomplished: He *hath* visited and *hath* redeemed His people.

In this visitation Zacharias sees a "horn of salvation." The horn represents strength, is a weapon of defense and offense. So this horn in the house of David, the Messiah Himself, the great Son of David; He will strike down the foes of His people, He will redeem them from their enemies; the Seed of the woman will bruise the serpent's head. For by "enemies" here we are not to think of political enemies of the Jews such as the Romans, but of sin in all its power and agencies, as the world, the flesh and the devil.

Zacharias finds a further ground for rejoicing in this, that the Lord remembered to perform the mercy promised to the fathers. His holy covenant and the oath which He swore to Abraham: "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed," was the climax of God's promise to Abraham. That promise God did not forget, nor the oath by which it was made sure. And though the patriarchs were dead, yet Zacharias looked upon it as showing mercy to the fathers, that the promise was now to be fulfilled to their children. Jesus Himself said: "Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad." So Zacharias now rejoices that the mercy is about to be performed, the covenant maintained and the holy oath made good.

Zacharias then passed on to the consideration of the immediate fruits of the divine visitation: "That we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life." The prophet still has his eye upon his enemies, the power of sin, the weakness of the flesh, the allurements of the world, the assaults of the devil, in short, all the evil forces that have laid siege to the citadel of the soul. These are the enemies that make weak knees, lame arms, faltering steps in the life and service of Christians. But all these foes he sees driven back and scattered by the mighty arm of great David's greater Son; and he now rejoices in the prospect of himself and his people serving God more fully and freely "in holiness and righteousness" all the days of their life. The prisoner is about to be set free, with the world of privilege and opportunity before him.

How about ourselves? What do you discover as you look into the new approaching church year? Do you see assurance of new light and hope, and are you rejoicing at the prospect? The new year promises nothing new in the way of divine grace. Its message will be the same Gospel that you heard in the past year, the same faith, the same hope. But why look for something new? Has this Gospel not been tried in the fire and found to be pure gold? Do you not realize in your own experience with the Word of God and in your communion with Christ that God has visited His people, even you also; that He has raised up an horn of salvation for you; that He has pushed back your enemies; that He is remembering His promises to your fathers and is fulfilling them to you and your children; and that in the power of His grace you may if you will — and no one can keep you from it — walk before the Lord in holiness and righteousness all the days of your life?

These, friends, are the things which the new church year will offer you; and you should see them more clearly now than Zacharias did then. He saw the kingdom by looking into it with a prophetic eye, as Moses beheld Canaan from the top of Pisgah; but you have walked the blessed

land in its length and breadth; you have drunk from the stream of milk, eaten of the honey-comb and plucked some of the heavy clusters from beside the brook of Eschol. You have lived and walked with Christ, some of you these many years, and He promises to be with you again this year, and to lead you into a still more intimate acquaintance with the beauties and the treasures of His kingdom. And now lift up the song of your thanksgiving at the threshold of the new church year. The third thing we find in this song of Zacharias is:

3. *Strong faith*: "And thou, child, shalt be called the Prophet of the Highest: for, thou shalt go before the face of the Lord, to prepare his ways." It is still the prophet that is speaking here; with the seer's eye he looks into the future and beholds the child — which now rests upon his arms as a helpless infant — as a man grown to full stature and a prophet of the Lord, even the forerunner of the Messiah, and with the spirit and power of Elias preparing the way before Him. With his trained ear he already catches the echo of the preacher's voice in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God."

But so sharp is the seer's eye that it lingers but for a moment upon the person of the forerunner; the forerunner at once disappears in the shadow of his great Master, even as the Baptist in his day himself said, "He must increase, but I must decrease." Therefore Zacharias at once fits his words to the person and work of the Messiah himself, "To give knowledge of salvation unto his people, by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace." He sees in the teaching and work of the Messiah the knowledge that brings salvation, that scatters darkness, even the darkness of the shadow of death; he sees the blood of mercy that

washes away forever the guilt of sin; he sees the people set in the way of everlasting peace through reconciliation with God. It is like standing on some barren and wind-swept hill and looking down upon a valley, well-watered and rich, with flocks and orchards and fields of golden grain.

This we say was a seer's vision, for only men of faith could see it; a Zacharias, an Elizabeth, a virgin Mary, a Simeon, an Anna the prophetess, the simple shepherds at Bethlehem, the wise men of the East were also witnesses. No Herod had such a vision, no Pharisee, no scribe, no chief priest; for them that beautiful valley was covered with impenetrable fog. They lacked spiritual-mindedness; they had no sense of their sin and of the need of a Savior; there was no longing for the great things of the soul, and in addition to all else, they had no faith. Even the prophet can see nothing without faith, for "faith is the substance of things hoped for; the evidence of things not seen." There were many things that Zacharias was hoping for, things of the future more precious than the things of the present; they were things of the unseen world, invisible to the natural eye, more valuable than the material things about him; all these things Zacharias grouped together and made his own by faith and rejoiced in their possession.

What about your faith at the threshold of a new church year? Is the year full of promise, full of hope? and are these things clear to you and certain? Or is the promising prospect veiled with a mist, and when the mist has disappeared the things themselves will have disappeared, as when the pearls upon the meadow vanish with the dew under the morning rays of the sun? Look into the future with the eye of faith. If you take your Bible and examine it carefully, you will find a promise for every day and hour of the year. You will find an insurance policy for every wish of body and soul, and a balm for every wound that may be made. Every morning that Word of God will give you strength for the labor of the day, and every evening you will find protection for the defenseless hours of the night.

But on this day we are thinking, not so much of grace for our every day life and labor, as of the great gift of

salvation itself. We are looking for the Sun of righteousness himself, not for scattering rays of light here and there. But here, too, faith is needed. The greatest blessing of the new church year will be the presentation of Christ and Him crucified. There is no other salvation and no other hope. But that calls for faith. Jesus wants you to believe Him in every word He uttered, in every promise He made. He wants you to believe in His shed blood, that it reconciles you with God, cleanses you from all sin and becomes unto you life and immortality. Amen.

SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT

LUKE 17: 20-30

And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you. And he said unto the disciples, The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see *it*. And they shall say to you, See here; or, see there; go not after *them*, nor follow *them*. For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one *part* under heaven, shineth unto the other *part* under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day. But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation. And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed *them* all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.

THE joyous note of the Advent season is the coming of Christ as the Savior of the world. That joy characterizes the whole church year. Even amid the gloom of the Lenten season the heart throbs with gladness, knowing that death shall be swallowed up in victory. Persons like Zacharias and his wife Elizabeth, the aged Simeon, the saintly prophetess Anna — and there were others — had waited long for “the consolation of Israel” and now that He was about to appear their hearts leaped for joy, as did the infant John in his mother’s womb at the greeting of the blessed Virgin. And to us and all Christians, the redeemed of the Lord, is there a matter nearer our hearts, a thought more fruitful of joy than this, that the Christ of our salvation is about to come, yea, has come and that we rejoice in the very presence of our Bridegroom and that the new church year will again picture to us the loved One of our souls in all His beauty and glory?

In last Sunday's lesson the coming of Christ Himself was more especially emphasized, together with the need of preparation on our part, with a glance also at the blessings of His mission. We shall today consider more especially

THE COMING OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM.

Christ's kingdom is of course the kingdom of God; and we shall ask, first:

1. *How does the kingdom of God come?* Our text tells us that the Pharisees demanded of Christ "when the kingdom of God should come." We are not told what their motive was; but, whether good or evil, we may consider the question itself a fair one. For upward of three years Jesus had gone about in the land, from village to village, from city to city, from plain to seashore, telling the people about the kingdom of God. Did not He begin His ministry by proclaiming in trumpet tones that the kingdom of God is at hand and that the people should repent and believe? Had not the voice of the Baptist, the Messiah's great forerunner, echoed from the wilds of the wilderness to every border of the land, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand?" Under the stress of this powerful preaching that reached the heart and conscience of the people, and under the powerful effect of the works of the Son of God, is it any wonder that the people were much wrought up, that there was great expectation, and that they wanted to know when the kingdom of God would come?

We are glad when people ask such questions. It shows that they have some interest in these things — that they are at least doing a little thinking on the subject. As long as people ask such questions we may know that the times of Noah are not yet upon us and we may feel that our preaching is not altogether in vain. Some will be led to hear the Word, to receive the truth and be saved.

But these Pharisees in common with the mass of the people in Christ's day had a wrong conception of the kingdom of God. What this conception was is indicated in Jesus' reply, "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo, here! or, lo, there!" These

words show that the people were expecting a visible kingdom. They expected that Christ as the promised Messiah would "restore again the kingdom to Israel." Doubtless they were dreaming of a Jewish monarchy, as in the days of the mighty David, when they in turn would rule again over all their enemies instead of themselves chafing under a foreign yoke. Their thought was: The chosen people of God must be free; God speed the day of such freedom. Even the disciples of Jesus were expecting some such earthly kingdom, for it was about this time that there was strife among them as to "which of them should be accounted greatest" in this kingdom.

Because of these wrong motives Jesus does not answer the Pharisees' question direct. He lays the emphasis, not upon the *when*, but upon the *how*; not the *time*, but the *manner* of the kingdom's coming is the chief thing. As long as a man does not have the right understanding of God's kingdom, it matters little when it will come, he will not receive it in any event. If a man does not know a diamond from an ordinary stone, he will not accept it at the value of a diamond, no matter whether offered him today or tomorrow. If men see no other good in the Church than bread and butter, social standing or business advantage, they will be as little interested in the real things of God's kingdom at one time as at another. Jesus therefore corrects the Pharisees' wrong view of the kingdom, and the sense of His words is this: You expect an outward kingdom and you expect that it will come suddenly, in all its power and splendor. I must tell you that the kingdom of God cometh not with observation, not as an institution that will strike the bodily eye with any outward splendor; neither will you find it locally here, nor there.

Such Pharisaical notions of God's kingdom prevail today also. It is human weakness to attach undue importance to the outward form and appearance of things. Fine looks will sell an apple that has few eating qualities to commend it. A bad heart will go unchallenged, if cloaked with a graceful demeanor. "Man looketh on the outward appearance, but God looketh on the heart," said the God of Israel

in choosing a king for His people. The pope at Rome thrones in splendor, and a great part of the world bows the knee before him. But let us not be deceived by these things. The extent of God's kingdom in any one place is not determined by the amount of outward show, wealth, learning or social standing; nor are eloquence, perfect liturgical forms and artistic singing certain evidences of great spirituality. Jesus found more of the kingdom of God in the humble home of Martha and Mary at Bethany than in the gorgeous temple at Jerusalem.

Jesus therefore declared to the Pharisees, "The kingdom of God is within you." He did not mean that it was outwardly present among them because He as the King was now in their midst, for then it could still be said, "Lo, here! lo, there!" Nor did He mean that the kingdom had actually entered the hearts of these Pharisees; for these men, like their class in general, were on account of their unbelief, still outside the kingdom of God. Jesus here simply designates the sphere or the home of that kingdom; it is in the heart, not in outward things. If you do not feel the power and presence of that kingdom in the heart, then you do not have it at all, no matter what your profession may be, your works, or the estimation in which you may be held by others.

In declaring that the kingdom of God is a thing of the heart, Jesus shows what this kingdom really is. It is something inward, something spiritual — a spiritual power which acts upon the heart, the moral center of man, effects a spiritual and moral change and makes of man a new creature, conformable to the image of God. The man who walked alone now walks with God; the man who hated his enemy now loves him; the man who stole, steals no more. Paul says, "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." It is righteousness, that is, freedom from sin through pardon in Christ's blood and holiness of life in the sight of God. It is peace, that is, peace with God and peace with a good conscience through forgiveness of sin and our acceptance as children of God. It is joy in the Holy Ghost, that is, the fruit of this righteousness and peace is unbounded joy and

happiness in fellowship with the Holy Ghost who has accomplished these things. But all these things are spiritual operations and results whose sphere of action can be the heart alone. The kingdom of God therefore is a spiritual power in the heart, a leaven leavening the whole lump and restoring man again to the image of his Maker.

Now we can answer the question, How does the kingdom of God come? If it is something spiritual, it must come in a spiritual way. When the Baptist prepared the way for Christ he did not tell the people to build larger houses, to get more land, or even to seek a higher education, but he told them to repent and believe. The kingdom of God comes through repentance and faith. I know no better word on this point than Luther's explanation of the second petition: God's kingdom comes "when our heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we believe His holy Word and lead a godly life, here in time and hereafter in eternity." First of all, the Word of God must come to us. You do not find children of God where the Word of God has not been taught, any more than you find wheat growing where no wheat has been sown. This Word must then be accepted by faith. The Word of God came alike to Pharisees and the disciples of Jesus; but the one group received it and entered the kingdom while the other rejected it and remained outside. This repentance and faith is the work of the Holy Spirit; He comes to us through the Word and leads us to know our sins and gives us power to believe the promises of forgiveness. Without Him we can do nothing. Furthermore there must follow holiness of life, otherwise all other efforts will be vain. The kingdom of God has no place in a heart given to sin; light and darkness do not dwell together. It is thus that the kingdom of God comes, through the preaching of the Word, through repentance and faith. And the fruit thereof is holiness of life, and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. — And now we are ready to ask in the second place:

2. *When does the Kingdom of God come?* In a sense the kingdom of God has always been among men. Wherever there are men who fear God, believe in Him and

are guided by His Word and Spirit, there is the kingdom of God. Such there always were, though at times their number was small. In the wickedness of the days of Noah the Lord said, "My spirit shall not always strive with man." In that early age of the world the Holy Spirit already wrought among men, but they would not be led by Him. Yet Noah and his family feared God, believed His promises and were accounted righteous, and those eight persons at that time constituted the kingdom of God upon earth. In the great apostasy of Israel in Elijah's day the prophet lamented before God that all had forsaken the Lord and gone after idols. But the Lord correcting him said, "Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him." God's Word and promise have ever been among men, since He said at the fall, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." That Word has always been a light for some, and a salt to preserve a remnant unto God. When, therefore, the Baptist and Christ came, they found persons ready to receive them and to welcome a fuller revelation of God's kingdom.

This fuller revelation came with the advent of Christ into the world. The Old Testament period was a time of preparation, a period of shadows and types, an age of twilight. A brighter day was promised, a morning when the Sun of Righteousness would arise with healing in His wings. That day was ushered in with the coming of Christ; the angels' song at Bethlehem was the opening anthem. Christ came as the Sun of Righteousness, "the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." He came, not only to tell men what they must believe and do to be saved, but also to work out man's redemption by taking our sins upon Himself and atoning for our guilt. With Christ salvation itself had come. Men were no longer to be fed with the manna of the wilderness, with mere types and emblems, but with the real bread and water of life. The Israelites had now entered their home and had begun to eat the corn of the land. This was a so much fuller revelation of God's kingdom than that of the Old Testament,

that the Baptist and Christ represent it as the coming of the kingdom, "Repent and believe, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

But there is also a constant coming of that kingdom. It has been coming every day since the time of Christ, and will continue to come until the end of the world. Jesus taught us to pray "Thy kingdom come," not only today or tomorrow, but every day to the end. And when we explained above how the kingdom of God comes, namely, when the Word of God is taught and we by God's grace believe His holy Word and lead godly lives, we declared at the same time when that kingdom comes. It comes when men hear God's Word, receive it, repent and believe and walk in its light. There is no need here of conjuring up hard questions and looking for difficulties; it is all very simple. The kingdom of God comes to you when you hear God's Word and receive it; when you say: "Yes, that is God's truth, that is for me, I shall take it home and make it mine own; I shall trust in it and live in it." Nor does it matter who the person is that so receives the Word. "Whether it be a Zaccheus climbing up into a sycamore tree to see Jesus; or a Nicodemus coming to Jesus by night; or a Samaritan woman, saying, "Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet"; or a leper, falling down at His feet and worshipping Him; or a Mary Magdalene, weeping at His feet; or the other Mary, sitting at His feet and hearing His words — wherever souls are drawn to Christ like iron to the magnet, there the kingdom of God is founded in them, gains power and might and is extended through them.

My friends, does that kingdom come to you today? or are you looking around for some visible token, some outward emblem, some sign from heaven? Are you ready to hear God's Word, to believe in Christ, to love Him, trust Him, serve Him and to turn your back on the world, the flesh and the devil? If so, the kingdom of God is within you and it will come to you still more. Every day there will be a more thorough leavening until the whole lump is leavened. There is no need for you to worry about questions of "when" and "where," no need to chase around for special duties to

perform. Remain at the post where Jesus has placed you, do the everyday work which your hands find to do; neither look around for special means of grace, for novel doctrines or new leaders. Hold fast to what you have, knowing where you have learned it. Walk humbly in the light as you see it and seek and pray for more light, and more will be given; and the day will grow brighter as the time of your release draws nearer, or as the day of the final and full revelation of God's kingdom approaches.

This brings us to another point, namely, the time when there will be a fuller revelation of God's kingdom. We mean the day when Christ will come the second time to gather His own people out from among the wicked, and when the righteous shall inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world. "For as the lightening, that lighteneth from the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under the heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day." Then, also, there will be no need to ask "when?" or "where?"; His advent will be apparent to all. Whether it be in our own land, in the region of Europe, on the plains of Africa, in the mountains of Asia, or in the isles of the sea, all will see that it is He; and they also who pierced Him will see Him.

More important is another question: Are we prepared for that coming? Whatever preparation we have already made will be severely tried. Jesus shows this by referring to the trials which He Himself must undergo. For the Son of Man must "suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation." For Christ also the way to glory was by the cross. He came to complete the kingdom of God, but to do this He must first bear the cross for our sins and engage in mortal combat with the devil; and only after He by His death and resurrection had dethroned the power of darkness, could He Himself be enthroned in the glory which He had with the Father from eternity.

And He calls our attention more directly to the necessity of watchfulness and prayer when He says, "The days will come when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it." He tells His disciples

that trying times await them, times when they will be pressed by their enemies as the quarry is pressed by the pursuing hounds. The Acts of the Apostles and later church history show how this prediction was fulfilled. Great was their suffering, even unto blood, so that not one escaped the martyr's death save John, and he not without great persecution. Then did they desire to see a day of the Son of Man, a revelation of His glory, to the overthrow of His enemies and the deliverance of His saints. Nor were these words spoken only for Christ's immediate disciples, but also for the centuries following, when persecutions again and again deluged the Church with blood. What longing for deliverance among the saints of those days! What looking forward to the coming of the King in His glory, "when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ!"

But the Savior brings this matter more directly home to us when He speaks of the condition of the world at His second coming. It shall be as in the days of Noah and of Lot, when the people in their extreme worldliness thought of nothing but eating and drinking, buying and selling, marrying and giving in marriage. Jesus does not represent these things as wrong, but as the only things of which the people thought. That was the sum and substance of their lives — a daily round of business and pleasure.

At the end of the world, did I say? Is it not largely so already? And were it not for the heathen who have not yet heard the Gospel, we should surely take this as a sign that the kingdom of God in its fullness may come as above described? In such a whirl of worldliness how can there be any preparation for standing before God and lifting up of the head for the redemption that draweth nigh? O, to your knees, my brethren, in thorough repentance! To prayer betake you, that this day come not upon you unawares, and so that He may "confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ." Amen.

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THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT

MATTHEW 3: 1-11

In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judæa, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey. Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judæa, and all the region round about Jordan, And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins. But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to *our* father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the fire. I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and *with* fire.

REPENT ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Such was the cry that startled the Judean wilderness in the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar. It was the cry of him of whom the prophet Isaiah had said, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness." Clad in a coarse garment of camel's hair, an undressed leather girdle about his loins, eating locusts and wild honey, severely simple and abstemious in habit, came the Baptist. Striking in appearance, unknown as to his person, but fired with zeal and borne on by the spirit and power of Elias, he at first delivered his message apparently to the cold rocks and the dumb beasts of the desert. But the strange voice soon fell upon some human ears, then others heard and came, and ere long multitudes hastened from every direction to hear the impassioned call to repentance. It was a new note, that call to repentance, a voice accredited with authority. He dealt not in formalities as did the scribes, nor did he put the people to sleep with

sedative platitudes. He gripped them at their conscience and shook their spiritual skeletons until the solitudes of the Jordan echoed with confessions of sin. The whole man preached — his words, his looks, his life, his surroundings; “weighty as the thunder, his word, clear and illuminating as the lightening, his life.” Free from every trammel of earth, bound alone to the things of heaven, the Baptist preached with authority, and the sinful knees trembled before him. “There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.”

The Baptist was the forerunner of Christ, sent to prepare the way before Him just as eastern monarchs were accustomed to have the heralds prepare for them a way and reception. The kingdom of heaven is the same today as it was then, its manner of coming and the conditions of entering, the same. Therefore from the Baptist’s message we also may learn how to prepare for the coming of that kingdom. Today we shall therefore consider

THE BAPTIST’S CALL TO REPENTANCE.

In the first place:

1. *What does the Baptist’s call to repentance presuppose?* If a messenger, of whom you had every reason to believe that he came from God, were to come to your house and cry out, “Repent ye, turn ye from your present ways of thinking, speaking and doing,” you would certainly conclude that there must be something wrong with your manner of life. For if your life is right, no one, not even God, has authority to demand a change. However it would not matter what you might think about your ways; they might appear right in your own eyes, as is usually the case with man. But in the eyes of God your paths are far from straight, and when the call from heaven comes to change, you must change or suffer the consequences.

With just such a message did the Baptist appear in Israel. He came upon them suddenly, unexpectedly, like a bolt from a clear sky. Like his great prototype Elijah who suddenly appeared before the wicked Ahab as if from

nowhere and appalled the king with the declaration, "As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word"; so the Baptist startled Israel with his cry: Repent ye, turn ye from your evil ways, prepare ye for the coming of the kingdom. And as the declaration of Elijah presupposed apostasy in Israel, the departure from the worship of Jehovah and a bowing of the knee to Baal, so did the Baptist's call to repentance presuppose sin and wrongdoing in that generation.

Nor is it necessary to show that especially great sins were prevalent in Israel in those days. That might make it appear as if the Baptist came simply to recover the people from a present great moral relapse; that ordinarily they did very well, but that at this time they needed a leader to bring them to ways of righteousness again. No, that call to repentance pointed to a deeper root of evil, the root from which all the wickedness of God's people had sprung — all the idolatry, all the violence and bloodshed, all the uncleanness and covetousness, during the many centuries that God bore with them, when their sins again and again cried to heaven for judgment. It implied a condition correctly diagnosed by the prophet of Israel, "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores."

That same call to repentance comes to us today; and it is needed today as it was then. It is needed especially in this Advent season, for there can be no true Advent for our hearts without true repentance preceding it. A John the Baptist must go before, ere the Christ of God can apply the balm of Gilead. Nor is it necessary to point out special great sins of the day, a thing which could easily be done. In almost every lecture or public address that one hears, some great sin of the day is set forth and a remedy offered. But to deal only with certain very noticeable sins would leave the impression that ordinarily we are doing quite well and that only now and then we need special assistance to set us right again. No, the evil lies deeper; it lies in our

very nature which, since the fall of Adam, is totally corrupt. The whole head is still sick and the whole heart still faint. "There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, not one." And this is true yet at this late day of grace; in spite of all that divine mercy and grace have done, men are still sinful and daily in need of repentance.

Furthermore this call of the Baptist was universal; it embraced the whole nation. The soldier was hit, the publican, the sinner, the common people! neither did the proud Pharisee, nor the learned scribe escape, nor the king upon the throne. John's Master who sent him was God and he knew no face among the children of men. As sin is universal so must the call to repentance be universal; when all the sheep have strayed into the wilderness than all must be sought. And let us thank God that this call is universal, for the call to repent is the dawn of day for the soul, and if God did not deign to call us, who then could repent?

Heed you that call this morning. Go home and say: Things cannot be right in my house, in my heart, for today I heard a call to repentance, to turn from my present evil ways. There must be evil in me; in whatever manner I may be doing God's will, there must still be much about me that is wrong. I must heed that call. Upon the life of my soul I dare not close my heart to it. May God give you grace today to follow that call as you never followed it before. — In the second place we ask:

2. *What does the Baptist's call to repentance demand?*

The Baptist demanded three things: first, repentance itself "Repent ye." The word "repent" is one of the great words of the Bible; you can find the word or the idea in some form upon almost every page of God's Word. It were well if every person would write a book on the word "repent"; not in order to publish the book, but for his own benefit, that he might become thoroughly familiar with the meaning of the word and its requirements. Repentance is one of the greatest things in the world; it is an epoch-making event in

the life of any man. The publican, repenting in the temple, went down to his house justified and a different man from what he had been. Matthew, another publican, repenting at the call of Jesus, ceased collecting taxes and preached the Gospel the rest of his life for the salvation of men. Zacchaeus, another publican, repented in the sycamore tree as Jesus passed by and then restored any ill-gotten gain fourfold, and gave half his goods to the poor. Paul, the proud Pharisee and the destroyer of the Church, upon his repentance became the mighty apostle to the gentiles, whose teachings today yet mold character and nations.

Do you realize any change that repentance has made in your life? Quite probably the change was gradual; you cannot say just when, nor where, nor how. But if you have repented at all there must be a change. For some of you perhaps that change came later in life; possibly you know just when. What a change it was! How your thoughts and plans for life were altered! Or even when you were brought to see some particular sin and turned from it, what a change! At first, sorrow, but afterwards, peace and joy and hope. You have known a man who was given to some sinful life, but one day you noticed a change in him; his speech, his habits, his very appearance were different. You found that the man had repented; his heart was no longer his own, he had given it to the Lord in response to the appeal, "Son, give me thine heart."

The second thing the Baptist demanded was, "Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance." True repentance is a thoroughgoing process; it does not consist in some transient feeling of pain on account of sin, in a few tears, sobs, pious wishes, hasty resolutions and easy formalities. No, of that sort of repentance there has been much in modern revivalism, requiring to be repeated about once a year. Even then it is still a cake half baked, like Ephraim of old. Luther in his Ninety-five Theses said: "When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, Repent, He meant that the entire life of His believers upon earth be a continuous repenting." Repentance means a complete change of life from the earthly to the heavenly.

Of this change the Baptist now demands evidence; and the only sufficient evidence is right fruit, right living. He told the Pharisees, whose profession he knew to be insincere, that they could not hope to escape the impending wrath by any outward confession or formality. The confession must be of the heart to begin with, it must be a real confession of sin; and then there must follow a changed life and that new life must issue in fruits. A repentance that does not bear fruit is a worthless tree. If you say that you repent of your sin, but do not quit that sin and practice the opposite virtue, then your repentance is nothing but a pretense and a lie; the truth is not in you. If in reading the Bible you experience certain good impulses to forsake evil ways, but turn from your Bible to the same crookedness again, then your repentance is a mockery. If at church under the influence of the preached Word you are moved to say: I will quit that evil way of mine, for I see now how displeasing it is to God, but if you go home and practice the same old sin, then in what do you differ from the swine that return to wallowing in the mire? Examine your tree of life. Do you find upon it the fruits meet for repentance? Paul tells you what they are: "The fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; against these there is no law."

The third demand of the Baptist is individual responsibility. "Think not to say, within yourselves, we have Abraham to our father." The Jew thought that because he was a child of Abraham according to the flesh, therefore, as a matter of course, he was entitled to the kingdom of God. Let no one think for a moment that the kingdom of God is made up of outward connection and relations. There is much advantage in having Christian friends and relatives; and let every one thank God for them. But such connections do not constitute salvation. You are not a member of your family by proxy, but only as you are there in person, bound together with the rest by the same ties of life and blood. So, too, you cannot become a member of God's family by proxy. Your husband or wife or parent or child may belong to God's people, but that does not make you a member.

Not until you have within you the same Christ-life and Christ-spirit which they have and are thus bound together with them — not until then do you belong to God's people. Nor are we to think of Jesus as standing at the door of a nation or of a family and knocking, but at the door of the individual heart. Only as He finds entrance into individuals does He find entrance into nations, communities and homes.

A word is in place here in regard to ourselves as Lutherans. The Lutheran Church is a great church, great in doctrines, great in works, great in numbers. But there are some who claim to be Lutherans in name, by descent, baptism and confirmation, who have little of a vital Christianity, few of the fruits of the Spirit, little personal religion. Let not such think that the name Lutheran will save them. A John the Baptist would brush that claim aside as he did that of the Pharisees and thunder into their ears, Bring forth fruits meet for repentance. God furthermore can find other people whom He can raise up as children of His kingdom or even as members of the Lutheran Church. We ourselves have seen men, gathered from the world or received from other churches, who became better Lutherans and better Christians than many born and bred in the Lutheran Church. Not in the least do we advocate indifference to the creed of our church, but we need to understand that in this call to repentance we cannot shield ourselves under a denominational cloak. — In the third place:

3. *What does the Baptist's call to repentance promise?* There must be a promise here. Without it our lesson would not be a proper Advent text. There must be something here to draw, to attract, to turn our faces upward and fill our hearts with expectation. Who can join in singing our beautiful Advent songs without feeling their lift, their allure-ment to things higher and more blessed? What is the promise? It is this that the kingdom of Heaven is at hand. A kingdom implies a king. Here God is the King. If God is the King and we are His people, should that fact not fill us with the highest expectation? Sometimes we hear people lament: "I have nothing left in this world but God." Friend, what more in reality do you need? With God all things

are yours. The Psalmist said, "There is none upon earth that I desire beside thee."

Brethren, let us dwell on these thoughts. Take your Bibles and try to sum up the many good things the kingdom promises you. You will be surprised at their number. David tried it, but he soon found more than he could count, "They cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: if I would declare and speak of them, there are more than can be numbered."

But the Baptist has something more explicit to say in regard to the promise. He points to the person in whom these things will be realized. "I baptize you with water unto repentance; but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear; he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." John's work was only preparatory, even his baptism was primarily only unto repentance; yet where there is repentance there is also forgiveness, and even also the presence of the Holy Ghost. But the fulness of the Spirit could not be given yet at that time; not until Christ had come and had wrought redemption by His death and resurrection, could the Spirit come in His fulness. The seed must be planted, must spring up and grow and ripen, before the precious grain can be harvested.

In that fulness of blessings we rejoice today. The mightier One has come and has done His work and He is ready now to impart His gifts of grace in all their fulness. That is the glorious prospect before us today. Are you entranced at the view? When you pass an orchard whose trees are all bending under the weight of luscious fruit, you can scarcely resist trespassing, so strong is the desire to accept the seeming invitation of the trees. But here are the more precious fruits of divine grace. Are you ready to receive them? They will be offered again during this year of grace. How much will you be enriched? How much of that kingdom will come to you? How strong will Christ become in you? One of Paul's constant prayers for the churches was that they might grow strong in all things through Christ. May our prayers for one another be for no less. — Finally we ask:

4. *What does the Baptist's call to repentance threaten?*

John's view of the coming kingdom was not only of its beginning, but also of its end; not only that Christ would bring salvation, but that He would also execute judgment. Both prerogatives belong to Him as the Messiah. The Baptist therefore threatened the Pharisees with the wrath to come, if they did not repent; and to the people generally he said, "The axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire." Of Jesus' baptism he likewise says that it will not only be with the Holy Ghost unto salvation for those who repent and believe, but also with fire unto damnation for those who do not repent. The appearance of the tongues of fire on the day of Pentecost is hardly a sufficient explanation of the Baptist's solemn declaration here, especially in view of what is said in the twelfth verse which properly belongs to the text, "Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather the wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

Remember therefore that Christ is not only your Savior but that He will one day be your Judge. Reflect upon that also today in your preparation for a fuller reception of His grace. You are all upon the divine threshing floor. Day by day you are being threshed through labor, through trials and afflictions and through temptation. Threshing does not hurt the grain, the object is only to separate it from the chaff. So Jesus is after the wheat — more and better wheat. What is He finding, golden grain, or wind-driven chaff? Oh, that your lives and your works may stand the fierce winnowing of that fan, and that you may be found as precious grain to be gathered into the everlasting garner of our God! Amen.

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT

JOHN 1:15-18

John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me. And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. For the law was given by Moses, *but* grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared *him*.

IN the Baptist's call to repentance as we heard it last Sunday, we learned something concerning the greater One who was to come. Today we shall learn more about Him. We then looked upon the palace from a distance, today we shall take a closer view. We shall enter in and look directly upon the rich treasures therein contained.

But in the treasure-house of today's lesson there are so many precious objects, that we cannot hope to examine them all in one short half-hour. If it were still customary to preach sermons an hour or two long, we might examine the rich contents more fully. We would remark as we pass, that this wealth of contents is one of the best evidences of the inspiration of the Bible; there is so much said in so few words and in such a simple way, that no one else but **He who has made the tongue and fashioned the heart could have said it.** Let us look to Him then who is the Light that **we may behold rich treasures of His Word.** We shall do so this morning by answering the question,

WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?

The text suggests three answers: First, Christ is the everlasting God; secondly, Christ is the fount of every blessing; thirdly, Christ is the full revelation of God.

1. *Christ is the everlasting God:* "He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me." Such is the Baptist's testimony concerning Christ. Jesus

was born about six months after the Baptist, and also began His public ministry about six months after John first lifted up his voice in the wilderness. These are simple historical facts. The Baptist had grown to manhood and now stood up among his people to preach and baptize. So will Christ soon appear among them to preach and to accomplish the work for which He was sent.

But the Baptist furthermore says of Christ that "he was before me." By these words he declares the preexistence of Christ. The two declarations of John that Christ came after him yet was before him, seem a contradiction, yet both are true. The Baptist is speaking of the two natures of Christ, of His human and divine natures. As to His human nature He came after the Baptist, but as to His divine nature He existed from all eternity. This paradoxical expression is calculated to set us to thinking. What does the speaker mean? He most surely means that Christ really existed before He was born of the Virgin Mary. In its last analysis it must mean that Christ is true God and true man, "true God begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man born of the Virgin Mary."

But the Baptist has in mind here not only this difference in time, but especially also the difference in rank. He would say: He that cometh after me and for that reason might seem to be less than I, is in reality greater than I, even so much greater that I am not worthy to perform the humblest service of a slave for Him, to unloose His shoe-latchets. Therefore He is "preferred before me"; He is greater, stands higher than I. I am only a voice, He is the very Messiah; I can only prepare the way, He is the very King of peace Himself; I can only point to Him, but He is the very "Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." Because of His divine character the lesson can speak as it does of Christ's "fulness," that "grace and truth came by Jesus," that He only hath seen God, that He is "the only begotten Son," and that He alone hath declared the Father. All these things lead to the first answer to our question: Christ is the everlasting God.

Here let us stop a moment and make a few observations. Our confidence in a man is in proportion to his truthfulness, his benevolence and his ability. A man who is not truthful we do not trust; a man who is not benevolent we do not approach for a favor, and a man who has no ability is not able to help us. But apply the rule to Christ and you find that you have a Savior who can help to the uttermost. He is a certain helper in every bodily need, for in His hand is power and authority over all creatures. "All power is given unto me in heaven and on earth," is His undisputed claim. Nor are His truthfulness and benevolence any less than His omnipotence, for His works of might are at the same time works of benevolence. At His word the water "blushed" and became wine, to the joy of the wedding guests; at His blessing the few small loaves were multiplied into endless baskets of bread; at His command the tempest was stilled and the angry waves stayed; at His touch sickness fled and at His voice even death slunk from the dark recess of the tomb. Since your Savior then is such a mighty helper in material things, why any doubt, why any fear, why any anxiety about your daily bread? You would laugh at a man who stood upon a bridge that is built of solid concrete and who feared that it might break down under his tiny weight; far more foolish were it for you to fear for your little life that rests safely in the hand of your mighty Savior.

But it is especially as the Savior from sin that Jesus is spoken of here; from whatever side this is regarded there is no reason for the least uneasiness. Jesus said, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God and all must be well. You look at your own weakness and begin to fear. But why? Christ is your Savior, not you yourself; He is going to do the saving, He does not expect you to do it. You behold the power of your enemies and you tremble. But why? Was He not proof against all the allurements of the world? Did He not withstand the temptations of men and of devils? Did He not triumph over death and Satan and proclaim His victory in the very citadel of hell? You fear because of your sins. But why? Can you point to a single word or act on the part of Jesus that might indicate

that either your sins or anybody else's are too great or too numerous to pardon? You fear that He may not keep His promises. Well, yes, that might make us trouble, if we looked upon Jesus as only a man; for no man has yet been found whose word could be relied upon in every instance. But Christ is also true God. We are not among those who believe that Jesus was only a man, though a great and good one. Such people have no divine Savior, no savior at all, for no mere man can be to us a savior from sin and death. But Jesus is also the ever faithful and unchangeable God and therefore His every word is trustworthy. But if you doubt the word of a truthful man you insult him. Will you now insult God by doubting His promises? Will you make Him out a liar by saying that He is deceiving you with His promises and does not mean to keep them? No, no! "Yea, let God be true, but every man a liar," cried out St. Paul — What then think ye of Christ? He is the everlasting God and therefore our redemption is sure.

2. *Christ is the fount of every blessing.* The evangelist speaks of the fulness of Christ, "And of his fulness have all we received." He does not stop to explain what this fulness is. You may think that a little strange, but it is not strange at all. If you were standing by the seashore would you begin to count the buckets of water that might be dipped from the bosom of the deep? Or will you try to number the stars and say: There are so many for you and so many for me? No, there is an abundance of water in the ocean for every one, plenty of stars for you and for all. So is the fulness of Christ; there is an abundance of blessings there of every kind for all people. The sun in his mighty power could light up a dozen more worlds like this little earth; there is no need of computing just how much light and heat he can emit, or if there is enough to supply all. There is an abundance there of everything that this earth needs of any sun. So too when the fountain of divine blessings flowing from Christ has flooded every land with good things during all the ages of the past, there is still an abundance left for the present and for all the ages to come.

Where is there a single good that you have enjoyed which did not come to you through Christ? Do you realize the fact that your daily bread comes to you through Christ, that even the unbelieving world is permitted to live day by day because God is merciful for the sake of Christ, and is longsuffering that men may yet repent and be saved through faith in Christ? "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." Not only therefore, do you receive from Christ all spiritual blessings, but it is through Him, too, that all temporal benefits are graciously bestowed.

Here, however, the evangelist has in mind the spiritual gifts of grace; they are the great things in the kingdom of heaven, not bread and butter. We must read our Bibles from this higher viewpoint. If you have an eye chiefly for material things and for temporal affairs, you will get very little out of your Bible. God did not give us a divine revelation to show us where gold or silver are to be found; how to grow abundant harvests or build houses. He has given us mind and muscle for these things. This fulness of Christ is spiritual fulness; and the evangelist characterizes it sufficiently when he says that it is grace. "Grace for grace," have we received.

Through Christ you receive forgiveness of sins; and is not that itself enough to fill you with happiness in the thought that all your sins, which have made you so much trouble, are remitted unto you? Through Christ you have righteousness. God no longer looks upon you as a sinner, but as without sin, as righteous and holy, even as Christ Himself is holy. Consider what that means; that you, a chief of sinners, are yet in Christ one of God's saints, one of the glorious righteous, an heir of the heavenly kingdom and elected to dwell with God and the holy angels forever more! Through Christ you receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, even power from on high "to become the sons of God" — power unto a new life by which you yourself can overcome sin and temptation even as Christ did. These are but a few of the gifts of grace. Perhaps we can best sum it all up in the words of Paul: that Christ of "God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemp-

tion; that according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

But we must not fail to note the distinctive character of all these blessings. The evangelist calls this fulness "grace." In the word "grace" we have again one of the great words of the Bible. All of God's gifts, even temporal blessings, may be called gifts of grace because they are altogether undeserved on our part, and because God bestows them solely out of His love and mercy. "All this purely out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me," we confess in our catechism concerning all material blessings. We cannot speak of grace in reference to the angels, for they never sinned and became undeserving. God manifests His goodness and His love to the angels also, but we do not call it grace. But in our case we who have sinned and deserved God's wrath and condemnation, it is all grace and nothing but grace. Every manifestation of divine goodness is therefore a bestowal of grace; it is the only way in which God can deal with us unto salvation. Hence we are saved by grace and only by grace.

However, there is something more to be noted: "Grace for grace," says the evangelist. This brings us back again to the fulness that is in Christ, to the boundless wealth of good things, to the never-failing supply. The expression at first seems a little indefinite; we hardly know just what to make of it. But one thing is certain; however much we may put into the phrase, we shall never be able to put more into it than it actually contains. "Grace for grace"; to put this in the most general way, it means an abundance of grace. It is like the land of Egypt during the years of plenty, which produced by handfuls. Or we may say grace after grace, one grace following upon another grace. If you receive the forgiveness of sins, that is followed by righteousness, and that again by peace. Or we may say, grace upon grace, a heaping up of grace: you receive forgiveness of sins, and upon that justification, the gift of the Holy Spirit and finally, eternal salvation. Or again we

can say that one grace is surety for another grace, a promise that there is more to come. Sir Rowland Hill was once given a fund to disburse to a needy family. He did not turn it all in at once, but sent only a portion at a time, always however with a note attached, "more to follow." So is the grace of Christ; every day a portion is bestowed, but always with the promise of more to follow. Our second answer to the question, What think ye of Christ? is, He is the fountain of every blessing and therefore salvation in Him is complete.

3. *Christ is the full revelation of God:* "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." In God's dealings with Israel Moses occupied a most important position. Through him God gave His Law to His people, the moral law, the ceremonial and religious law and the civil law. Yet we cannot speak of Moses as revealing God, but only that God revealed Himself through Moses. So likewise none of the prophets, nor even the apostles were revealers of God in the proper sense; God by His Spirit revealed Himself through them.

This giving of the Law by Moses furthermore was not at all a full revelation of God. The Law shows only one side of God, namely, His holiness and hence also, His anger at sin. But holiness is by no means all of God. To look at God's holiness alone would be like witnessing the effect of the sun on a hot summer's day, when his burning rays are scorching the vegetation which his more gentle rays called forth. It would be like dropping in at your neighbor's just as the father was in the act of declaring the law in stern words because of some wrong-doing in the family. Would you thus get a complete view of all his thoughts and feelings toward his family? So also any view of God, based only upon His holy Law, must be altogether incomplete and one-sided.

Therefore the Law is generally not spoken of as a revelation of truth. Indeed the Law is at times set over against truth as here: "The Law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." At most the Law reveals only a part of the truth, namely, that God is holy, that He demands holiness from us and that He will punish

all unrighteousness. But that is only half the truth and there is no comfort in it. It is like knowing fire only as something that burns, but not as something that warms to life again the chilled members of your body. Especially do we find that the ceremonial law was not a revelation of the truth. It dealt in shadows and types and signs, not in the body, the substance, the thing itself, which is Christ; just as arithmetic deals in figures and numbers and not in money, wheat, clothing and the like. By the Law therefore no one can obtain a full knowledge of God, nor of the way of salvation. The Commandments will never tell you all you need to know about God, that He is a kind and merciful heavenly Father, no matter how thoroughly you may study them; neither will mere moral precepts point you the way to the golden city. Whoever expects to make the journey by that flickering light will be sure to land in the slough of despair. The more you study the Law, the deeper you get into its real meaning and spirit and power, the more you come to realize that the Law is the letter that killeth, and that by the works of the Law no flesh shall be justified.

Over against Moses and the Law therefore, the evangelist sets grace and truth through Jesus Christ. And notice here that he does not say that grace and truth were given by Christ, but that they "came by Christ." Christ was not a mere agent by whom God revealed Himself as He did by Moses and the prophets and apostles, but the sense is that Christ Himself, in His person and work, is the revelation of God. In the letter to the Hebrews the Son is declared to be the brightness of God's glory and the express image of His person. When you see Christ you see the Father. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," said Jesus to Philip. Not only what Jesus taught, but first of all what He is and what He did are a revelation of God.

This revelation, furthermore, is one of "grace." It is grace because it shows God's love and mercy and goodness toward undeserving sinners. We are prodigals who had turned our backs upon the kind and genial home of our father and drifted into a strange country where in riotous living we wasted the good things God had given us. Soon

we found ourselves in great want, our own strength gone and not a friend to help us. Then we turned our faces back again toward the old homestead and there we found father eagerly waiting to receive us, ready to pardon all our ingratitude and meanness, willing to take us back again into the home, to cover our nakedness and still our hunger with the best the house afforded. That is grace, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This revelation furthermore is one of "truth." Christ is the revelation of truth, because He does not show us only one side of God, His holiness and righteousness as revealed in the Law, but He shows the whole of God, His goodness, love, mercy, long-suffering and compassion; God's wisdom also, for in Christ "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge"; God's might and power likewise, for we see the power of God, not only in Christ's miracles, but especially also in His triumph over death, hell and the devil. In Christ we have a fuller revelation even of God's holiness than in the Law, for here we see that God gave even His only Son as a sacrifice, that the righteous demand of His holy nature might be satisfied. Christ Himself furthermore reveals not only these great things concerning God, but shows us, too, just what we need to do to be saved; namely, that we must accept Him and believe in Him as the Savior from sin and death. Christ is the only light by which we can find our way back home.

The difference between Moses and Christ is therefore great. Thus does an eminent preacher illustrate it, "Imagine at the coming festival of Christmas-eve a widow sitting in a cold room, lonely, helpless, deeply in debt. Suddenly she hears some one coming up the stairway. Who can it be? It is the agent of the law to demand the last piece of furniture for the unpaid debt. No, it is a man of mercy sent by the blessed Christ-child to cancel all her debts, to rejoice her heart with all manner of gifts and give her a glad Christmas indeed. Such and even greater is the difference between the Law and the Gospel. The Law demands; the Gospel gives."

But our text also tells us that no one can reveal God except Christ. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." Moses did not see God in His fulness, David did not, even Paul did not. The privilege belonged to Christ alone, because He is in the bosom of the Father. As a child in the bosom of its mother feels her very heart-throbs, so Christ sees and feels the very fulness of God's nature, His boundless goodness, love and mercy as well as His wisdom, power and righteousness.

No one, therefore, can know God except as he knows Christ. "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." Our full answer then to the question, What think ye of Christ? is: He is the everlasting God; He is the fount of every blessing; He is the full revelation of God. Amen.

CHRISTMAS DAY

MATTHEW 1: 18-23

Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privately. But while he thought on these things behold the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife; for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold a virgin shall be with child, and she shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel; which being interpreted is, God with us.

A *Blessed Christmas to you all in the name of the blessed Christ-child:* "This is the day which the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it." This is the day and this the event for which the Church has been waiting and preparing. Most blessed truths and most gracious promises have been considered during the Advent Sundays just passed. It was all in expectation of the blessed Christ-child whose birth we celebrate today. We have been trying to get our hearts in the right frame properly to celebrate God's great Gift to the children of men; a Gift so great that even the angels of heaven were moved to leave their blessed abode and sing their songs among scenes of earth.

Since the Christ-child is the source of all this rejoicing and good will on Christmas day, we do well this morning to consider more especially:

THE GREAT GIFT OF GOD'S SON TO THE WORLD.

Ordinarily there are three things to consider about a gift: What the gift is, what its purpose is, what the giver's motive is. So there are three things about the gift of God's Son that we shall consider. First, Who this Son is; secondly, What His mission is; thirdly, What the Giver's motive is.

1. *Who is the Son that was given us?* We were told in our lesson last Sunday, who this person is whom we so highly honor, namely, the everlasting Son of God. It was shown that He was greater than His forerunner; that He existed from all eternity; that in Him is all fulness; that He is in the bosom of His Father, and that He alone can declare Him. There come to our minds in this connection the great names applied to Him by the prophet: He shall be called "Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."

These same great truths are contained again in today's lesson. Who can read this chaste and simple account and not be led to say: This cannot be an ordinary child whose conception and birth are here spoken of. He was conceived by the Holy Ghost; she in whose womb He was conceived was a blameless virgin, espoused to Joseph as his wife; Joseph according to law might have put her away openly, even causing her to be stoned, but to spare her he was minded to put her away privately. At this critical moment an angel appeared to him, explaining the situation and telling him what to do; that the Child's name should be called Jesus, Emmanuel, God with us. And in all this the Word of prophecy was fulfilled. All these things show that here is a Child, not begotten after the course of nature, but a Child for whom God prepared a special way, a Child who is "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners and made higher than the heavens."

But our text today brings out, in addition, another great and essential truth and fact, namely, the reality of Christ's human nature and the fact that He was born of the Virgin Mary. Last Sunday we were told that He is the only begotten Son of the Father; today we are told just as distinctly that He was born of the Virgin Mary. These are two great facts as regards the person of our Savior. "I believe that Jesus Christ true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord," is the creed which we confess as true disciples of Christ and children of God.

These great doctrines need to be confessed especially at the present day. There are those who believe and boldly declare from pulpit, press and platform that Jesus Christ is not divine in the sense that He is the eternal Son of God, but that He was only man. They proceed also, and that quite logically, to deny any atonement through the blood of Christ, in the real sense of the word. The only sense in which He is our Savior, they affirm, is that He was a great teacher, pointing the way to a virtuous life, and that by His noble and beautiful example He inspires us to follow in His footsteps. That He should save us from our sins, is an impossibility. If we have any sins to be saved from, we must do that ourselves; Christ can only give us some light and encouragement for that which is true and good and beautiful. Abraham and David and Paul were not saved through faith in God's mercy unto the forgiveness of sin and righteousness before God, but by faith in themselves, in their own ability to overcome temptation and evil.

And as to Jesus having been more than man, these same people or others of their kind declare that His conception was not by the Holy Ghost or miraculous, that He was not born of the Virgin, but that He came into the world like any other ordinary mortal, and that the simple account is either highly figurative, or else a pious fraud. Thus would these false teachers make the Word of God of none effect; and not merely a part of it, but all of it. For if this simple historical account of Jesus' conception and birth cannot be accepted as it reads, then what can be so received? Every breakwater is down, the harbor is destroyed and we are at sea.

Against all this misrepresentation, this false teaching, this destructive heresy we enter our most solemn protest. There are things here which we can neither understand nor explain; but how many facts in common life about us would we not have to deny, if we would not accept them until we fully understood them? Who, for example, can fully explain the process of thinking, yet who will deny that he has a mind or that he thinks? The facts of Jesus' conception and birth have been given us to believe, not to analyze

intellectually; therefore we believe them. We abide by the simple statement of the evangelist: Jesus was conceived by the Holy Ghost in a miraculous manner, He was born of the Virgin Mary who had not known any man; He is therefore true God and true man in one person, ordained to be our Savior through His blood by the remission of sins.

This, however, is a high festival day and is not a suitable time for polemics, nor even for expounding doctrines at great length. We therefore hasten to give expression to the joy and gladness that fill our hearts this day. There can, of course, be no genuine rejoicing without the proper doctrinal basis, just as there can be no Christmas feast for the body without material preparation. But in the above facts we have the proper doctrinal basis: This person is both God and man and is declared to be our Savior and therefore His name is called Jesus, because He shall save His people from their sins. This brings us to our second part:

2. *What is the mission of this Son who has been given us?* "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins," said the angel. With these words he pointed out the mission of the Son of God among men. But what shall we say of sin? Why did sin necessitate the coming of the Son of glory to the earth?

Why so much sorrow and suffering in the world? Why that groaning of the Hebrews under the lash of Egyptian task-masters? Why that weeping of captive Israel by the rivers of Babylon? Why does the prophet speak of those that sit in darkness and in the valley of the shadow of death? Why are there millions of girl-widows in India, doomed to lives of hopeless sadness and suffering? Why in our own fair and prosperous city is there so much want and suffering that great efforts are necessary to relieve it, if for only a day? Why is the page of the daily press disfigured with glaring headlines of robbery, murder, adultery and every other vice and crime? Why did Pilate wash his hands in water, vainly protesting his innocency of the condemnation of Jesus? Why did Felix tremble when Paul reasoned before him of righteousness and temperance and judgment to come? Why are fear and cowardice written upon the face of the criminal?

Why does your head ache and toss upon a sleepless pillow when you have a guilty conscience? Why all this misery in a world that was made good — even very good?

Different answers are given to these questions. Men have different opinions, especially when their opinions are all their own. A man who is determined to think for himself in all things is bound to think wrong in many things. But as there is only one correct explanation of Jesus' conception and birth so too is there but one correct interpretation of the fact of sin in the world. That interpretation is that sin is a reality and the cause of all sorrow among men.

Remove sin and the trouble disappears. Some days you see the sky overcast with clouds. There is nothing wrong with the sky; the sky is just as clear and blue as ever, the sun shines just as brightly and the stars are in their places at night just as at other times. But there is something in the atmosphere; it is full of vapor and charged with gases. Clear the atmosphere, sweep the clouds away and the sky is revealed in all its sublime clearness and beauty. So here in the sphere of human life and experience; there is nothing wrong with the works of God's hands, nothing wrong, we can say, with man. He is God's creature; he is capable of happiness. This whole world is capable of being made a garden of Eden again. Yes, we have the promise that there shall be a new heaven and a new earth. "God shall wipe all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." But sin must be swept away, the moral atmosphere must be purified. The "former things" must pass away, and under "former things" sin is included as the very first. When the apostle speaks of a new heaven and a new earth, he expressly adds, "in which dwelleth righteousness." It will be a place of righteousness, a place without sin. We cannot expect all tears to be wiped away and all sorrow to cease, until sin has been purged away. What this world therefore needs is a Savior from sin. The Israelite expected such a Savior, because God had promised Him. Even the gentile world

felt and groped about in darkness for some being who could help them in their distress.

That Savior has been sent for both Hebrew and gentile, and today we celebrate His coming in the flesh. Think of it! Here is a person who takes away sin. "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." He takes away sin and sweeps the human sky clear of every evil. Every cloud and every noxious vapor that has been shutting out the sunshine of complete happiness and poisoning the springs of life, all must disappear before Him whose name is called Jesus. Do you rightly appreciate the fact? Do you fully weigh the momentous truth? Say to yourself, I am a sinner; there is no question about it. I see it, I feel it, the Bible tells me that I am a sinner. I have brought great misery upon myself, I have exposed myself to everlasting ruin. I have no excuse to offer, I can expect no leniency. But here is a Savior who takes away my sins, all of them, with all their consequences for time and eternity; the present evils that are left are intended for my good, even as the apostle declares, "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

That, my friends, is the glorious message for your souls today. "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy," said the angel to the shepherds. This is the great Christmas fact that has called forth the spirit of good will among men and has sustained it with growing activity during all these centuries. And it is good tidings not only for you and a few others, but it "shall be to all people." There is no limit to the saving power of the name of Jesus, nor is any one excluded from its domain of action. Every nation has had its heroes and benefactors; few of them have become world-wide in their influence. But the name of Jesus belongs to no nation, clime or country; it belongs to the world. Wherever children at their mothers' knee learn to lisp the name of Jesus; wherever young men and young women learn to love and to fear that name; wherever the strength and vigor of manhood learns to honor it and wherever old age rejoices in it, there the power to save from sin is present, and there

men are being drawn into the kingdom of God. And some of our highest Christmas joy we should find in this fact that more is being done today than a year ago to bring the name of Jesus to the nations of the earth. The greatest day of the earth will be the day when, in every clime and among every people under the sun, both old and young, rich and poor, will bow the knee and worship toward Bethlehem. And no Christian should let this day pass without asking himself the question, What have I done since last Christmas to carry the name of Jesus to others? The angels of heaven brought it to men; others brought it to me. Have I been a relay agent along the line of march to bear the precious message farther?

The greatness of this message grows upon us when we consider how long the world had waited and how often men had been disappointed in their expectations. Eve, the mother of the human race, bare Cain and said, "I have gotten a man from the Lord," thinking that he would be the promised Seed; but instead of being a savior he became the murderer of his brother. Lamech begat a son and said, "This same shall comfort us concerning our work and the toil of our hands." But instead of seeing the approach of any golden age there was a flood of wickedness in the days of Noah, followed by the flood of waters. The prophet Isaiah saw in a vision the Virgin who should conceive and bear a Son and should call His name Emmanuel, but soon afterwards Israel was carried away into captivity. Daniel, himself a child of captivity, declared that this sojourn in a foreign land should continue seventy weeks, but those seventy weeks grew into seventy long years. Malachi, the last of the Old Testament prophets, declared, "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple," but more than four hundred years elapsed before the messenger came to prepare the way and before the Lord Himself came to the temple. Is it any wonder that the prophet cried, "Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night?" What rejoicing then when the watchman at length said, "The morning cometh!" The

darkness has been dispelled, the Sun of righteousness has risen with healing in his wings and we today walk in the light of that Sun. We see more of that Light than did the shepherds of Judea, or the wise men from the East; and we today can say, Emmanuel, God with us, to save us from sin and to give us the victory.

3. *What was the motive of the giver of this gift?* If you should receive a valuable gift from some friend but should later learn that it was not given with the proper motive, not from love or friendship, would not that fact detract greatly from your appreciation of it? If, on the other hand, you should receive a gift of but small intrinsic value, but were convinced that there is heart and friendship in it, would not that fact make it a precious gift to you?

Here now we have a great Gift to begin with; not great, it is true, in money value; for it is but a poor Babe, that Babe of Bethlehem. Nor is there any promise of gold or silver connected with the coming of the Messiah. We are to bring Him gold and silver as well as frankincense and myrrh, as did the wise men, but neither He nor His fore-runner said that He would enrich us with material things. It is not a Gift, then, great in money value, but a Gift great in service. A person is given us, a person in whom God is with us, who is to bring us back to God, reconcile us with God, restore again the full communion between us and God, and so make man happy again in God his Maker. If there is great joy in a home when a son is born there, binding husband and wife together more closely and giving rise to great hopes and expectations, how much greater the joy here where a Son has been born to unite heaven and earth, which for ages had been divorced through sin and wrath?

But we know also just what God's purpose was in giving His Son. The angel said, "On earth peace, good will toward men." What heart but a heart of love, a heart that has entered into deepest sympathy with us, a heart of sincerest compassion, laden too with every balm that can heal and every word that can comfort — what but such a heart can send forth peace to the earth and assure all men of good will? When Jesus was baptized the Father's voice was heard from

heaven, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"; and on the Mount of Transfiguration this voice was repeated with the additional words, "Hear ye him." That is, hear ye Him that ye may live, for to that end I have given Him. Jesus Himself later testified, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son." Last Sunday we were told that "no man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." Now, in all the teaching of Jesus can you find anywhere the least intimation that God had any other object in view in sending His Son, than to manifest His love and mercy unto the salvation of men? Or if you look at Jesus as the revelation of God in His own person and works, do you not here also find a revelation of love? Follow Jesus as He goes about doing good, healing the sick, cleansing the leper, cheering the downcast, comforting the sorrowful; follow Him to Olivet where He sits weeping over Jerusalem because she would not repent; stand at a distance — for it is holy ground — and see Him in Gethsemane praying for strength to drink the bitter cup; follow Him to Golgotha where as He hangs upon the cross He prays for His enemies, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Is not all this a revelation of love? Well could the apostle say, "God is love."

That God's motive in sending His Son was love, is seen also from the permanent relation which He establishes between us and Himself. Enemies will not dwell together. Hatred separates. Love alone unites and keeps together. Jesus is called Immanuel, God with us. God wants to be with us, wants to dwell with us. There is no stronger evidence of God's love for us than that fact. Think of that when you hear His knock at your heart. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." And this union is not for a day or for a year, but it is God with us forevermore.

But there is another thought here. "God with us"; that means also that we are to be with God. Do you realize that fact and are you working to that end? Have you a

Christmas prayer in your heart today that you may draw nearer to God in love? If that is not a fruit of this festal season, our services and festivities will have missed their purpose. Remember that this is a relation of love and the love must be reciprocal. God cannot be with you, if you are not ready to be with Him. Jesus, knocking at your heart, will not come in unless you say, "Come in, dear Master, and abide with me."

Is there anything lacking, then, in this great gift of God's Son to the world? Can you think of anything that might be added to make the gift more complete? Is there a want that He cannot fill, a pain that He cannot ease, a hope that He cannot fulfill? Have we not then in the Babe of Bethlehem the greatest joy in the world? Is not then the birth of Jesus Christ the most joyous event in all the annals of time? No wonder that the angels came down from heaven to make glad music for men and in turn sang, "Glory to God in the highest." Join we in the glad chorus. Amen.

SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

LUKE 2: 25-32

And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost that he should not see death, until he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law, then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.

THE great festival of Christmas is past, but its light is still with us. Indeed, it is growing in brightness, just as the Christ-child is growing in strength from week to week. Great was the hope and the joy of the Virgin when the Child was laid in her bosom, for the angel had said that He should be "called the Son of the Highest." An additional impetus was given that joy when the shepherds came and worshiped and when the wise men came and opened their treasures of gold, frankincense and myrrh. There was a further increase of joy when Simeon took up the child Jesus in the temple and uttered words of wonderful meaning. This incident in the life of Christ should be instructive for us. According to the law the first-born male child in Israel was holy unto the Lord and was required to be redeemed with an offering. To present the child Jesus to the Lord and to redeem Him was the purpose of the visit of Jesus' parents to the temple at this time. It was on their arrival there that Simeon came into the temple and took the Child up in his arms. We have here, then, the picture of an aged man

FONDLING THE CHRIST CHILD.

We ask, first:

1. *Who fondles the Christ-child?* The first answer of the text is, He who has lived in the fear of God: "And

behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout." Who this Simeon was as to his person and office is not stated. Some hold that he was a prominent man in Jerusalem; others hold that he was unknown. But whether one or the other makes very little difference. Jesus has said: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." Paul speaks of those who do not mind earthly things, but whose "conversation is in heaven." As such an one Simeon appears here, whatever his place or condition among men may have been.

It seems plain that Simeon was not a priest, otherwise it would certainly have been mentioned. Yet he appears here in what may be called the capacity of a priest. He comes to the temple, recognizes the Christ, takes up the Child, honors Him and speaks of His high and holy office before those about him. The priests of the temple did not know the Christ, did not honor Him, did not declare His name, but this man did. Sometimes where priests and ministers fail to do the will of God and the works of the church, laymen take their places.

Though we are not told who Simeon was, we are told what he was; and that is the more important. In a cemetery in West Virginia a number of soldiers lie buried. Their monument bears this inscription, "No one knows who they were; all the world knows what they were." In human history only the names of the great live — mostly only for a time; in the kingdom of God the names of the lowly become great and gain renown and live on forever. Two things are said of Simeon; one is that he was "just." The word characterizes his life and conduct in relation to the law. Like Zacharias and his wife Elizabeth, so Simeon walked in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. He had no pleasure in sin but sought the ways of truth and righteousness. That his righteousness was not a mere outward form like that of the Pharisees but came from the heart, is seen from the second thing that is said about him, namely, that he was also "devout." The word indicates that his righteousness and religious conduct proceeded from the

heart and had a large measure of love and conscience in it. He feared God and walked as before the Lord.

Such was Simeon who fondled the Christ-child. You will not find a man doing this whose heart is given to sin and finds no pleasure in righteousness, or in the service of God. The Christ-child is the Lord's Christ, who is to regulate one's life, guide it into the way of righteousness and peace. But that man will have little interest in Christ, who has little interest in being just and devout before God. A man who has little love and taste for art will show little interest in a fine painting. So too will a man who has little or no taste for the things of God, show little interest when Christ the very fulness of God appears before him.

How do you stand this test? Are you ready to take up the Christ-child, not only as a sweet child, but as your Lord and Master and the hope of your salvation? Has your life been such during the past year, so devoted to righteousness, to the service of your neighbor and to the doing of God's will, that the desire has been growing upon you to go to the temple where, in Word and Sacrament, you may take up the Christ-child and press Him to your heart as your only Lord and Redeemer?

He furthermore fondles the Christ-child, who waits for the consolation of Israel. "Waiting for the consolation of Israel" is a further statement concerning Simeon. This consolation was the deliverance which the Messiah was to effect. It represents Israel in destitution or in a state of bondage; not however the bondage of mere political subjection to another nation, but the bondage under sin, under the curse and power of sin. This deliverance was the object of Simeon's deep thought and earnest desire, like that of the sick man, longing for health; of the wanderer, longing for home and rest; of the prisoner, longing for freedom.

And note, too, that it was not only for his own personal deliverance that he was concerned, but for the consolation of all Israel, his own people, for whom his heart beat strong. This is a characteristic of the men of God, which we must not overlook. They are not narrow in their view of God's redemption; they all take in at least their own people; most

of them reach out also to the gentile world, even as Simeon here says, "A light to lighten the gentiles" as well as the glory of the people of Israel. We need to keep that fact before us right here in the Christmas season. Christ came to redeem the world. There is laid in that fact the proper basis, not only for church and missionary work, but also for the proper sphere of one's personal religion, peace and righteousness. If you are seeking a Savior just for yourself, without any thought of the need of others, then you are missing the spirit of the Gospel and the spirit of Christmas and you will not find the Christ-child.

Simeon therefore rejoiced greatly when he found the Child. He had been waiting long for this occasion; and it was not enough for him simply to lay his eyes upon the Child; he must take Him up in his arms and press Him to his heart, so precious is He. It is a beautiful sight at any time to see a gray-haired man take up a little babe in his arms and, his face all aglow with gladness, fondle the child and utter significant words. But here, the unexpectedness of the meeting; the strangeness of the faces; the wonderful things that are said, all conspire to make this one of the most remarkable scenes in child-life. We find such scenes nowhere but in the life of the Child Jesus.

Here again we cannot expect a man to be greatly interested in the Christ-child, nor catch the proper spirit of Christmas, if in his life he is little concerned about the consolation of Israel, the redemption which Christ has effected for him and all mankind. Such a person either does not feel the need of such salvation, does not feel his sin, is satisfied with himself and like the Laodiceans feels himself rich and increased with goods; or else he is seeking his consolation in something else, seeking like Dives to fill any void of his heart with the pleasures of the world.

Here let us be honest with ourselves. There is always great interest in the Christmas festival. Preparations are made weeks in advance. "Do your shopping early," is the cry of the merchants. There is racing back and forth for the objects desired and for bargains, often, too, with little consideration for the rights and convenience of others. Well-

filled purses grow thin and where they fail, loan banks are prepared to furnish a further supply. But what lies at the basis of it all? What is the ethical character of all this activity? That it is not all of the flesh and the devil we believe; that there is much genuine good-will in the giving of gifts and especially in the efforts made to provide a day of good cheer for the poor we concede. But how much of Christ is in it all? How much interest in the consolation of Israel? Shops and theaters are crowded, but when we come to the churches where the real spirit of Christmas should appear, what do we find? Very ordinary interest, generally poor attendance, unless the occasion be some Santa Claus exhibition; small offerings made for the cause of Christ, at least when compared with the heavy deposits made at the shops. Must we not conclude from all this that comparatively few are prepared to fondle the Christ-child as the hope and consolation of Israel?

Again, he fondles the Christ-child to whom the Spirit has revealed Him; "And the Holy Ghost was upon him. And it was revealed to him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, until he had seen the Lord's Christ." We are not told just how this revelation was made to Simeon. But the reason is given why it was made and that is the more important, for it shows under what conditions we may expect similar revelations. We have seen that this man Simeon was devout, righteous and waited for Him, and this fact shows that these things constituted the very substance of his life. Here, then, was a man given to the things of God, waiting for further revelations. When the Word came to him about righteousness, about devoutness, about the consolation of Israel, it found open ears and a ready heart. Here was a man so desirous of these things that he prayed to be spared from death, until he had seen the Lord's Christ. To such an one God was willing to make further revelations. To such an one it was easy for the Spirit to find ways and means to show him who and where the Christ-child was.

Here we find the chief explanation of the fact that men have so little knowledge of the Christ-child. There is little interest and hence little revelation and little knowledge.

A man with little interest in books will get little out of books; a man with little interest in art will see little in art; a man with no eye for nature will learn little from nature. Revelations in these things do not come to men who are not looking for them. So, too, the Spirit does not reveal Christ to men who are not looking for spiritual things. The means of revelation are here. You have the Bible in your homes; the Word of God may be read from countless books and papers; you can hear it in the house of God; evidences of the power of the Gospel meet you everywhere; and through these means the Spirit can reveal Christ to you. But you must be looking for the things of Christ. The church-service is often criticized; the sermon is not always what it should be; for it is hard to preach a fine sermon every Sunday. But may the fault not often lie on the other side of the house? It takes something to be a good hearer. Jesus Christ was the greatest of all preachers, yet few were fully enlightened under His preaching. But for those who were willing to hear and who were looking for the things He had to give, He was the fulness of light then as He is the fulness of light today.

But some one may say, Have you not left out the sinner who is suddenly converted, without apparently seeking Christ? Have you not forgotten the Magdalenes, the Sauls, the malefactors, the jailors? No, they are all included. In these the change has been more sudden, apparently, more dramatic, but the thing itself is the same. The fear of God had set in, there was looking and waiting for deliverance, there was readiness to hear and to receive, and revelation therefore followed. They were ready to receive the Christ-child, and when He was presented, took Him up and fondled Him.

2. *What does such an one find in the Christ-child?* First of all he finds Christ Himself: "And he came by the spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law, then took he him up in his arms and blessed God." We are not told how Simeon was informed by the Spirit that he should go into the temple just at this time and that the child which

he should find there would be the Christ-child. It may have been no more than a thought or suggestion, coming to his heart, that he should do these things. But whatever it was, Simeon was quick to obey, and because he sought he also found.

Do not expect some extraordinary message from the Spirit, telling you where and when to find the Christ-child. Is it not enough and a message of the Spirit when on Sunday morning you feel that you ought to go to church to hear more about Christ and His will and to worship God in fellowship with your brethren? That is about all the message from the Spirit that you can expect and that is enough. By following that admonition, moreover, you will make no mistake; you will be led to where the Christ-child is. If you have a suggestion to go elsewhere to hear some strange voice, then beware; try the spirit to see whether it be of God.

In the second place, he who fondles the Christ-child finds readiness to depart this life: "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word." That Simeon had in mind departure out of this life is evident from what is said above that "he should not see death, until he had seen the Lord's Christ." There is something pathetic in the scene. Here was an old man tired of life. He was like God's aged people today; they have enough of life - just waiting for the call to go home. Yet, though tired of life, this man was not ready to go; not because of any earthly attachments as we find to be so often the case, but because he first wanted to see the consolation of Israel. Now his heart's desire is gratified, now he is ready to go. His service for God in this world is ended; he had kept alive in his own heart and no doubt had kept alive in the hearts of others the hope for the Christ, until that hope was realized. Now he asks God to dismiss him from His service; the day's work is done, the sun nigh to setting.

Here was no grasping to the last moment for the things of this life. Neither was there any fear, nor uncertainty. Blessed the man so prepared. The child is ready for bed when it asks to retire; so Simeon asked that his body might

be laid to rest and his spirit set free to go to its Maker. The merchant-man is ready to weigh anchor when the ship is fully laden; so Simeon, on a foreign shore, is laden with the consolation of Israel and is ready for the journey home. It is said of Voltaire that in his last illness he demanded of his physician that he save his life, or at least lengthen it six months. He would then give him half of his possessions. "If not, I will go to the devil and take you along," said he. When the philosopher Plotinus was on his death bed, he was in great fear of the devil whom he thought he had destroyed in his life-time. There are cases where the wicked seem to die peacefully and people who judge only by what they see are ready to say: "All is well." But what would they say if they saw the soul's awakening? For so died the rich man and was buried, but he lifted up his eyes in hell in great torment.

But how about ourselves? Are we ready to depart this life? There is only one event in your life that is more important than your birth, that is the hour of your death? All is well that ends well. Your life began in sin and sorrow; the first sound you uttered was a cry. Through all these years sin and evil have accompanied you; you have not been able to rid yourself of these ill-omens. But as the sun sinks to the horizon, what are your expectations? What is the great desire of your heart? What have you found during all these years? Have you found the consolation of Israel? Are you satisfied that at death's gateway you are going to be separated from all your sin and from all the ills of this mortal life? Are you ready for the *nunc dimittis* that we hear at every sacramental service: "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace?"

In the third place, he who fondles the Christ-child finds his hopes realized: "For mine eyes have seen thy salvation." We have seen that the persons who fondle the Christ-child have great hopes and expectations. These hopes need to be realized, else there will be disappointment. But Simeon was not disappointed, and the particular point to be emphasized here is the fact that his hopes were realized alone in the Christ-child. Possibly a number of things had

occurred during his lifetime that seemed to be a fulfillment of certain prophecies and a realization of certain hopes. Whether Simeon knew of the birth of the Baptist and of what was said at his circumcision we are not told; but even if he had known of those things and had been an eye-witness, that would not have satisfied his soul. It would have cheered him and given him an alert eye for the Star of greater magnitude. But he must see that Star, he must have the Christ-child in his arms, before he is fully satisfied.

That is the prime fact which stands out today yet as the distinctive mark of Christianity. There is no realization of the hopes of the soul except in Christ. You may look back over your past life, at your good deeds, at what you have suffered; you may look to the teachings of science, of philosophy, of the moralist and of the naturalist; you may listen to the dreams of the spiritualist; you may set up a theory of your own, but nowhere will you find the realization of the hopes of the soul except in Christ Jesus. Everything that men may offer is a delusion. It may do to live by — for a while — but it will not do to die by. *In pace* is written only upon the monuments of the ransomed of the Lord, who are returning and coming to Zion “with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”

In the fourth place, he who fondles the Christ-child finds in Him salvation for all the world: “Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.” Of no other light could Simeon say these things. All the countless candles in the world cannot make a day; it requires the full-orbed sun. The Law given by Moses shed a considerable light, but only upon one side of life and upon one side of God. Israel under the Law was like a mountain whose one side is constantly under the shadow. And nowhere do we see that the Law of Moses threw its rays upon the gentile world; a few gentiles came in, but the Mosaic economy did not go out in search of them. How different the salvation which God has prepared for all people. No essential distinction is made: “there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is

neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.”

Here then is a missionary thought. You cannot properly fondle this Christ-child without thinking of all who are lost. This fact is very material to your own full assurance; you cannot feel that Jesus is your Savior unless you believe Him to be the Savior of all others. For if some are excluded, what assurance have you that you are included? And from that standpoint of our lesson you cannot look with indifference upon missions. We are not told here what Simeon did. Of the prophetess Anna it is said that she spoke of Christ to “all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.” Doubtless Simeon did no less. Nor should we do less. If we would be Simeons at the first, let us be Simeons at the last also. May the light that has shone into our hearts be reflected upon others that they may see the glory of Israel and the Light of the world. Amen.

NEW YEAR'S DAY

LUKE 4:16-21

And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet *Isaias*. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.* And he closed the book, and he gave *it* again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, *This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.*

A *Blessed new year to you in the name of Jesus of Nazareth:* "A safe journey" say we to a friend who is leaving for some distant point. We all start this morning upon a journey of three hundred and sixty-five days. We all started at the same instant and we shall complete the journey at the same instant. We know not whither the year will bring us, nor what our experience will be along the way; we know only the length of the journey, though for some the time will seem longer, for others shorter. Nor do we know whether we shall complete the journey upon earth; quite probably some of us shall finish the year in another world.

"A safe journey," we say. This is an expression of good will. It should be more, a prayer that God's grace and blessing may attend us. There is hope and encouragement in such a start. Like a flock of birds in autumn preparing for their passage to a summer clime, full of instinctive hope and filling the air with their music, so we all start and travel together, rejoicing together, weeping together, bearing one another's burdens and so fulfilling the law of Christ. We should do these things for one another in general; we should do them for one another as members of this congregation in particular.

And while we are extending greetings, let them be the very best. Our lesson suggests what they should be. The echoes of Advent and Christmas are still in our ears — echoes of “peace on earth” and of “good will toward men.” This is the message that we must carry with us into the new year. We here find Jesus teaching for the first time in His home city. In what He says there is help for us to carry the burdens of the year before us. He declares that this is “the acceptable year of the Lord” and that great things are being done. These things were true then, they are true today; and from these words of Christ let us gather

OUR BEST NEW YEAR'S GREETING.

In making up this greeting we shall first speak of something that is not in the text, except negatively, namely, that:

1. *Chief emphasis must not be laid upon material things.* In a world of sin such as we live in, it is very important to know what we should not do. All the commandments but two say, “Thou shalt not.” No commandment of course is kept by simply not doing the things forbidden; but the thing of doing sin lies so near our corrupt hearts that the Lord deemed it best to speak of that first. So, too, it is well in starting the new years to have it clearly understood that material things are not the chief things to seek after.

Money, success, prosperity are not in themselves sinful but they are apt to bewitch and possess the heart, and that is sinful. How true this is may be seen when witnessing the parting of friends. If you start on a journey to some distant place your friends show much concern about your general welfare, that no accident may befall you, no attack of sickness, no misfortune to life or property. As to purely spiritual things little or nothing is said; many do not even think of them. One might readily infer that there is no danger involved at this point, that the soul needs no particular concern and watching. But the explanation is this, that we are more concerned about the things of the body. The admonition of Jesus to seek first the kingdom of God is reversed and for that reason we so often start the year wrong.

From men of the world we do not expect anything better. For them life has no other object, the year no other purpose. This is their hope: May there be good health during the year, no death in the family, no financial reverse, success in business, an enjoyable, happy year. Here is where the inventory is taken. A year that registers no loss at these points is generally considered a successful year. But should we not expect more of Christians who have heard the lessons of the past Advent Sundays, who have worshipped toward Bethlehem and have stood in the temple with Simeon and beheld the consolation of Israel? Shall we not expect them to have other thoughts, at the beginning of the year than of money and pleasure, or of bonds and stocks?

We should see the prime importance of spiritual things as suggested in our lessons. Jesus speaks of "the acceptable year of the Lord." We want the new year to be an acceptable year, do we not? Jesus declares furthermore that the Spirit of the Lord is upon Him and that He is anointed of the Lord to do a great work for His people, but when we look at that work we find that it is concerned primarily about the things of the soul. Again we here find Jesus for the first time teaching in His home city. Here He was "brought up," grew from childhood to manhood and received His home training; here He increased in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man; here were His friends who had been His playmates in childhood and His associates and companions in youth. Among these people He now stands up to speak, surely He will not speak to them of trifles and mere pleasant reminiscences. He who has come to be the deliverer of His people will surely speak of His mission, of what weighs most heavily upon His heart and of what is most needful for His nation. We therefore do not find Jesus explaining here how the natural resources of His country may be developed, nor does He offer a remedy for the political ills of His people, nor does He propose a method for the removal of poverty; but He deals with the great spiritual facts which concern the soul and which constitute the basis of man's real happiness, both for this world and for that which is to come.

Material things are not to be excluded. God has given us a body and He has stocked the world with a great abundance of the good things in which the body rejoices. In his own day Jesus gave strength and health to the body as well as peace and joy to the soul. Today yet He gives home and country as well as church and salvation. And does He not in His own matchless prayer teach us to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread," and "Deliver us from evil?" And when He tells us to "seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness," He hastens to assure us that all other things needed will be added. No need of fear then for these things. The year is not given us primarily for meat and drink, but if we walk in the ways of God, the three hundred and sixty-five days of the year will find our larders amply supplied. — In the second place we find that:

2. *Chief emphasis must be laid upon the things of Jesus Christ:* Let me note briefly the things of which Jesus here speaks. I have been anointed, says He, "to preach the Gospel to the poor." At another time when He was asked of the Baptist if He was the Christ He gave as a proof of His messiahship that the "poor have the Gospel preached unto them." Jesus was the friend of every man; He knew no classes from any mere social viewpoint. But Jesus was then and is today yet the special friend of a particular class of poor people for whom He has a special message. But they are the poor in spirit: "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." They are the people who feel their sins and their want of righteousness and fitness to stand before God. But they are humble and bowed down and to them Jesus comes with the message of forgiveness and peace.

"He hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted," continues the great Teacher. There are many people in this world with broken hearts and there are many things to break the heart. One man's heart is broken because he has lost his wealth, another has lost his health, another, a friend, another, social standing, or some official position. But such conditions do not constitute the brokenheartedness for which Jesus was sent. These are accidents in life, not funda-

mentals. The brokenhearted are those who feel their sins and the sting of a guilty conscience; and they are troubled, not only because of wrath and threatened punishment, but they are also distressed because they have sinned against a kind heavenly Father and they are now honestly looking about for deliverance, for peace and comfort. To these Jesus comes with the healing balm of Gilead.

Furthermore Jesus came to "preach deliverance to the captives, prisoners of war. Any one who has read or heard of the treatment of prisoners in our own late Civil War knows that the lot of such people is a most pitiable one. Cruelty, want, filth, sickness and a hundred other ills were their companions, besides the greatest evil of all, that they were deprived of their liberty. By reminding us of the wretched condition of prisoners Jesus wants us to see the awful plight of those taken captive by Satan and held fast in the fetters of sin. For these Jesus has a message of deliverance. It is authorized by the King of heaven. Their sin shall be forgiven and the power of lust and the flesh shall be broken, so that they may step forth again into freedom and serve the Lord God instead of an alien master.

"And recovering of sight to the blind." Blind Bartimaeus and others experienced this wonderful power of Jesus. But the restored light of the eye was symbolical of the inner light to be given to the soul. When the Baptist said, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world"; when Peter said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," "thou hast the words of eternal life"; when Mary sat at Jesus' feet and heard His words of grace; when the malefactor upon the cross turned to Jesus and said, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom" — these are cases of spiritual surgery where Jesus opened the eyes of the soul to see the Savior in His grace and beauty.

"To set at liberty them that are bruised." We may think here of the slave under the lash of his master, bruised and bleeding, groaning to be free, yet helpless to achieve his liberty. It is another powerful likeness, setting forth the distress and anguish of the man who has become a slave to

lust and his passions, as the drunkard to the cup, who is reaping the reward of his misdeeds in a guilty conscience and in a ruined body, but who is now looking and praying for a deliverer. Jesus also came to set these free and to place them under a Master whose yoke is easy and whose burden is light.

“To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.” Reference is had here to the great year of Jubilee among the Jews, occurring every fiftieth year, when debts were remitted, confiscated homes restored to their original owners and bond-slaves set free; a year too when the land was not tilled, but when the fields nevertheless spontaneously produced the needed supply which was free to all. It was a great year for the Jews and it strikingly sets forth the Gospel era which Jesus ushered in. Here every debt of sin is forgiven, every slave of sin and Satan set free, every one placed in possession of all needed spiritual supplies. Now is realized the prophet’s promise, “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the water, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.”

Such are the things Jesus declares to His fellow townsmen, these the treasures He commends to them, these the marks of an acceptable year. They are the great things of the soul and of life, things that do not pass away with the new year, but endure forever.

However we did not say above that chief emphasis must be laid upon spiritual things, but upon the things of Jesus Christ. We said so for a purpose. Many people may be ready to say, Yes, the proper way to begin the year is to plan it with reference to the things of the soul. The Jew may tell you that, the Mormon, the Spiritualist, the Christian Scientist, the Unitarian, the Universalist. But neither you nor I want to follow out their ideas during this year of grace. It would be a strange path for us. We should not feel at ease, neither would we reach our goal. Every man may of course believe what he chooses. We are willing also to concede that these people are seeking God and aiming for heaven. But they will pardon us for believing that they are

upon the wrong way. We have taken our start at Bethlehem and the way leads to Golgotha and the open sepulchre. It is a different way from theirs, but it is the only way with marks of full assurance. It has the mark of the word of prophecy, the mark of the fulfillment of prophecy, the mark of satisfied divine justice, the mark of infinite love, the mark of free grace, and all these moreover converge in Him who said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me." Therefore we say that emphasis must indeed be laid upon spiritual things, but upon spiritual things as they have been revealed in Christ Jesus.

This fact is brought out nicely in our today's lesson. Notice the central position which Jesus assumes in the scene; not this that He stood up to read; any Jew was at liberty to do that; but the importance which He attaches to His person, the very high and the unique position He assumes among His townsmen. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon *me*, because he hath anointed *me* to preach the Gospel to the poor; he hath sent *me* to heal the broken-hearted"; *I* am to preach deliverance to the captives, *I* am to bring recovery of sight to the blind, *I* am to set at liberty them which are bruised, *I* am to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. May we not rightly say of such assumption, either it is unheard of egotism or the illusion of a dreamer, or it is the gracious Word and Promise of God? We know now that it is the latter, for Jesus did not only claim that He would do these things, but He actually did them; and they are being realized today in the experience of every believer just as really as on the day when He stood up to teach in the town of Nazareth.

We are told here furthermore that when Jesus was sat down and was about to begin to teach, "the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened upon him." Brethren, one and all, young and old, I cannot possibly give you any better advice for the new year than this: Fasten your eyes upon Jesus of Nazareth. You have looked upon Him as the Babe of Bethlehem, you have observed Him as a child presented unto the Lord in the temple, today you see

Him as a man, fully grown, teaching His fellow townsmen; a teacher come from God, teaching the way of God in truth; a Light lighting every man that cometh into the world; a Comforter for the distressed: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"; a source of life and strength for every one who will trust Him. Keep your eyes through the year on Jesus of Nazareth. And if I this year, as your servant by the grace of God, can hold up to your eyes Christ as the crucified, though living One, and in such a way as to draw your eyes of faith to Him, then shall my work in your midst this year not have been in vain.

Nor is the case such that you find only spiritual things in Christ Jesus. There is in our Savior a wonderful union of the spiritual and the material, of the heavenly and the earthly, for He is both the Son of God and the Son of man. He brings us not only the gifts of heaven, but He assures to us also the good things of earth. There is a happy union of the spiritual and the material in His teaching here in Nazareth. His language and illustrations are taken from material and earthly conditions. But if we say that this language must receive a spiritual interpretation, our reply is that the best commentary on these sayings of Jesus is what He did in His life, where He healed not only the soul but also the body. As in the days of His flesh no one who came to Him with any real trouble of soul or body and who was humble and trustful, was ever sent away comfortless; so also today whatever this year may bring you in the way of labor or grief, if you go to Jesus with an humble and trusting heart, He will not send you away empty. He has told you to be as carefree about meat and drink as the bird in the tree-top, for He has placed Himself under necessity of caring for you. Cast ye your care upon the Lord, for He careth for you. The Church is often criticized for promising so much in heaven, but doing so little for men's needs upon earth. But the Church is trying to teach just what Jesus told us to do, seek first "the kingdom of God and his righteousness"; and wherever men follow Jesus' admonition, they find that He is an ample provider also for

the body, but they need to remember another word of Jesus that "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."— In the third place we find that:

3. *The present year is the acceptable year of the Lord:* "And he began to say unto them, this day is the scripture fulfilled in your ears." The case with the people of Nazareth was a little different from that of ours. For them there was now for the first time a real fulfillment of the words which Jesus read. For centuries the Scriptures had been read and expounded in their synagogue, but whatever was said about the Messiah, was only prediction. Now, however, it is no longer a promise of the future, but it is fulfillment. If there were any poor there, He was there to preach the Gospel to them; if any brokenhearted, He was there to comfort them; if any blind, He was there to give them sight. For them it was therefore an acceptable year of the Lord, such as they had never had before. It out-shone any Sabbatic or Jubilee year Nazareth had ever known; it was the greatest opportunity the village ever had.

It is not quite the same with us. What we hear today is not new, we have heard these things before. And when we say, even with emphasis, this is the acceptable year of the Lord, you may reply, We heard you say that last year; indeed we have heard that claim made every year of our life. There is nothing new today, no new promise; it is the same Gospel that we heard in our childhood and to which our fathers before us listened. We do not see therefore that this year has any advantage over the year that has just passed.

Quite true, and yet we maintain that this should be a year of greater spiritual advantage to you than any year of your past life. You will concede that your need of divine grace is just as great today as it ever was; you will concede that the offer of grace is just as full and free today as it ever was; you will concede that God is just as able and just as willing to bestow these gifts of grace today as He ever was; in all these respects the year promises to be the equal of any that is past. But what of your own experience? What of your accumulated knowledge? Are these things

of no value? Do they not fit you to get more out of this year than you did out of the year just past? Does Jesus not say that to him that hath shall be given? Where is the teacher that does not profit by his year's work and set out with the new year to do better work? Where is the merchant for whom the old year did not have valuable lessons which he will apply to a better conduct of his business in the new? Is it only in spiritual things that we make no progress and that the days past have no lesson for the days to come?

That is the thought which we here especially want to drive home. We are living in the era of grace. More than nineteen hundred years since Christ came; almost nineteen hundred years the full light of the Gospel has been shining upon the benighted world. How long it will continue to shine we know not. This entire period, however, is the acceptable year of the Lord. But for the Church every succeeding twelve months should be a greater year. There should be growth, a fuller, firmer grasp of the facts of salvation; greater rejoicing in the good things God has given us; a broader application of these things to life; and a more energetic pushing out of the lines of God's kingdom, until all the world hears the Word of the Lord. Write then over the portal of your heart, this year by the grace of God, shall be a greater and better year for me than the last one. Amen.

SUNDAY AFTER NEW YEAR

MATTHEW 16: 1-4

The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting, desired him that he would shew them a sign from heaven. He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, *It will be fair weather*; for the sky is red. And in the morning, *It will be foul weather today*; for the sky is red and lowering. O ye hypocrites! ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not *discern* the signs of the times? A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. And he left them, and departed.

WITH this Sunday we close the Christmas cycle of the church year. The great subject was the coming of Christ into the flesh. Naturally it was the Christ-child that was here presented to the world. But the Christ did not remain a child; like any other child He grew up to full manhood, for He came to consecrate every stage of human life, from the cradle up through childhood and youth to manhood. And in the last two lessons of the cycle it was no longer the Child but the Man Jesus who was before us and already in the midst of His work. Today, furthermore, we find Him already in hot conflict with His enemies.

Pharisees and Sadducees are the enemies of Christ in our lesson. These two sects were in reality at enmity with each other, but in their common hatred of Jesus they were willing to lay aside their differences and combine their forces against the Lord's Anointed. They appear here as friends of each other and even of Jesus, only desiring a sign from heaven as an additional proof that He is the Messiah. The request appears reasonable and why not grant it, if that would bring them to faith? But Jesus sees the motive and the duplicity of their hearts and no sign is granted at this time.

Jesus' reproof, showing that though these men believed in signs, yet did not discern the signs of the times, suggests the subject for our consideration this morning,

THE SIGNS OF OUR TIMES.

These signs are of two general classes: The bad signs, and the good signs.

1. *The bad signs of our times:* It will throw light upon our own day if we first look at the times in which the scene of our lesson is laid. The very worst sign of that time was the request which these men made of Christ. They seek a sign from heaven. Why? They are not yet convinced that Jesus is the Christ. Why? What is back of their unbelief? There are different kinds of unbelief. One kind is the natural unbelief which is common to all unconverted men; by our own will and strength we do not and cannot believe in Christ. But God promises grace to overcome this natural unbelief so that this alone is no sufficient reason why a man should not be brought to faith in Christ. If you ask a man with but one limb to come and dine with you, his crippled condition is no excuse for not coming if you at the same time offer him a pair of crutches.

Another kind of unbelief is that which is due to a man's lack of knowledge. A man can not believe in Christ if he has not heard of Him. "How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?" What is needed here is a preacher.

A third kind and the very worst kind of unbelief is willful unbelief; when men do not want to believe. This generally develops into active and malicious opposition to faith; such people resist every evidence of faith that is brought to bear upon them. That is just what these Pharisees and Sadducees did; they opposed every evidence of Christ as the Messiah that was presented. Such unbelief not only cuts one off from salvation as do all forms of unbelief, but it also shows that the person is very bad at heart; false, untrue, insincere, dishonest in his very heart; and when such persons still pretend to righteousness as did the Pharisees they must be set down as hypocrites, even as Jesus here called these men a wicked and adulterous generation.

These men would have Jesus think that they wanted to know the truth and that they were ready to believe in

Him just as soon as sufficient proof was furnished. Signs had been shown, but they pertained to earthly things, as healing the sick, feeding the multitudes, stilling the tempest. They ask a sign from heaven: for example, Give us manna from heaven as did Moses in the wilderness; or command the sun to stand still as did Joshua; or call down fire from heaven as did Elijah on Carmel; give us some such sign that we may know that Thou art come from God.

But if the Gospel is preached to an assembly of one thousand and only one repents and believes, is that not proof that the evidence was sufficient and that all might have believed? Jesus had some true followers at this time; the evidence that produced conviction in them would have sufficed for the Pharisees if they had been open to conviction. Look at some of the more evident proofs that could not possibly have escaped the eye of these watchful critics; the general yearning at that time for the Messiah and the expectation that He would soon come; the national movement toward John the Baptist to hear his preaching and accept his baptism; the characteristic teaching of Jesus, so different from anything the people had ever heard, satisfying their souls as nothing else had ever done; the many mighty miracles of Jesus; the sinlessness of His life; and finally the fulfillment of the Word of prophecy in Christ. We speak not here of the evidence coming from personal contact with Jesus as in the case of Nathanael or Nicodemus or the woman at Jacob's well; we speak here only of that public and general evidence which every one had opportunity to observe. Nor did the enemies of Christ lack the evidence of personal contact. Upon this very occasion as upon many others Jesus read the hearts of these men in such a way as should have convinced them that here was One greater than any prophet.

Here then was willful unbelief. Instead of gladly accepting the truth as far as they saw it and humbly asking for more light, which is the only way to find the full truth, they closed their eyes and hardened their hearts. Instead of approaching Jesus as friends, they opposed Him as enemies and sought to kill Him, which they also finally did. This

was the great evil omen of the time; for although it had its seat chiefly in the Scribes, Pharisees and Sadducees, yet the leaven had leavened the whole lump, so that Jesus wept for the nation at large because of their unbelief. There were other evils which afflicted the nation, such as worldliness and covetousness, but unbelief was the one great barrier that prevented the stream of God's grace from watering the land and making it bloom as a garden of roses.

What shall we say of our own day and people on this point? Are there any evil omens? Jesus says here that we should be able to discern them, whether good or evil: "Ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?" Much is being done to forecast the state of the weather, if only for a day or two in advance; nor is the effort without success. What are we doing to discern correctly the moral and spiritual conditions in Church, State and home? When the weather bureau flashes a signal across the continent that a storm is coming, shippers, merchants and farmers prepare for it. Are we as alert to detect the approach of any moral storm and to avert it?

For one thing, we can hardly say that men now are calling for a sign from heaven. There are of course some whose eyes are trained in that direction. Dives in hell wanted Abraham to send one of the dead to preach to his brothers upon earth; so there are some now who seek to hold conversation with the dead; that they seem to think would satisfy them and bring them peace. Others there are who think that Christ will come in glory in a year or two and their eyes are turned upward to see the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. There are still others who are looking for signs from heaven, but these are few in number compared with another class. The Jews did not believe the signs upon earth, but wanted one from heaven; today men do not believe the signs from heaven, but want them from the earth. What we mean is this: men no longer believe the heavenly, the supernatural, but only the natural. The supernatural and the spiritual cannot be accepted as real, only the rational and the natural. Faith cannot be used as a means for knowing things; only reason and the senses. I cannot know

that Jesus arose from the dead because I cannot understand how He could do so; that is their method of reasoning. As well say, it cannot be that a bolt from the sky can shatter an oak tree into splinters, because I do not understand how that is possible.

Here are some of the results of this way of reasoning: The Bible is not regarded as an inspired book, all divine truth and no error; much of its history is not considered to be history, but mere allegory or legend. The miracles recorded in the Bible are not held to be true accounts. No miracle ever took place; even Christ did not perform any miracles. Christ was only a man, not the Son of God. Christ did not die to atone for sin, only as a martyr to His convictions. The mysterious, the spiritual and the heavenly elements of truth are sloughed off so that only the natural and the rational remain. The religion itself is not a gift of God through revelation, but something natural which man can discover or bring about of himself. God in nature is a misnomer; nature is her own lord and God has nothing to do with rain or sunshine. History is the product of human thought and activity, and it is not God who exalts one nation and abases another. The result in general is that the spiritual and the supernatural are ignored and the natural and rational are given the only place in the program of men's thoughts and life.

The enthronement of reason over divine revelation we hold to be the worst omen of our time. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." That is eternal verity. But if we have nothing to do with God in nature or in history, and if the Bible is emptied of all that is divine and only the human is left, then why should we fear the Lord? If there be no God, or if man is not accountable to Him; if there be no hell to appall and no heaven to cheer, then why should men be kept from vice if they find pleasure therein? That there is a present increase in vice and crime, such as homicide, suicide, adultery and kindred sins, our daily records testify. There must be a cause for this. The most logical explanation is this, that men have departed from the fear of the Lord. In their mind God has been ruled

out of the world; He has been dethroned and His Word made of none effect. They have nothing to fear, therefore, and can go their own way like the wild asses of the wilderness.

That Jesus had in mind the unbelief of His day may be seen from His reply to His enemies, "A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonah." Notice the character which He imputes to that generation, "wicked and adulterous" — and the root of the iniquity is their unbelief; they did not believe the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so should Christ having been put to death for the sins of the world, be three days in the bowels of the earth and should rise again unto the justification of all who believe on Him. That was the greatest of all signs, by which the Jews should know that Christ was the Messiah. That sign is still in evidence today and all the world may see it. To reject the crucified, though living Christ, is to reject the offer of salvation, to cut one's self off from God's grace and to cast one's self into the arms of the world that lieth in wickedness and under the power of the devil.

There are other signs of the times which portend no good. There is a spirit of worldliness, of materialism in life — a craze for money-making — a disregard for authority that is alarming. But these are only symptoms — loathsome boils upon the body. The disease itself lies deeper. The fear of God and humble faith in His word are lacking. Cecil Rhodes declared: "Let a man be a Buddhist, let him be a Mohammedan, let him be a Christian, or what you will; let him call himself what he likes, but if he does not believe in a Supreme Being he is no man — he is no better than a dog." Faith in God and in His Son Jesus Christ is the only power that can subdue the world, the flesh and the devil.

2. *The Good Signs of our Times:* Our day has some good signs to speak of, thank God! Not everything is evil; the day is not all night, nor the year all winter. The gates of hell have not yet prevailed against the Church and they never shall. There is a most significant thing here, however,

which we must not overlook. The best signs in the day of Christ were connected with His person. Whatever yearning there was in that day and whatever hope of deliverance from galling ills, were associated with the Messiah, the promised Deliverer of Israel. So also today. The best signs are those which show that the world is looking toward Christ. Not only the question of man's eternal salvation, but also the great social problems of the present day, if they are to be solved at all, must find their solution in Jesus Christ; He is still the Anointed of the Lord to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, recovering of sight to the blind and to set at liberty them that are bruised.

We may already call it a good sign of our times that there is great dissatisfaction with present moral conditions in the social, business and political worlds. That is the first thing needed for improvement; the evils of the day must be uncovered. Much is being done toward this end. The press, the platform and other agencies as well as the pulpit are engaged in uncovering sin, exploring wickedness and in dragging the evil doer into the light. Here even the "muck-taker" is doing a good work. Nor are the efforts fruitless; unthought of wickedness in high and low places has been exposed, many an one has been justly disgraced for his crimes against his fellow men; some have been made acquainted with prison walls; not a few have sought to end their shame and disgrace in a suicide's grave.

We rejoice at these efforts for civic righteousness, though we fear greatly that the good work has not altogether the right basis, for it is not so much the force of God's Word and the fear of the Lord that are moving our people, as their mere natural sense of right and wrong. Such efforts will never develop the highest types of character. Yet we rejoice in these things, for an honest man, even if he does not believe in Christ, makes a better citizen and neighbor than a thief and a scoundrel. But we rejoice especially in these things because not a few of the leaders in this movement take their standard from the teachings of Jesus Christ. That is the best feature of the sign; it brings Christ into the movement, even if only as a Teacher and Example of right living.

There are other signs which promise better things. We discover them in the sphere of the church. They are better because they stand in closer connection with the person of Christ. One of these signs pertains directly to the Bible and its use. More copies of the Bible, in whole or in part, are being published, sold and distributed today than ever before. We believe that no thorough and permanent improvement in things spiritual, moral or social can be expected except on the basis of God's Word: "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word"; and "thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." Nor is it simply the distribution of the Holy Scriptures that is noteworthy; there is at present also more study of the Bible, especially in the Sunday school and in young people's organizations, than formerly. Much of the study is not of the right character, the Bible not being looked upon as the inspired Word of God, and Christ the crucified One as the Bible's center and source of all true moral and spiritual power and life. Yet good will come from the study of the Bible. It is especially cheering to hear complaint—and that too outside the Lutheran Church—that the training afforded our children in our public schools is very defective just because the Bible has no place in the curriculum. People are becoming dissatisfied with present conditions and are casting about for a corrective, and many have their eyes turned to the Scriptures.

Another good sign in the religious sky is the emphasis laid upon doing things. Today, in the business and political worlds and also in the sphere of religion, men insist upon seeing things done. Religion is more than mere knowing and believing; "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them!" Going to church on Sunday and displaying a one-day-in-a-week religion is not enough; men want to see religion put into practice every day of the week; they want to see it carried into the shop, the factory, the office—made as wide, in fact, as life itself. There is to be no nook or corner in life where one's religion does not shine or send its warming influence. Great emphasis is placed upon love—love that goes out and does good things for its neighbor.

If faith is accorded any great prominence it must be a "faith which worketh by love." Nor is this talk of action all empty talk. Great efforts are put forth to improve moral and social conditions, to remove the stress of poverty, to conquer disease, to lessen or stamp out vice and crime, to afford recreation and other cultural advantages for the submerged. Men give their wealth, others give their time and strength, others the fruit of their study and observation; and their object is to make life more tolerable for the unfortunate, to let sunshine into their homes.

Of course, here too, all is not gold that glitters. Much of this activity does not spring from the fear of God and faith in Christ. Some may think that by their works of benevolence they are paving their way to heaven. Here Christ is again robbed of His glory. But we do not expect any work among men to be perfect, and therefore we cast the mantle of charity over what is amiss and rejoice at the good.

Probably the very best sign in the religious sky is the increased missionary activity of the churches. Any one with close acquaintance with the work of the Church in the past, and with his hand upon her pulse at the present, does not need to be told that there is a more widespread and more intense missionary activity today than at any other time since the days of the Apostles. Christ's great commission to the Church is to "preach the Gospel to every creature." If the Church is more actively engaged in that work today than ever before, who will say that the signs of the time are not propitious? Sometimes we fear for the Church. We forget the promise that the truth shall prevail and that Christ shall conquer; and that if there is one proof stronger than any other that Christ is prevailing today, it is the increased missionary activity which we see.

But some one may object that this great activity is not all genuine missionary work. Doubtless there are defects here as in the other cases of good omens; but, we believe, in a less degree. The great body of missionaries, especially in the foreign field, are more sound in the faith than the home churches sending them. The Bible as the inspired

Word, Christ and Him crucified as the only Savior, salvation by grace through faith and not by works; these are the cardinal doctrines that prevail in the mission field; by these the Church shall go on conquering and to conquer. See we of the Lutheran Church to it, that we be among the victors. Amen.

EPIPHANY

MATTHEW 3: 13-17

Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan, unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbade him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering, said unto him, Suffer *it to be so* now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And, lo, a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

TODAY we begin the Epiphany cycle of the church year. Epiphany in church language means the manifestation of Christ. The festival of Epiphany has come to have a two-fold meaning; one of these is the manifestation of Christ to the gentile world. This thought is nicely brought out in the Gospel lesson on the star and the visit of the wise men from the East. Here the leading thought is Missions, especially Foreign Missions, and Epiphany has therefore come to be regarded as a kind of missionary festival. The other Epiphany thought is the manifestation of Jesus as the Savior of the world; and it is well set forth in our today's lesson on the baptism of Jesus, whereby He was consecrated to His great work, and in connection with which proof was given of His divine character and mission.

The Epiphany cycle embraces the Epiphany festival itself and the six Sundays following. We expect to find in these lessons a revelation, and that very largely a self-revelation, of Jesus as the Savior of the world. We should not forget, however, that this is only a church arrangement by which we dwell especially upon the self-revelation of Jesus during the Epiphany season. The fact is, that the entire life and work of Christ was a revelation of Himself as the world-Savior. Yet it should help us to a better understanding and appreciation of the work of Christ, if for a season we

dwell more especially upon the proofs that Jesus is the Messiah for all the world. A more appropriate place for this thought could hardly be found than immediately after the Christmas season. There we learned that He came in the flesh to be a Savior; here we shall see that He is the Savior for all men.

Today we shall speak of

JESUS' MANIFESTATION AS THE MESSIAH.

On the basis of our text we find this manifestation set forth in the Son's obedience, in the Spirit's descent, and in the Father's testimony.

1. *In the Son's Obedience:* One of the facts that stands out very prominently in the life of Jesus is that, in His entire redemptive work, He as the Son, was absolutely obedient to the will of His heavenly Father. As a boy of twelve He said in the temple, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" As a man in the midst of His work He declared, "I seek not my own will, but the will of my Father which sent me"; and again, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." In the garden, overwhelmed with bitter agony, He said, "Father, not my will, but thine be done." Here was the fulfillment of the Word of Prophecy, "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart."

Being the Son of God it could not be otherwise than that Jesus should be obedient to His Father, for true obedience is one of the characteristics of all the sons of God. But the character of Jesus' work also demanded such obedience. Jesus came to free us from the curse of the Law. To do this He had to shoulder that curse for us; and this in turn required that He be placed under the Law and be made subject to it. "When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law." In all these things Christ learned "obedience by the things which He suffered" and "humbled himself, and became obedient unto

death, even the death of the cross." All this, furthermore, was a manifestation of Himself as the Messiah and Savior of the world.

In our text Christ's obedience is set forth in His submission to baptism at the hand of John the Baptist. For eighteen years, since His visit to the temple at the age of twelve, not a word is recorded concerning the life of Jesus. We know nothing except that His home was at Nazareth, that He was subject unto His parents, that He increased in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man, and that He learned the carpenter's trade. Those were Jesus' quiet years, but the preparation for His great work went on. Though the Son of God, yet He grew in the knowledge of His heavenly Father's will and in the consciousness of the work which He was sent to do. He was biding the time when the word should come from His Father in heaven; Go, My Son, enter upon Thy work. Just how that word came to Jesus we do not know; nor is it necessary for us to know. But we do know that when it came Jesus was quick to obey. We may think of Him as telling His folks at home: The great call has come and I must go at once. His tools were laid aside, solemn leave was taken of His mother and brothers and He hastened to the Jordan to be baptized of John. It appears that Jesus had not been attending upon the preaching of the Baptist, and John elsewhere tells us that he did not know Jesus to be the Messiah until he saw the Holy Spirit descend upon Him. The Baptist doubtless meant that up to that time he had had no visible or official token as evidence that Jesus was the Christ. That John had some knowledge of Jesus seems evident from what he says here, for when Jesus requested baptism John said, "I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?" John must therefore have known of Jesus and of His sinless character. This request for baptism, however, he could not understand. He himself, who was a sinner, needed baptism at the hand of Jesus the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world; but as to Jesus, He was without sin; hence there could be no repentance and therefore no need of baptism unto repentance.

What then did Jesus' baptism signify? There is nothing in the account here nor elsewhere in the Scripture that sets forth fully the purpose of that sacred rite. We must therefore content ourselves with Jesus' reply to the Baptist, "Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness." Two things are clearly implied here: first, that Jesus did not need baptism for Himself. John's baptism was unto repentance, but Jesus had no sin to repent of, no old, depraved nature to bury. Hence no new birth was needed — no beginning of a new, personal consecrated life. Therefore this call for baptism seemed strange to John; it was like bleaching snow white cloth, or like washing spotless linen. But there were other considerations which did not pertain to Jesus' person, but to His office and work, and for the sake of these Jesus said, "Suffer it be so now." What these other considerations were is stated more fully in the words, "For thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness."

Jesus came to fulfill all righteousness, to do all the will of God. Men are not so insistent upon having the right done under all circumstances; the father passes by many a wrong deed of his children without demanding full satisfaction. We get as much right and justice as we can and leave the rest go. It is not so in God's kingdom; His will must be done in every case, or some one must suffer. You must obey the laws of health in your body or you must suffer for your sins. But men have not done this righteousness required by God, nor can they do so. Therefore Jesus came to do these things for them. When Jesus was circumcised on the eighth day, that was keeping the Law; when He was presented to the Lord in the temple at the age of forty days that was keeping the Law; when He attended the feast at Jerusalem, paid the temple tax, observed the Sabbath, all this was keeping the Law. Most of these things pertained to the Ceremonial Law, yet they were God's law given to His people. Obedience to God required obedience to these; and while the Jews often did these things in a mere perfunctory manner, Jesus did them in the real spirit of holiness. So too He went to Nazareth and was subject

unto His parents; and thus in all His life He did the will of God; and that was fulfilling all righteousness.

In this spirit Jesus came to John to be baptized of him. John's baptism was not a part of the Law; it rather belonged to the Gospel dispensation. But it was from heaven, from God, and full righteousness required that it be accepted, even also by Jesus, though He did not need it for Himself. And now the word had come to Him from His Father to begin His great work; and as baptism for the ordinary Israelite meant the beginning of a new life, so it meant for Jesus the entrance upon His Messianic life or public ministry, the working out of man's redemption by bearing the world's sin as the Lamb of God, and making atonement for it through His own blood.

There are two things here which we should not overlook. The one is for our comfort. Jesus has fulfilled all righteousness, and He did this for us. Even baptism is not omitted, though He did not need it for Himself. When our conscience condemns us and the devil accuses us of not having kept the righteous will of God, then here is our hope: Jesus has done all this for us, in Him we are secure against every assault. He is the cleft rock in which we hide and where we are safe against every shock of the storm. Luther tells us that upon one occasion the devil said to him, "Luther, thou art a great sinner; thou art lost." "Hold," said Luther, "I am a great sinner, I acknowledge that; but I am not lost, for Jesus has paid the penalty of my sin and has fulfilled all righteousness for me." Upon that the devil left him as he left Jesus in the temptation in the wilderness.

The other thing which we should here note is an admonition. Jesus was obedient to the law of righteousness in all things; and He did this for us. Shall we now not obey in the few things which are demanded of us? Obedience to God is a hard word to spell in our every-day life; it is easy to obey the flesh, but that works destruction. Can we not get inspiration and strength for this great work by looking unto Jesus? Try it. Keep Jesus before you as the obedient Son of His Father. We should learn obedience from the Baptist also. Jesus did not explain to him in

full why He needed baptism, but a word was enough for John. Some things which God asks of us we cannot fully understand. Let us obey anyway. There are mysteries in God's Word which we cannot fully grasp. Let us believe anyway. There are providential dispensations in life which we cannot fully understand. Let us obey anyway. There are mysteries in God's Word which we cannot fully grasp. Let us believe anyway. There are providential dispensations in life which we cannot fully explain. Let us submit anyway. There is often a mist hiding our view of the future. Let us hope anyway. — The manifestation of Jesus as the Messiah is set forth also in:

2. *The Spirit's Descent*: "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him." There are four other occasions upon which the heavens were opened: when the heavens opened for Ezekiel at the river Chebar and he "saw the vision of God"; when Stephen at his martyrdom saw the heavens opened, and "the Son of man standing at the right hand of God"; when Peter saw the heavens opened and a great sheet, containing all kinds of living animals, was let down upon the earth; and lastly, when John the Revelator saw heaven open and beheld a "white horse; and he that sat upon him was called faithful and true." We might add also the vision of Jacob at Bethel. In all these cases the open heaven did not seem to be a thing significant in itself, but rather as being required for the real events of the occasions. In the baptism of Jesus the chief event just here was the descent of the Spirit, for which the cleft heaven opened the way. Or, we can say that the heavens were opened that they might shower upon Jesus their greatest blessings, just as the chambers of the clouds are opened that they may water the earth.

But are we to assume here that Jesus did not have the Spirit before this? Not at all. He was conceived by the Holy Ghost, and at the annunciation the angel said that the Child should be "holy" and be called "the Son of God." How, too, should the Child have increased in favor with

God, if the Spirit had not been with Him from the beginning? And that wonderful saying in the temple at the age of twelve, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" the wisdom and understanding which He there manifested — how could we account for those things if He had not then already been full of the Spirit? During all these years the Spirit of God was upon Him, but here at His baptism He received that Spirit without measure.

The case is similar to that of the apostles. The Holy Ghost was with them before the day of Pentecost, otherwise they could not have believed on Christ and followed Him to the end. But they needed the Spirit in greater measure and for special gifts to fit them for their work. Therefore Jesus at His ascension commanded them to remain at Jerusalem until they were endowed with power from on high. So Jesus, about to enter now upon His great work, needed the Holy Spirit in a special measure, or rather as Peter says, "without measure," that He might be fully fitted for the task before Him.

Nor should the fact here trouble us, that Jesus was the Son of God and that as such the fulness of the Spirit must have been upon Him from the beginning. Jesus was also man and grew and increased as a man, both in body and in soul. So, too, He stood in need of prayer; He spent much time in prayer. St. Luke tells us that He prayed here in connection with His baptism. In the garden of Gethsemane He prayed and an angel was sent to strengthen Him. As a man, therefore, Jesus could receive the Spirit at different times and in increasing measure. There are of course things here which we cannot fully explain, but we accept the facts as they are given and abide the time of greater light.

The descent of the Spirit upon Jesus was therefore a further manifestation of Jesus as the Messiah and Savior of the world. It was a further preparation on His part for that great work. The character of the work is indicated furthermore by the visible form of the Spirit, that of a dove. The dove represents purity, sinlessness, the absence of all guile and craft; it represents gentleness, and gentleness is born of love. Study the life and work of Christ and

see whether you do not find Him all along an high priest "who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens?"

The Spirit, furthermore, abode upon Jesus. John tells us expressly that he saw the Spirit descending upon and remaining upon Him. Peter states "how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power"; and how He then in the power of the Spirit, "went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed with the devil; for God was with him." Furthermore at once after His baptism Jesus was "led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil." Before Jesus should begin to fight the devil in public He must first conquer him in private. This combat on the sands of the desert was a part of His work and the Spirit fitted Him for it. Later, when Jesus stood up in the synagogue at Nazareth to teach His townsmen He said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

All these facts and events show Jesus to be the God-appointed Savior. He did not do these things of His own accord; He did not put forth opinions of His own when He taught the people; the works He performed were not self-selected works that pleased Him and brought Him honor. In all these things He was guided by the Spirit of God and was doing the will of His heavenly Father; and if by His acceptance of baptism at the hand of John His obedience to the Father is shown, we also see how He was filled with the Holy Spirit and so enabled to fulfill all righteousness.

A word should be said here about our own baptism. We are in danger of regarding it as a useless ceremony — only a few drops of water sprinkled upon the head and a few words uttered. Of what benefit can such a ceremony be in washing away sin and in conferring the power of a new life? Is it not like pouring a little water on a dead plant and

expecting it to revive, or washing a corpse and expecting it to live? What can water do for the soul, even though some Word of God be used in connection therewith? What can baptism do for the little child which does not even know what is being done? So men will reason in their self-conceit and prate in their folly, with the result that baptism at best is regarded as a mere ceremony and the christening of a child as worse than silly. But here we see Jesus the very Son of God and the mighty Savior of the world, who stilled the tempest with a word and raised the dead with His voice, who shed His blood upon Calvary that you and I and all the world might live, who rose from the dead and ascended into heaven in a cloud of glory — here we find Him going down to Jordan to seek baptism, declaring that it must needs be in order that all righteousness might be fulfilled; and upon Him in His act of humble obedience to His heavenly Father the Holy Spirit descends in all His fulness to fit Him for His work. Who of us, then, in the light of these facts, will think lightly of his baptism? Should it not be a source of comfort to us daily that even in our very infancy we were started in the way of righteousness through baptism? The more should we find comfort in our baptism when we consider that Jesus Himself said that unless we be born again of water and the Spirit we cannot enter the kingdom of heaven and that Saint Paul calls our baptism a washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, and declares that as many of us as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is still — and will be until the end of time — a connection between our baptism and the coming of the Holy Spirit, if only we are ready to receive Him as was Jesus here on the banks of the Jordan. — The Messiahship of Jesus is shown also in:

3. *The Testimony of the Father:* “And lo, a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” For whom was this voice, for the Son? or for the Baptist and us? or for both? Doubtless, the latter. The Son was now being set apart and consecrated to His great work. Though He was the Son of God and as such could receive nothing, for all things were already His, yet

He was also man and as such needed divine confirmation and strengthening. Moreover Mark and Luke record the words as spoken directly to Jesus, "Thou art my Son in whom I am well pleased." They were words of encouragement for Jesus just as Joshua was encouraged when he was directed to lead Israel into Canaan; Go on, my Son, for thou art indeed my Son; be of good courage; go on to the work and possess the land.

But these words were uttered also for our sakes. Matthew records them as spoken especially for the Baptist. But that they were meant for any others who may have been present and for all men of all times is evident. It is the Father's testimony to all the world that Jesus of Nazareth is His only Son and the Savior of the world. The words "in whom I am well pleased" furthermore are the Father's endorsement of what the Son had already done, of what was being done here at the Jordan and of what He would do in the future; and the appearance here at the baptism of Jesus of the three persons of the Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, shows that it was the Triune God who had planned and who was now to effect the redemption of the world.

Here then is assurance and comfort. Jesus has fulfilled all righteousness for us; He has made complete atonement for our sins; He has made possible for us righteousness and holiness before God. The Father sent Him to do this work and is well pleased, and the Spirit equips Him with the needed power. The work has been done to the satisfaction of the Triune God and we need have no fear that it might not be accepted or that we might be rejected when we appear before Him in the name of Jesus.

This same voice was heard upon the Mount of Transfiguration when there came a voice out of the bright cloud which overshadowed the company, "This is my beloved Son: hear him." The words "hear him" were not uttered at Jesus' baptism, but that they were implied is evident. These words are significant; they show that the Son is the revealer and interpreter of the Father. Elsewhere Jesus tells us that no man knoweth the Father, "save the Son, and he to whom-

soever the Son will reveal him." "Hear ye him"; that is the admonition for us. O that we would more faithfully heed it! Whether it be a word of command that Jesus utters, that we should walk in righteousness and holiness, that we should seek peace and pursue it; or whether it be a word of promise, that we should come unto Him and find rest unto our souls, we cannot afford even for a day to be forgetful of that voice. If the boilers on an ocean liner are allowed to cool for only an hour, or if the rudder sends the ship out of its course for only a few knots, time is lost, energy is wasted, needless dangers may be encountered. So for the Christian in this world there is only one safe thing for him to do, to heed and believe the voice of His Master every hour of his life. "See that ye refuse him not that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth," that is, God speaking from Sinai, "much more shall not we escape if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven," that is, God speaking through Christ. Amen.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

JOHN 1: 35-42

Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God! And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say being interpreted, Master), where dwellest thou? He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day: for it was about the tenth hour. One of the two which heard John *speak*, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona; thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, a stone.

ON these Epiphany Sundays we dwell upon Jesus' revelation of Himself as the Savior of the world. If you want to be a deliverer from the suffering in your community, you must in some way make that fact known, either by word or deed. Jesus made use of both ways; He declared Himself to be the Savior, and He also actually rescued the perishing. Nor did He wait until men came to Him, but He sought them. "The Son of man is come to seek and save that which was lost." The Good Shepherd scouring the wilds of the hills and the mountains for the lost sheep is a charming subject for the artist's brush. We delight to look upon that scene; there is much hope in it for the lost sinner. Jesus, therefore, at the very beginning of His ministry began to go after the lost and to gather about Himself a company of intimate disciples, not only that they themselves might be saved, but that they in turn might rescue others from destruction.

But there is another side to this matter of being saved through Jesus; the man who wants to be saved must himself also seek Jesus. We have a fine example in today's lesson of how the first disciples sought and found their Savior. Therefore let this be our subject this morning:

FINDING THE MESSIAH.

We shall also see how Jesus here showed Himself to be the Savior by permitting Himself to be found. In speaking about finding the Messiah, the first thing to consider is the fact that:

1. *Jesus must be preached:* Ordinarily when we speak of finding an object the responsibility and the work rest entirely upon the seeker. The object sought can do nothing; a lost piece of jewelry can only lie in its place of hiding, and at best reflect a ray of light if the light happens to fall upon it. Everything must be done by the seeker, he must find his way to the piece of jewelry, the piece of jewelry cannot come to him. In the kingdom of God, however, things are different. There is no less for man to do and the responsibility is no less than when he is seeking a lost ring. But, on the other hand, there is something which we do not find in the realm of nature. There is a seeking of the sinner, a coming toward man, a coming after him; the very initiative is altogether on the side of God. "God first loved us," "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son." From the very beginning there has been a movement of God toward man. God chose Abraham and made him the bearer of salvation for the world. God raised up Moses and sent him down to Egypt to deliver Israel from bondage. John the Baptist was commissioned from the Lord to preach repentance to Israel and to prepare the way of the Messiah. The Son of God was sent from heaven, to come down and be made flesh, to redeem the world from the cruel bondage of sin and from the galling yoke of the devil, without any call from man. That is the great and joyous thought of the Christmas season — God among men, God with us — Emmanuel.

There is a thought back of this fact, which we need to notice. Why does God wholly take the initiative in saving us? When a man is sick will he not call a physician? When he is in distress will he not seek relief? Why does a man in the deep distress of his soul not seek out the only Deliverer? The answer is a three-fold one: first, man does not

realize his condition; he is sick unto death and knows it not. Secondly, if he has some sense of his lost state he knows nothing of the great helper; he knows not where He is to be found, is not sure even that there is such a helper. And thirdly, even if he has some knowledge of Christ as the Savior, yet he has no will-power of himself to go to Him, make a statement of his case and ask for deliverance. That is man's pitiable state. If you are lost in a deep forest but have strong limbs to carry you out, that is not so bad; but if your limbs are paralyzed your only hope is that some one may find you. Here then is our hope: God comes to man and seeks him out in his distress. The Lord passed by and saw man lying helpless in his blood and said, "Live, yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live."

There are many ways in which God does this seeking, many occasions and circumstances which He makes use of; but there is one means which is so essential and so far-reaching that we speak of it as the means by which God finds the sinner and draws him to Himself. This is the preaching of the Gospel — the preaching of Christ. "Preach the Gospel" is the great commission. "How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?" And "it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."

When the Baptist prepared the way of the Messiah, what did he do? He cried out until the echo was heard in every corner of Palestine, Repent ye; turn ye from your evil ways, from your sins. But that was not all. If he had followed that up with the teaching of the Scribes: Stop eating unclean meats; stop breaking the Sabbath; deliver your tithes; bring your offerings to the temple; attend the feasts and the new moons; make long prayers; broaden the hems of your garments; wash your hands before you eat. What hope for a comfortless people could have sprung from such a message? What assurance of deliverance could there have been in such a proposal? Absolutely none. Therefore he went on and pointed out a worthy motive for repentance, Repent ye, "for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." He has come, the longed for and expected One has come, the Mes-

siah, the Savior! Turn now from your evil ways and accept Him, for in Him is real salvation. This is all summed up in our lesson in the matchless word, "Behold the Lamb of God." The day before, as Jesus came toward him, he said to his disciples as he pointed to the Savior, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." This day, as Jesus passed by, the Baptist repeated but the first words, "Behold the Lamb of God." The name and the image were taken from the Old Testament and the people understood their meaning. Christ must be made a sacrifice for sin; and as a lamb without blemish, so Christ must be innocent and without sin and must bear His suffering in meekness, without murmuring and complaint.

Thus did the Baptist preach Christ to his disciples: "I have told you that I am not the Messiah, but that He cometh after me. You are looking for Him, you are not satisfied with me; you want the Master, Him who is mightier than I. Behold, there He is. See Him as He draweth near; and I say unto you that He is the Lamb of God, He will be made a sacrifice for sin that all may have life in Him. He is the one whom you must now follow. My work is done. I was sent to prepare the way, to direct people to Him. I have done that for you. Follow Him."

Such is the teaching that is needed today also. It must be clear and show men just where Jesus may be found. If your house were on fire you would call the fire department to extinguish the fire. Just then you would not be concerned about anything else. So the sinner when he has come to feel that his soul is lost does not care to hear about philosophy or politics or social reform or eugenics, but he wants to learn about Him who is the only One in heaven and on earth who can help him. We must here especially emphasize a truth that is brought out very strongly in John's terse expression, namely, that Christ taketh away the sin of the world, by being Himself the sacrifice for sin. John did not say: Behold your teacher, your benefactor, your exemplar, your inspiration; behold a master mind, a leader, a king, a prophet, a wonder-worker. He could have said all of these things of Jesus. But John was sent of God and therefore

he did not speak as men speak. He knew what Jesus came to do, what kind of a Savior the world needed; he knew that if Jesus were all these things, but nothing more, He could not save a single soul from death and hell. All these things Jesus would be and do, but He must be one thing more, He must be a sacrifice for sin.

Any preaching of Christ today, or at any other time, which stops short of placing Christ before men as the sacrifice for sin cannot save. Who can read the account of Christ's work as related by the four evangelists and not be impressed by the importance attached to His death and resurrection? Take John's Gospel as an example. Jesus was about thirty-three years old at His death; His public ministry covered three years. Of the twenty-one chapters of John's Gospel ten, almost half, are devoted to things which occurred during the last week of Christ's life and the few weeks after His resurrection. Taking what is said on the subject in other parts of the book, more than one-half of Saint John's Gospel deals directly with Jesus' death and resurrection. In contrast, look at the life of some great man as penned by an uninspired hand in a bulky volume, and you will find probably a half-dozen pages devoted to his death. The great work of a man is done in his life, but the greatest work of Christ was done in His death. When a man takes to his bed to die his work is done, but Christ did not say, "It is finished" until He gave up His Spirit. For any one who *wants* to see this is plain. We must preach Christ, but it must be Christ the crucified One. — The second thing in finding the Messiah is this that:

2. *Jesus must be sought*: It is not enough that God seeks us, we must also seek God. If we were nothing but pieces of silver then God's seeking would suffice. But we are intelligent creatures and God wants us to use that intelligence and seek Him. He cannot save us and make us His children unless we are willing to be saved and become His children. Already in Old Testament times He told the people to seek Him. "When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, thy face, Lord, will I seek." He had also given them a sure promise that if they sought Him

they would find Him. "Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart."

This is just what these first disciples of Jesus did. They came out to see the Baptist, who he was and what he represented. Whatever their thoughts of him may have been, that he might possibly be the Messiah, they were soon undeceived, for he frankly told them that he was not the Christ. But these men did not turn back discouraged; they seized what they could for the present and looked and waited for more. They determined to abide with the forerunner until the King Himself should come. They felt: If the herald is here his royal Master cannot be far away. Neither were they offended at the sharp admonition of the new Elias and at his demand for fruits meet for repentance. They were in search of the Messiah and they were in earnest; such trifles could not divert them from the way.

When the Messiah now was come and was ready to enter upon His public work, where could He hope to find better followers than right among the disciples of the Baptist? Here therefore we find Him, looking over the ground which the Baptist had already cultivated; here the divine seed would soon take root and grow. Nor was He disappointed. The men who sought the Baptist were ready to seek the Messiah Himself. And when their master, with eye and mouth directed their attention to the Christ, they were quick to follow Him who had been pointed out as "the Lamb of God."

Here now is a matter which you should not overlook. It is both interesting and instructive. A few Sundays ago we learned of Simeon's going to the temple by the Spirit to see the Christ-child. We were not told just how the Spirit informed Simeon of the fact. It may have been only a thought or suggestion put into his heart that on such and such a day the Lord's Christ would appear at the temple. Notice if you do not find the same thing here when Andrew and John find the Messiah, for we may as well state who these two disciples were. The Baptist did not tell these men to follow Jesus; he only said: "There He is; decide for yourselves what you are going to do about it. That is the call of

the Spirit; choose now whether you will obey or not." Furthermore Jesus did not ask these men to follow Him, neither by word nor by gesture, possibly not even by a look. And when of their own accord they followed Him and He noticed them, He turned toward them with the question which may have spelled discouragement as well as encouragement: "What seek ye?" Not until they had given further assurance of wanting to meet Him by saying, "Master, where dwellest thou?" did Jesus give them real encouragement by saying, "Come and see."

There is another thing of the same nature that we must not overlook. When Jesus came to the Baptist for followers He did not tell him what He wanted; He did not walk up to him and say: You are My forerunner, you were sent in advance to prepare men for Me. Where now are they? I am come to claim them. I want you to instruct them all now to follow Me. No, nothing of the sort. Jesus simply appears upon the scene and gives John the opportunity of finishing his work, but he must do so of his own accord. So, too, in the case of these disciples. However much Jesus yearned to claim them as His own, He left the matter with them, they must choose. The day before, the Baptist had already pointed Jesus out as the Lamb of God, but his disciples were not then yet ready to follow Him. But on the second day at another opportunity they made their decision.

What is the lesson? It is this: you must not expect too much of the Lord, that by sheer force He will start you upon the way of life. Nor must you want to prescribe to the Spirit just how He is to tell you where the Lord is to be found — You must not demand a sign from heaven. When you are in church and hear the Word of God; when you read your Bible or some other religious book or paper; when in conversation with others on religious subjects; or when in your private reflections and meditations, you are told that you are a sinner and need a Savior and that Jesus is that Savior; and especially when at such times you are made to feel in your heart that these things are so and that you ought to heed the voice, that is the call of the Spirit. Then Jesus

is passing by and giving you the opportunity of following Him, then the Baptist is pointing to Him: "Behold the Lamb of God." Then the question is up to you to decide. So Joshua called to Israel, "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve." Thus Elijah challenged idolatrous Israel on Carmel: "How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him." So also today. The Gospel is preached, the Lamb is pointed out, men are invited. None on that day will be able to find a just excuse that the call never came to them. But you must choose; and election or no election you must choose if you would be saved.

On the other hand, do not get the impression that little encouragement is given to make the choice or that the invitation is not pressing. Elsewhere Jesus tells us to "compel them to come in." Nor are we to think that insuperable difficulties are in the way. Andrew and John had no difficulty in finding the Baptist, and they had no difficulty in finding Jesus. The Baptist helped them to find Jesus and Jesus helped them to find Himself. He encouraged them to come. "Come and see." Come at once, do not wait till tomorrow; My house is always open.

But, my friends, these men were really seeking Jesus; they were in earnest; they were seeking the Lord with their whole heart. They did not drift to the Jordan; they came there for a definite purpose and with a fixed determination. Some people are simply drifting in religious things. It is an easy way of doing, but there is no promise of good. A man might start drifting down the Ohio to St. Louis; it would be an easy way of going, but he might not reach his destination. We of course can do nothing of ourselves; but God will help us, for it is "God who worketh in us, both to will and do of his good pleasure." But He expects us to second His efforts, to make use of the abilities He gives us. Some people go to church and find nothing because they seek nothing. Some seek themselves at church and because they are not made much of they are offended. They also find nothing because they seek nothing. Some go to church seeking their own ideas about Christ, not the Christ and the

truth as they have been revealed; they also go away empty. Seek the Lord, seek Him earnestly, seek Him as He has been revealed, heed the voices as they come to you, take every step as it is pointed out, and you will find the Messiah without fail, and find more of Him at every seeking. — The third thing in finding the Messiah is that:

3. *Jesus must be retained:* To find Jesus and then lose Him again is of no value. If I earn a dollar I gain nothing if I let it slip away the next moment. I must retain it or exchange it for something useful. When these men found Jesus they followed Him to His lodging-place and abode with Him that day. Just what Jesus revealed to them at that first meeting we are not told. But we can readily infer what its character was, when we think of what Jesus said to Nicodemus or to the woman of Samaria at Jacob's well.

This we know, that these men found so much in Jesus at this first meeting that they never forgot Him and held fast to Him throughout their hard lives and are still with Him in Paradise. You will notice that John singularly mentions the exact hour when the meeting took place — the tenth hour. John could not forget that hour; for it was then that he met the Man who was ever after the power and inspiration of his life. It was a thousand times more to him than would have been a message, that a friend had left him a million dollars. Oh, what sources of comfort and power such times in a man's life may be, when new revelations of grace and truth come to him and he treasures them up in his heart as did these men!

The saying, "once in grace, always in grace," is not correct. The Scriptures show that a man may fall from grace; branches on the living vine may die and then they are cut off and cast away. The roadway of life is littered with such branches. Many of them are twice dead, plucked up by the roots. Every church record is disfigured with these names. It was once said of them that they had found the Messiah, that they were converted; but they did not abide with Him and He could not remain with them. Jesus loved them, had sought them, had died for them, but like

the son of perdition they were again lost because they gave their hearts to another.

Notice an important condition here for remaining with Jesus. We are told here that Andrew first found his brother Simon and brought him to Jesus. We may correctly infer that John did likewise, and a little later found his brother James and brought him to Jesus. John in his modesty does not mention this fact, but he does not mention his own name even throughout his entire Gospel. Both of these men, therefore, at the beginning started to do missionary work; and what we should learn here is this: that it will not be half so hard to remain with Christ, if we work for Christ as these men did. It is natural for a man to become indifferent toward what is secure. A man buys a farm, pays for it, gets his deed and lays it away in a tin box and is no more concerned about the question of possession. Some people get and hold religion in the same way. They are baptized and confirmed and get their certificates, have them framed and hung upon the wall or tied with a ribbon and laid away in a safe place. That is all very good — for the beginning — but in one thing these people are not like the farmer; the farmer works his farm and gets his living out of it, but these people do not work their religion, and therefore get nothing out of it. The result is that they lose everything except their certificates. These may be sought out at their death to serve as a sort of basis for a funeral sermon, to preach them, if possible, to heaven.

Andrew and John here show us how to remain with Jesus. Enter into His service at once. Keep your eye open for any work that you can do. Look about for a friend who has not yet found that Messiah. Perhaps you have a brother or a sister, a father, a mother, a husband or wife, or even a child, who has not yet learned to know Him. Help that person to find Jesus and at the same time strengthen your own hold upon the Savior. This will be a blessed experience for you; for while you are seeking out others for Christ, you yourself will learn to know Him better. "The liberal soul shall be made fat." When Andrew appeared before Jesus with his brother, Jesus said, "Thou art Simon the son

of Jona; thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, a stone." Here Andrew saw Jesus reading his brother like a book and giving him a new name in keeping with his character. There was additional assurance for Andrew that Jesus was the Messiah. Place yourself in the service of the Master and at every turn you will be enriched with new revelations; revelations of your own heart, revelations of glorious hope, revelations of the blessedness of a life fully consecrated to the service of Christ. Amen.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

JOHN 1:43-51

The day following, Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me. Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see. Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith unto him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile! Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip, called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee. Nathanael answer and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel. Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these. And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.

HE manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him." That was said of Jesus when He turned water into wine. Jesus revealing Himself — that is the Epiphany thought. Last Sunday we saw how Jesus revealed Himself to Andrew and John and how they believed on Him. Then Andrew brought forward his brother Simon and there was more revelation when Jesus said, "Thou shalt be called Cephas"; and then Peter believed. John also brought his brother and there was still further revelation and James believed. Today we shall hear of still other revelations and of still others believing.

How natural and simple the whole process is. Jesus reveals Himself to men and then they believe in Him. The same rule obtains among men themselves. If a man would gain your confidence he must reveal himself to you and show himself worthy of your faith. You will not trust a dishonest man or a liar. Jesus reveals His ability and willingness to save and men believe on Him.

But not all men believe. And that suggests the very important question: Are you ready to believe in Jesus when He reveals Himself to you? Jesus tells us that He does not manifest Himself to the world, not unto men generally, but only unto certain persons. Who are such persons? What are their chief characteristics? We have the portrayal of such a person in our lesson this morning. The person is NATHANAEL, AN ISRAELITE IN WHOM IS NO GUILE.

Let us study the man. We find first:

1. *That he was an earnest seeker after Christ:* Jesus was about to leave the scene of the Baptist's labors and go up into Galilee. On His way He found Philip and said unto him, "Follow me." Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter, with whom he was acquainted. He was doubtless also acquainted with James and John, who were partners with Andrew and Peter in fishing. These five men had now all found the Messiah. Philip had another acquaintance who had not yet been so fortunate. His name was Nathanael. He hastened to him in great excitement, as we may well imagine, and said, "We have found him, of whom Moses in the Law, and the Prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Joseph." You see, Jesus had showed Himself to Philip and Philip had believed.

But notice now that there was much seeking here. Jesus tells us of the merchant-man seeking goodly pearls. There were pearl hunters here along the Jordan, a goodly company of them, Andrew and John, Peter and James, Philip and Nathanael. What were they doing here, away from their cities, their homes, their places of business? There was no commercial fishing here in the Jordan. Ah, these men were after higher things than those taken in water with net or seine. These men had learned to know the value of the soul and its need; they had heard the Baptist say that the Messiah was about to come, and they were there in the wilds of the Jordan valley looking for Him. Nor should we overlook this beautiful fact that they were also seeking each other; Andrew sought Simon, and John sought

James, and Philip sought Nathanael; and Jesus sought them all. Ah, what a congenial company! What fine texture of hearts! Do we not see here that Jesus knew whom He was selecting for His immediate followers and future Apostles and pillars of the Church? Where could He have made a better selection? Is not this also a revelation of Christ, even of His divine knowledge and wisdom?

These men found Christ because they sought Him. Of course Christ also sought them, otherwise they would not have found Him. Christ is always doing that; He is the good Shepherd who is always on the lookout for any stray sheep. But yet we as sheep that have reason and know when we are lost need to seek the Shepherd; the prodigal son had to resolve to go home and seek his father. This fact was pointed out last Sunday, and it is repeated in today's lesson to show its importance. We are so apt to forget, and some lessons we need to hear often in order to learn them aright. It requires precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little, there a little. Sometimes men seem to run upon some great treasure as by accident, but not often. The rule is that we must seek, work, dig; the great bulk of the world's output of gold is found by hard digging, not by surface scratching. Now and then we hear of a man finding Christ as by accident. He chances to hear a sermon and some word of divine truth reaches the heart and starts a train of thoughts and gives him no rest until he is driven to the foot of the cross. We have read of persons who went to church for sport and mockery but who came away praying. Such things may happen; for Christ is looking for us even when we are not looking for Him. But if you needed the loan of a thousand dollars and went about telling all your friends that you did not need any money and did not want any, you surely could not expect them to lend you the sum. You may possibly be saved even if at the first you do not seek Christ. In His great mercy He may find you as He did Saul of Tarsus. But if you want to be sure of salvation then seek the Lord while He may be found.

Furthermore, we should seek the Lord with a sincere heart. Jesus said of Nathanael, "Behold an Israelite indeed,

in whom is no guile." You see, the kind of heart has very much to do with one's success or failure in seeking. These men succeeded so well because they had the right kind of hearts. Their seeking was not a show like that of the Pharisees; it was not a pretense, a make-believe; it was a genuine seeking like that of a thirsty man looking for water, a hungry man for bread, a sick man for health, a lost man for his way. These men were dissatisfied with themselves; their souls were crying for something better than they had yet found in their fishing, and they had left their nets to find that better treasure. No man will find Christ until he has become dissatisfied with his present state and possessions. If a man is satisfied with his present home he will not look for another. So also if a man has no trouble on account of his sins, no desire for the peace of God and no concern about eternal salvation, he will not seek for Christ; or if he does, it will not be with a sincere heart.

Then, too, it is necessary to seek Christ at the right place. These men sought Jesus at the most likely place. Where the forerunner had prepared the way, there they expected to find the Prince Himself. Where the seed has been sown there the fruit will be found. We should not expect to find Christ in places of amusement, or in the club, or even in the shop or store or office. We should take Christ to these places or else stay away; but we do not go to these places to seek Him. On the contrary we must be willing to get away from these places, to leave our places of business and amusement for a while as these men did, to forsake the world and go to the desert place where we hear nought but the voice of God's Word. There we shall find the Savior if we seek Him aright.

Notice also that these men were familiar with what Moses and the Prophets had said about the Messiah. They were therefore able to identify Him as soon as they saw Him. We now have a fuller account, a more complete portrait of the Messiah than they had. Are you familiar with that account? Do you know what is said about Christ in the Scriptures? Do you recognize Christ when He appears before you? You cannot expect to find the most of Christ

if you do not search where the most of Him has been revealed. "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me." — We find furthermore concerning Nathanael:

2. *That he was an honest doubter*: "And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip said unto him, Come and see." Nathanael was an honest doubter with the emphasis upon *honest*. We do not here mean that a man must be a doubter to find Christ. Let a man be thankful if he has no doubts to contend with, if he has grown up from childhood under proper training to accept and believe all that is needful without having had his life punctuated with doubts and question marks. There is no virtue in doubt, but rather, great danger. Our aim should be to get away from doubt, to get into the clear, to stand in the sunshine where we can see things in their proper outlines and proportions.

But if a man has doubts let them be honest, not the fruit of malice as that of the Pharisees who hated Christ and His teachings. Neither let it be a refusal to believe simply because one cannot fully comprehend the word of Christ, as did those who were offended and turned back from following Christ because He said, "My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed." Neither let it be that carping spirit of doubt which magnifies every imperfection which it detects in the followers of Christ, keeps flinging these things at the heads of Christians and finds pleasure in so doing. All doubt of this character is dishonest, deceitful and full of guile. To such Christ does not reveal Himself, and all they have is their doubt and the devil's mockery besides. Such people may learn to know some things about Christ, but they do not learn to know Christ. Jesus revealed much to the Pharisees, but He never revealed Himself to them. He revealed Himself only to a Nicodemus, to a Samaritan woman, to a Thomas. Be honest with your own heart and with Christ. He will then reveal Himself to you; doubt will disappear and truth and conviction take their place.

The sincerity of Nathanael appears especially in his readiness to make proof of Philip's challenge, "Come and see." That is the best cure for doubt. Our first thought usually is to argue with the doubter, to resort to logic and argument and convince him. We are apt to overlook the fact that in any question where doubt is at all possible, logic and argument may be used against it as well as for it, and that the other man can perhaps wield these weapons just as well or even better than we. A contest of such character usually ends as it began — in argument; and the advantage lies with him who is most skillful in dialectics.

The better method is to take the man by the hand and lead him to where he can see the practical result of faith. You can use all sorts of comparisons to tell a man how honey tastes, but the only way for him to find out just how it tastes is to have him eat some.

Our preaching will be largely fruitless if we do not lead men to see what Christ does for the soul. Our preaching should therefore be descriptive rather than argumentative, a setting forth of facts rather than a reasoning about facts. Jesus turned water into wine and His disciples believed on Him. He said to the nobleman: "Thy son liveth," and when the nobleman went home and saw that his son lived, both he and his house believed. Jesus showed Thomas His hand and His side and Thomas said, "My Lord and my God." We shall see in our lesson how Jesus said to Nathanael, "I saw thee under the fig-tree," and then Nathanael believed. Some men doubt the miracles of Christ. Can we not take such persons and show them some fine Christian characters who formerly had been abandoned profligates and say: There is a miracle which Christ performed only yesterday? There are hundreds of wonders that faith is working, that Christ is doing. Ask people to come and see them.

Nathanael was ready to go and see. He thought little of Nazareth — saw not how a good thing like the Messiah could come from such an unlikely place, but he did not allow that to stand in the way. What Philip told him to do commended itself to him as the right and fair thing to do. He

was not like some people who are quite ready to fault the Church and Christians, but refuse to take a square look at the facts. Such a position shows deceit, fraud, guile; they are unfair and mean to be unfair. Not so Nathanael. Christ calls him "an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile." There is a reference here to Jacob, to whom the name Israel was first given. Jacob's heart had been full of craft and guile, but during that wonderful night when the Lord wrestled with him his heart was purged; with the break of day a Prince with God. Nathanael is one of his true children; new light shone in upon him. Then he was called "Israel," without cunning, craft or wicked guile; no duplicity, no folds in his heart, but open, candid, fair, honest and upright. — We find furthermore:

3. *That Nathanael was a ready believer.* The lesson makes that very plain. Upon Jesus' declaration, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile," Nathanael asked, "Whence knowest thou me?" Doubtless two questions were in Nathanael's mind. One was, Whence knowest Thou me at all? I have never seen Thee, nor hast Thou ever seen me; whence this acquaintance? The other question in Nathanael's mind was, Whence knowest Thou my heart? How canst Thou read me like a book, not knowing my life? Is it not clear that Jesus was again revealing Himself, showing that He knows what is in man and needs no one to tell Him? "O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my down-sitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thoughts afar off."

But Jesus did not stop here; a little more revelation was required to bring out the full bloom of Nathanael's faith. Jesus therefore replied, "Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee." We are not told what Nathanael was doing under that fig-tree. He had probably chosen that spot during his sojourn by the Jordan as a place for retirement and rest, perhaps for meditation and devotion. There is a beautiful phrase descriptive of Israel's peace and prosperity which reads: "They shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig-tree." But this is of little moment. What overwhelmed Nathanael was

the fact that Jesus saw him there without his being in reach of human physical vision. That brought the budding faith to bloom. Nathanael said to himself: Nazareth or no Nazareth, big or little, of ill repute or of good repute, here is one who sees me when afar off, who knows me without seeing me, who knows my heart and thoughts without knowing my life. This person is more than a man; this is the promised Messiah; this is God Himself.

Notice now the wording of Nathanael's confession, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel." His first word was, Rabbi, master, teacher, my teacher. Thou canst show me the things I need to know. We called the Baptist "Rabbi" and he showed us many things, but Thou canst show us more. The Baptist could know the heart only from the life and works, but Thou lookest upon the heart direct. The Baptist said that a greater than he was coming; verily, Thou art that greater one.

Then he speaks of Jesus' divine character, "Thou art the Son of God." Jesus is to him no mere man, a creature of God like another man, but He is the very Son of God, begotten of the Father, of like being and essence — hence God Himself. This confession shows that these men in Israel were expecting the Messiah to be more than a mere man; they had not misunderstood the wonderful names applied to the Messiah by Isaiah when he said, "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace."

Nathanael next speaks of Jesus' relation to men, "Thou art the king of Israel." The Messiah was expected to spring from the house of David and to sit upon David's throne. The Jews had very crude and carnal views about the Christ as king; yet this confession here shows Nathanael's ready faith. This person who appears so unlike a king, coming from such an unlikely place as Nazareth, with not a single outward credential except that voice in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way" — in this person Nathanael sees the king of Israel.

Shall we not learn from Nathanael how to believe? He might have insisted upon seeing and knowing more of

Jesus before believing, but he had seen enough to begin with, and he believed. There are many things about Jesus, many other proofs of His divine character that have not yet been shown us, but if there is any one here who still doubts, let him ask, Have I not seen enough to begin believing? Have I not experienced the power of His Word upon myself and seen its effect upon others? Should I not be willing to believe as far as I see and know? Learn that lesson now and learn it right here from Nathanael. Jesus says, "Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed." But if you are not yet able to do that, believe as far as you can see and Jesus will soon show you more; like Nathanael, you will soon be permitted to see greater things. — And this brings us to the last point, namely:

4. *That Nathanael received the promise of greater revelations:* "Thou shalt see greater things than these." That was the promise to Nathanael. That is the promise to us. "Whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundantly." What a great promise; always more in store for us; always more to follow! It has been feared that the world's coal supply may fail, that we may be compelled to sit about cold stoves in freezing weather. Let there be no fear, God will always have means with which to keep His people warm. Much less shall there be any disappointment in the kingdom of grace, or failure of any gift of grace for those who seek the Lord. Rivers of earth may dry up at their source, the river that flows from the throne of divine grace, never. Notice also, that these greater things are always an addition, not a substitute for what we already have. It matters not what greater things Nathanael saw after this day. What he saw here always remained for him a most precious remembrance. Can you not recall instances of God's grace and mercy in your own life that are as precious today as the day upon which they occurred? Oh, keep what you have and more will be added. In the parable of the pounds the Lord says, Give the one pound to him that hath ten. Whatever great things you may already have, there are still greater things in store for you.

Let us see how this promise was fulfilled in Nathanael. Jesus said, "Verily, verily I say unto you, hereafter ye shall see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." Reference is had to Jacob's dream when he saw a ladder reaching up to heaven and angels ascending and descending. This dream was prophetic of Israel's future: Here were true sons of Israel, Israelites in whom was no guile, and they should see this very thing done. The ascending and descending of angels represents the communion between Christ our brother, together with ourselves, and our heavenly Father, for through Christ, God has become our Father. Notice also that the angels' activity begins with their ascent. Our way of thinking is rather that their home is in heaven and that they must first descend. Not altogether so. With the coming of Christ and the kingdom of God the angels' place of activity is rather here with men; here they are to minister to them who shall be heirs of righteousness. So they ascend from earth with our prayers then again descend with heaven's blessings in their hands. And all this because the Son of God became man and the one Mediator between God and men. From Him alone leads the way to heaven.

And now observe Nathanael following Jesus through life and seeing the greater things: He heard Jesus' wonderful teaching, saw His mighty works, witnessed His unspeakable love and compassion; he saw Him die upon the cross, witnessed His resurrection, beheld Him ascend to Heaven; he saw his own power and work in preaching and that of his fellow apostles; he saw his own faith grow from day to day and hope bore him up as on eagles' wings; he saw his triumph over temptation and sin; and as he neared the end of his course he saw death fleeing from him; and when he looked across the valley he saw the light gleaming from the other side; and now Nathanael and his fellow apostles sit upon the twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Amen.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

JOHN 4: 5-14

Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with *his* journey, sat thus on the well; *and* it was about the sixth hour. There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink. (For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.) Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldst have asked him, and he would have given thee living water. The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us this well, and drank thereof himself and his children, and his cattle? Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

ONE of the remarkable things about Jesus was His knowledge of the human heart, His ability to read the character and the thoughts of men. He "needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man." We find examples of this divine insight throughout His life. Striking examples appear at the very beginning of His public ministry. On the very first day Simon, the brother of Andrew, was brought to Him and He read him and said, "Thou shalt be called Cephas," which means a rock. On the next day Nathanael was brought to Him and He said, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile."

This was a way Jesus had of revealing Himself to individuals especially, by direct personal contact, "under four eyes." He thus sought to win the confidence of men and to awaken faith that He might then enrich them with the gifts of divine grace. Our lesson today affords another

striking example of this method of dealing with the sinner. He knows the thoughts of the Samaritan woman, reads her character, reveals her history, but offers her at the same time the water of life.

We have here again a beautiful Epiphany thought, Christ revealing Himself as

THE GIVER OF LIVING WATER.

We shall note, in the first place, that:

1. *The natural man knows nothing of this living water:* Jesus with His disciples was on His way to Galilee through Samaria. At midday He came to Jacob's well, near the village of Sychar. His disciples passed on to the village to buy meat, but Jesus, wearied with the journey, rested on the curb of the well.

The place was rich in associations. Here the patriarch Jacob had lived, labored, prayed. Jesus was resting upon the very well which Jacob had digged. Here was the plat of ground which Jacob had given to his son Joseph and just a little north of the well rested the bones of Joseph, which his brethren had carried thither from the land of Egypt. Farther to the north and east stood Mount Gerizim, and a little beyond, separated by a narrow valley, Mount Ebal. Here Joshua, at the command of Moses, had gathered the hosts of Israel to hear the blessings and curses of the Law. Six of the tribes stood on Mount Ebal and uttered the curses, and six stood on Gerizim and pronounced the blessings. Travellers claim that the words could easily be heard from one hilltop to the other. On Mount Gerizim Joshua had erected a great altar of stone inscribed with the Law as a testimony to Israel. The Samaritans later erected their temple on this mount and made it the center of worship over against Jerusalem as the center of Jewish worship.

There were associations here, therefore, which readily lead one to deep thought and serious reflections. This woman of Samaria was not ignorant of these things, and she seemed to be proud of them. Nor was she without religious thought. She believed that the proper place to worship

was Mount Gerizim and not Jerusalem; she believed that the Messiah would come, who would teach them all things. Yet neither the woman nor the place knew anything about the living water. When Jesus spoke about it she showed surprise and betrayed ignorance. The real meaning of those associations was either forgotten or misunderstood. God did not mean, for example, that a temple should be erected at Gerizim and worshipers diverted from Zion at Jerusalem.

This is but one instance where man betrays his ignorance of spiritual things. On Mars hill, in the midst of Grecian art and culture, stood Paul, revealing the living God who made heaven and earth; but he created scarcely more than a ripple upon that complacent sea of idolatry. Before Pilate stood Jesus and witnessed the good confession that He was come to bear witness unto the truth, yet the only response He received was the mocking question: "What is truth?" Again and again Jesus reasoned with the scribes and Pharisees, showed them the truth in word and deed; yet after all was done, He had to say: They are blind leaders of the blind; let them alone.

Nor is it any different today. Take yourself for an object lesson. Try to think away from yourself all you have learned about God's grace and truth from divine revelation; eliminate the instruction of parents, teachers and pastors and see how much you have left. Without these sources of knowledge what could you know of the true God, of Christ as the Savior, of forgiveness of sins, of righteousness, peace and salvation? Or go to some one who has not had these privileges, or having them, has not used them, and what can he tell you of scriptural things? Or what would you find if you went to some pagan country and examined all their stores of knowledge and wisdom?

What does all this show? It shows that the natural man knows nothing of the things of the Spirit of God, that even at his best he is altogether brutish, can drink only the water of Jacob's well, but knows nothing of the living water. A few years ago this country was very much agitated over the discussion of earthquakes, their cause and the best way to protect ourselves against their terrible effects. But men

were not certain as to the cause, and could not devise a way of escape. So in the matter of the soul. Men feel that something is wrong, that there is danger; but they can neither divine the cause, nor discover a remedy or way of escape. They do this and they do that, they run to and fro, but in the end death opens its jaws and they disappear, snatched alike from human vision and knowledge. Therefore it must be accounted the greatest blessing when Christ comes into a community, stops by our wells and under our fig trees, enters our homes and talks to us about the living water. Oh, that He would come and sit by the well of every home, or rather let me say, that people would hear Him when He does come. — We notice furthermore that:

2. *Compared with living water no other water quenches the thirst:* One of the most striking utterances of Jesus in the ears of this woman was His declaration that whosoever drinketh of that water shall thirst again. The woman had of course been aware of that fact, but it had never impressed her greatly; she had never drawn any higher lesson from it, especially with reference to the transiency of all earthly and material things. Jacob's well afforded very good water, the best of its kind, but she had never reflected seriously upon its limitations.

Just such a state of mind we find to be very general among men. Go to the man who lives to eat and drink and to have a general good time; tell him that he always gets hungry again after eating, that none of these enjoyments are permanent, and he will concede the truth of what you say. But the strange thing about human nature is this that, though men know these things, yet they will not and cannot get away from them, they keep clinging to Jacob's well as the most important thing in life. There are people right here in this community who know that these worldly waters cannot quench the thirst of the soul, yet they cannot leave that well. It is money they want, or ease or pleasure; to these things they cling; they keep hugging Jacob's well. And if Jesus came and sat down by their well and told them that they would always thirst again after drinking of these

waters, they would still turn from Him and refuse to try some other water.

We should learn a lesson from the Samaritan woman. She was not in every respect a good character, but she would permit herself to be influenced, she was ready to learn; indeed she seems to have been very desirous of learning something about the Messiah. It is to such that Jesus reveals Himself as we have seen in the past Epiphany lessons. Whether it is a Nathanael, an Israelite in whom is no guile, or a Samaritan woman who had five husbands and was now living with a man who was not her husband, Jesus is ready to reveal Himself, if men are only open and ready to receive Him.

Observe now that Jesus did not belittle the water of Jacob's well. He Himself wanted some of it. But He pointed out its limitation; that was all. The man who drinks it will thirst again, He says. Jesus does not proscribe eating and drinking and the other enjoyments of life. These are so many fountains of pleasure which a kind heavenly Father has opened for His children. He does not denounce learning and art and philosophy as sources of higher entertainment and pleasure; He does not fault the queen of Sheba that she came to Solomon to hear his wisdom; He only says that a greater than Solomon is here. He does not chide men for studying history, for searching out the hidden things of the world and for harnessing the forces of nature; He only says that if a man had all knowledge and all understanding and had nothing else, he would still be nothing. He does not even say that it would be wrong for a man to gain the whole world; He only puts the question, What would it profit a man?

All these things are gifts of God and they have their place. But men must leave them in their places and just that is what they do not do. They make more of raiment than of the body; more of meat than of life. They do not consider that these are only means to a higher end. If a pupil would forever cling to his a b c's, instead of passing on to the use of words and phrases, he never would gain an education. Much more foolish are men who have once learned to eat

and drink and who now think that there is nothing else to do in life except to eat and drink until their taste is gone and their lips are set. They cannot get away from Jacob's well. Will a man build a city whose top will reach to heaven with dollars of silver and eagles of gold? Will a man delude himself with the fancy that these earthly pleasures will reach beyond the grave? Men will go far for water that is reputed to heal the body, but the well of living water that heals the soul and that is near they pass by. Not only men but also cattle drink from Jacob's well; have men no higher thirst to quench than cattle? And are they willing to stand side by side with their flocks and drink from the same trough? This is the great truth which Jesus wants to set forth here, whosoever drinks of this water will thirst again. — But what is the water which Jesus gives? Jesus Himself tells us:

3. *This living water is a perennial spring of water in the believer:*

“Whosoever shall drink of the water which I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water which I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” What an astounding claim! Drink of this living water and never thirst again? But it is true. He who touched the sick and they were healed said it. He who gave His life to redeem the world said it. It must be true. Where is there a saying of Jesus, correctly interpreted and properly applied, that did not come true?

Besides, ask those who have drunk of this water; what do they say? Ask Paul who counted it all joy to suffer for Christ's sake. Ask the thousand martyrs who in the strength of that water willingly shed their blood for the name of Jesus. Ask the man about to die, who for a lifetime drank of Jacob's well but who now, as the earth is receding from him and heaven is drawing near, cannot quench his burning thirst except at this fountain of living water. Ask the Psalmist whose soul thirsted for God, for the living God, as the hart panteth after the water brooks?

But what is this living water? At a later day at one of the feasts at Jerusalem Jesus stood in the temple and cried, “If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.

He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake he of the Spirit which they that believe on him should receive." According to these words we cannot be wrong when we say that this living water is the gift of the Holy Spirit through whom the soul receives all the fulness of salvation. However we do not need to seek for a set word or phrase to show what this living water is. A word or phrase cannot compass its meaning. Living water — what does it mean? Why, all that the soul needs. Does the soul need forgiveness of sin, righteousness, peace and joy? It is all found in this living water. Does it need power for a new life, strength to overcome temptation, courage to go on in the work of the Lord? It is all found in this living water. It is the soul that is thirsty, in this, in that; here, there; today, tomorrow. It is the soul in all its needs crying out after the living God; and it is this living water that quenches all its thirst.

And what is the result of drinking this water? Jesus says that such a person "shall never thirst." A little difficulty seems to present itself here. A little farther on He says that this water shall be "in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." But why this well if there is no thirst? A well is to drink from, not a mere ornament. Besides we enjoy water only as we drink it. But if there is no thirst then we do not care to drink. And what is our daily experience? Do we not experience a daily thirst for divine grace? Why are you here today? Is it not to quench your thirst? Why were you here last Sunday and why will you come again next Sunday? Will it not be to get more water to quench more thirst? We say of the miser, the more he has the more he wants. The same is true of the child of God; the more he has of divine grace the more he wants. The soul is continually crying for more, and every day it has new needs. We may not know just how it will be in the world to come, but here we are always thirsty, always wanting more grace. This accords with the Psalmist's experience when he compares his thirst after God with that of the wild hart panting after the water brooks. This was

the Psalmist's daily experience. In making the comparison he may have thought of the hart in the chase, well nigh exhausted with running and consumed with thirst; but in this life the soul is always being chased and is in constant need of rest and refreshment.

The explanation then is this that there is no time, not even for a moment, when the soul is cut off from this water as a man may be cut off from Jacob's well. If you feel a constant thirst it is also being constantly quenched. The believer is constantly drawing comfort, strength and peace from the divine truth treasured up in his heart. It is a well of water in him, not a vessel full of water outside of him that may be lost. The truth which you hold cannot be lost nor taken from you except by a lapse of faith on your part. Wherever you may be and whatever the conditions, your wants are being satisfied. It is not like a diamond on the finger, which sparkles only when some light falls upon it. In your gloomiest experiences the Holy Spirit in your heart will be sending light and hope and comfort. And because it is "living water" — water that gives life — therefore it springs up into "everlasting life." It is life to you in this world and the effect will be life to you in the world to come. It is the one blessing — and mark that well — the one blessing that you can enjoy already in this life but that also reaches over, even with increased blessedness, into the life to come. — There is one thing more that we must say about this living water; it is this:

4. *Christ alone can give us this living water:* Notice well the emphasis Jesus here places upon that fact. He told the woman, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." He represents Himself as bearing a special gift of God and the occasion as a special opportunity for her to receive blessings such as she had never received before. Friends, do you realize this fact, that when the Gospel is preached to you, offering the gifts of Christ, you are having the greatest possible opportunity of your life? We speak of great opportunities in life, opportunities to make money,

to gain some high position, to win great success in one's profession; but what are such opportunities compared with the opportunity to win Christ, the fountain of all real life and happiness?

Jesus furthermore emphasizes the fact that He alone can give this water, by repeating the words "that I shall give thee." "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be a well of water." Jesus wanted to impress the woman with the fact that she must not look elsewhere for that water. For that reason too there is a constant repetition of the personal pronoun "I." We do not like to hear men use that pronoun too often. If they do we at once feel that they are attaching undue importance to themselves and are saying more than they can accomplish. Jesus needed to have no such fears for there could be no danger that any man might be disappointed in Him. A word is only of so much force and value as there is power back of it. Behind Jesus' every word there is omnipotence and therefore He did not need to hesitate to say "I." Whoever came to Jesus in the days of His flesh found Him ready to redeem every word He had ever spoken. He could therefore say to all men: Come unto Me, I will give you the water of life. Seek it not at Jacob's well, seek it not in Moses, seek it not among men, nor in your own hearts or thoughts or virtues or works. Seek it alone in Me. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."

Here now is the first and foremost problem for us and all men, to learn who this person is who says, "I can give you living water." This woman attacked the problem at once. At first Jesus' claim sounded ridiculous, but she had not gone far in her conversation, until she said, "Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet, and before Jesus was through with her she went home and reported to her people, "Come, and see a man that told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ?" You see, Jesus revealed Himself unto the woman and she on her part was ready to believe.

The great achievement, we say, is to learn to know Christ, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the

only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." That knowledge is worth more than to have discovered all the planets or all the secrets of nature. There have been great philosophers in the world before Christ and since, but from that fact alone we could not know whether they today are in heaven or in hell. Paul said to the Corinthians that he was determined to know nothing among them save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. We can have only little interest in an object of which we know little. You may take up a good book whose title promises little, but as you read you become interested and you can scarcely lay it down again. You may meet a stranger who at first attracts you little, but after some conversation you find him interesting and you go away feeling that you have another friend in the world. Such a person this woman found Jesus to be; such every one will find Him to be, who is willing to learn and ready to see the light.

Oh, that men would come to Jesus, the fountain of all truth, instead of going to their own broken cisterns. "Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the Lord. For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and have hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." Amen.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

JOHN 4: 31-42

In the meanwhile his disciples prayed him, saying, Master, eat. But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of. Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought him *ought* to eat? Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work. Say not ye, There are yet four months, and *then* cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together. And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth. I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours. And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman, which testified. He told me all that ever I did. So when the Samaritans were come unto him, they besought him that he would tarry with them: and he abode there two days. And many more believed because of his own word; And said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard *him* ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world.

LAST Sunday we were shown how Jesus talked with the woman of Samaria about the living water. We have the same general scene before us today, but there is a change; today we shall witness the second act. Last Sunday Jesus was sowing; today He is reaping.

Jesus takes occasion here to say some very significant things to His disciples; but they are things which concern us likewise. He speaks of meat they know not of, of sowing and reaping, of the harvest field, of labor and the fruits of labor. The things He speaks of pertain to work; Jesus was a busy man, doing the work His Father sent Him to do. You must feel too that it is the very highest kind of work. Jesus, in His teaching was always at the top of the ladder. You understand too that the scene before us is a missionary scene.

The various thoughts of the lesson may be gathered up in Jesus' own beautiful phrase:

THE FIELDS ARE WHITE TO HARVEST.

Let us seize upon the thoughts of these words and make them meat for ourselves. First we shall dwell upon:

1. *The missionary spirit that is manifest here:* The disciples had returned from the village whence they had gone to buy meat; the meal, a simple repast, was prepared. They prayed the Master to eat and the word implies that they did so repeatedly, but He showed no interest. The disciples wondered; only a short while before He was hungry as well as thirsty, now He wants nothing. "Hath any man brought him aught to eat?" "I have meat to eat that ye know not of," was the Master's response; "my meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." This in a measure cleared the matter for the disciples; it was not bodily food upon which He was feasting, but mental, or rather, spiritual.

This did not mean that the disciples should not eat the food which they had prepared; neither did it mean that Jesus Himself would not desire such food later on. Nor does it mean that we can dispense with the ordinary means of bodily support. Nor does it imply that ministers of the Gospel, who are called to do just such work as Jesus was doing here, no longer need to eat or drink, nor have a house to live in; especially must this not be interpreted as meaning that our missionaries no longer need a liberal support, that we need to give them but half a living and that for the other half they should look to this higher kind of meat. No, God still causes the earth to produce her fruit that there may be seed to the sower and bread for the eater. If any of the missionaries whom we have sent out and whom we have promised to support are obliged to sow in tears because of want, they shall indeed, in the Lord's own good time, reap in joy and shall doubtless come again with rejoicing bringing their sheaves with them; but we who have more than enough will be held responsible to the Lord for withholding from them the bread which they needed for themselves and for their children.

Though Jesus' not eating here is no reason why we should not eat, yet from it we should learn that our bodily life is not absolutely dependent upon baker's bread. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." If God so will He can maintain us without ordinary bread. He has means with which to feed our bodies of which we know not. Therefore He says, "Take no thought what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, or what ye shall wear." Do the work to which you have been called and your Father in heaven will see that you get the needful bread. Jesus was forty days in the wilderness, tempted of the devil, without anything to eat. At the end of the period He was indeed an hungred, but still strong enough to fight and overcome the devil. Elijah ate a simple meal, prepared by an angel under a juniper tree; and in the strength of that meat he went forty days, doing the work of the Lord. Moses was engaged in the Lord's business for forty days on Mount Sinai without food to eat. But remember, all these men were engaged in the Lord's work, were men of faith and therefore they were sustained by the higher food.

It is far worse when men consider the sum of happiness to consist in the mere gratification of the wants of the body, when they make that an end instead of a means. Then it is that they sink to the level of the beast of the field. That is what the ox lives for, to eat and drink. And though men by their intelligence and skill can discover higher kinds of pleasure in eating and drinking, yet even the ox will seek out the best grass and the most comfortable spot to lie down. These are all gifts of God and we should appreciate them and be thankful. But we must not permit them to hinder us in seeking higher purposes and enjoyments. You assert yourself already in seeking entertainment in literature, in art, in music. But we dare not stop there; whoever does is still of the earth, earthy.

The meat of which Jesus here partook was of a higher kind; it was to do the will of Him that sent Him. Can you think of a higher service than that of doing the will of your Father in heaven? Can there be any keener enjoyment than

the satisfaction of having done that will? And will not that dispense with a hundred other things that are not necessary? We hear much of living simpler lives. You will simplify your life a hundred fold if, casting all your care upon the Lord, you do only what you are sure He wants you to do. Jesus was a busy man, yet His life was very simple. He cared for nothing, save to do His Father's will. Of course, doing the Lord's will may mean the doing of some very ordinary and humble things. It may mean building a house, or digging a ditch, or sweeping the floor, or blacking your master's shoes. But when done for the Lord, there is meat in all that work.

Yet whatever work of that kind you may have to do, the Lord has also greater things for you to do. The particular form of Jesus' work here was to save men; indeed, that was His work throughout: "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." He had spoken to the Samaritan woman and she was saved; now others were coming and He must speak to them that they may be saved. And the matter dare not be postponed; the iron was hot, and the strokes must fall hard and fast. These people being ready to hear, they must be given the Word before the devil instills other thoughts. That was Jesus' work here and therein He shows the true missionary spirit, a burning zeal to bring men into the kingdom of God. "The love of Christ constraineth us," says Saint Paul; and again he says with fear upon his heart, "Woe unto me, if I preach not the Gospel."

You are not all called to be missionaries. Many of you young men, however, expect to be; and though you will not all become missionaries in the ordinary acceptation of that term, you do expect to become ministers of the Gospel, and that is essentially the same thing; it is winning souls for Christ and building them up in Him. Here now is an example of the missionary spirit which you need to foster; you cannot get along without it. However necessary intellectual training may be and however much of it you may receive, that alone will not fit you to be heralds of the Cross. It is said of the great naturalist Louis Agassiz that

when he was asked to go upon the lecture platform he replied: "I have not the time." So Jesus had no time for anything else but saving the lost. He was the almighty God and it would seem that with His unlimited power He would have had plenty of time for other things. But His mission was, to seek and to save that which was lost. Nothing did He allow to interfere with that work, not even a midday meal. Paul was mighty in intellectual equipment, yet all his powers were used to the one end, namely, to preach Christ to dying men. That must be your purpose, your undivided interest. Neither your heads nor your hearts are large enough to divide between the service of the Gospel and other interests.

But many of you are not called to become missionaries, yet the lesson is for you also. The highest meat you can find is bringing others to Christ; you parents, in bringing up your children in the Christian faith; you teachers in the Sunday school, in leading your pupils to see Jesus in all His grace and beauty. But why dwell on this point? This higher meat is offered to all in a hundred ways. A certain young Jew went to his tailor to have his measurement taken for a suit. While taking the measurement the tailor persuaded him to accept a new Testament. The Jew read the book, became converted and himself became a missionary among his own people. How often have you, brother, sister, made use of such opportunities? How often have you spoken to some unconverted person about Christ and pressed upon him the necessity of looking after his soul as well as his body? How many have you invited to church? Do you speak well of your church? How many weak brethren have you helped along the slippery path? There is meat in that for yourself as well as for the other person. A man had lost his way in the snow. He was exhausted and was about to lie down. Just then he saw another traveler lying in the snow, almost stiff with cold. He went to him, lifted him up, shook him and kept on shaking him, until both were thrilled with new warmth and life, and finally they found their way to safety. When you feel that you are growing spiritually cold and indifferent, then go out and look up some

brother who is even more indifferent and lay hold upon him and arouse him; and you will both receive new life and will go on your ways rejoicing. — We consider in the second place:

2. *The missionary prospect that is here presented:* Jesus looked upon the fields about Him and, noticing how the seed had sprung up and how green the fields were with the first growth, said, "Say ye not, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest?" Just then the woman returned from the village and many of her townspeople with her, and Jesus said: I see another field where we do not need to wait four months until the harvest, "Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, for they are white already to harvest." Jesus was not mistaken, for many of the Samaritans believed on Him.

It of course took spiritual insight, faith and hope to see these things. The disciples could not see them as Jesus did, just as they could not see the higher meat with which His soul was refreshed. Nor can we see these things as Jesus did. But He wants us to believe them nevertheless. "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." In this particular case even the natural eye could see the whiteness of the fields. Hence Jesus said, "Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields." The disciples could see the people coming and how they listened to the Word, how they asked Jesus to remain with them, how they rejoiced in His presence during the two days and how they received the Word and believed.

Today, also, we are not without fine missionary prospects. We have proof of this here in our own community and city. Of course, if the people are expected to come in by the score, then the field is not white. But that is an experience which we are not often permitted to enjoy; even our daily bread does not come in that way. Jesus Himself never had another such experience as this one at the well of Jacob. Once He went over into Syro-Phoenicia for a single mother and her daughter. Again He crossed over the sea to Gadara and made a single convert. If we are satisfied to win a soul here and a soul there, to interest a soul now, and

another then in the things of the kingdom of God, then we shall find the fields white unto harvest.

And not only here at home, but throughout this broad land, the field is ripe. If you are looking for fields where a congregation will spring up over night and where a city is born in a day, where the sower and reaper may always rejoice together, then of course you may be doomed to disappointment. But if you are willing to go out and work, sowing the seed in patience, and sowing only, if need be, willing that some one else shall do the reaping — if you are willing to send men out to work and keep them at the work, year after year, then the field is ripe and the prospect is good. That the field is ripe may be seen in the work of our own synod. At the close of nineteen hundred and eleven we had ninety-nine missionaries in the field; in addition there were twelve missionary parishes unsupplied for the want of men; and in addition to this there were ten other calls to open up new fields. During the year just past nine fields became self-supporting, and eight during the year nineteen hundred and ten; and since missionary work has been fully organized in our synod, twenty-six years ago, one hundred and thirty-seven parishes have become self-supporting. We may add here, not boastingly, that for no other church is the field so ripe as for the Lutheran church. Let us rejoice at that prospect and go and gather in the harvest.

And when we look at the foreign field, the prospect there is an encouraging one. Here again if we expect a nation to be born in a day, we shall be disappointed. It required about thirteen hundred years to Christianize Europe. But wherever men are sent who give themselves prayerfully to the work, their labors are being blest. There may be more than four months till the harvest. Missionaries have labored so long as thirteen years before a single convert was made. And even though we reap not at all, our hearts must not despair. It is ours to sow even if we cannot reap. Jesus wept over Jerusalem, not because He tried so oft to gather her children as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but because they would not. He wept, not because He had labored so much, but because the city was lost.

There is another side to this missionary prospect which we must not overlook. Jesus says, "He that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal." The converts are conceived of as so many sheaves which the missionary gathers into the kingdom of God. In that ingathering he finds his wages; that in some of that higher meat which rejoices the soul. But the main thought here is contained in the words, "that both he that soweth, and he that reapeth may rejoice together." Here is an exceptional case, Jesus would say. I came but an hour ago and sowed the seed in the heart of the woman; now behold, the seed has not only germinated, but is already ripe for the sickle. Whether we think of Jesus as both sower and reaper, or as the sower and His disciples as the reapers, it does not change the fact that here sowing and reaping fall together, and the sower and the reaper rejoice together.

But it is not always so. "Herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth. I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labor: other men labored, and ye are entered into their labors." Jesus has in mind the work of the apostles in general. They indeed were sowers as well as reapers, but much of their first work was reaping where others had sown. The great ingathering of three thousand souls on the day of Pentecost and the rapid growth of the Church in the days following were largely the fruit of the labors of Jesus, of John the Baptist, and of other godly men and even women, and of the disciples themselves while with Jesus, for even then they were sent out to preach. And could we not today also point to congregations where men had labored for years, patiently sowing the seed without any great ingathering, but when they were called away to some other field, or to rejoice with the reapers in heaven, the field was found fully ripe and there seemed hardly anything more to do than to reap? It behooves us therefore to honor the man for the work that he does, not primarily because of visible results. Sowing is generally harder work than reaping, and it usually requires a longer time; but remember that in the end we shall all rejoice together, sower, reaper and garnered sheaf. We have considered the missionary

spirit that is manifested here. We have viewed the missionary prospect. Let us now look at:

3. *The Missionary himself who is here presented:* We should not forget that we are yet in the Epiphany season, which deals with Christ's manifestation of Himself. We have seen in the preceding lessons how He revealed Himself to individuals and won them as disciples, among them the woman of Samaria. But the lesson of today takes us further. "Now we believe," said the Samaritans to the woman, "not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world." The first thought here is this, that Christ is the Savior of the world. He is looking not only for certain individuals, not only for the lost sheep of the house of Israel; and the fact that He is here dealing with the Samaritans, a mixed race of Jew and gentile, shows that in His salvation all the nations of the world are comprehended; that there is neither Jew nor gentile, neither Greek, barbarian, nor Scythian, but all are one in Christ Jesus. The middle wall of partition is down. Jesus Himself did little work outside of His own people; but we have here, as in many other places, the implied fact that the Word shall go into all the world and His lines unto the ends of the earth. These Samaritans were not slow to see this great fact, to accept it and to rejoice in its blessed truth.

There is another truth here which you should learn. It is a thought upon which we might easily enlarge, and with great profit. It is this: that we have here the world's great Missionary. The efficiency of an army and the success of a campaign depend largely upon the commanding general. Jesus is the Captain of our Salvation; He must lead us against the enemy; from Him we must get our inspiration; from Him must come the word of command. When He sent the Apostles forth to preach the Gospel to all nations, He gave them the promise, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Jesus is therefore in our midst, giving us life and encouragement by His Word and Spirit, directing us, too, in the great work.

Are our eyes upon Him? We have observed how in all our lessons Christ is the central figure, engaged in the work of saving souls; and we should furthermore observe, as we go along, how the disciples gradually caught the fire from Him and so were enabled to continue the work. Only one failed — Judas the traitor; and he failed because he did not catch the missionary spirit, but permitted himself to be held fast by the spirit of covetousness. There is a meat that perisheth; let it not come nigh your soul. Seek the higher meat by doing your Master's will. Keep an eye on Jesus, on His work, on His methods, on His spirit, and you will gradually find yourself drawn toward Him as a plant is drawn toward the light. You will find awakening within you the spirit of missions and the strong desire to do your heavenly Father's will.

Faith is a most important element in the make-up of the missionary. We have already noticed how Jesus at Jacob's well saw a ripening spiritual harvest before His disciples ever began to think about it. It so filled Him with joy that for the time being He could not eat. By His omniscience He of course saw what the human eye could not see. But we have His Word and Promise and that Word is no less effective today than when Jesus Himself preached it from the curb of Jacob's well. The certainty of its fulfillment should give us strength and courage to go on in the great work. When the orchardist plants his fruit trees he goes about it with buoyant spirit because he knows that with reasonable care he will enjoy a delicious harvest in a few years. Why should we not be even more certain of a rich return when we plant the eternal truth of the Gospel? Who shall prevent its growth if God Himself wills it? Many prayers are not answered because of a lack of faith. So, too, doubtless many a missionary effort fails because we went about it with a faltering heart. Lord, increase our faith. Amen.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

MATTHEW 7: 24-29

Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it. And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: For he taught them as *one* having authority, and not as the scribes.

THE Bible sets forth the Christian life under various figures. Paul calls it a "fight" when he says to Timothy, "I have fought a good fight." Again, we are admonished to "run with patience the race set before us." Jesus speaks of it as choosing the right way when He says, "Strive to enter in at the straight gate." There are many other comparisons but they are all given to show us the many-sidedness of the Christian's life and work. The Holy Spirit is using every possible means to lead us into fuller light. We do not know how a palace looks until we have gone about it and viewed it from every side. So the Psalmist says, "Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces." We are to study all phases of the life that is required so that we may be prepared and continue steadfast when the mighty conflicts come.

In our lesson this morning our Savior makes use of another comparison to set forth the nature of life. He compares it with the process of building a house. We may therefore take as our subject:

THE CHRISTIAN'S LIFE-BUILDING.

The very first thing in this building process is:

1. *Laying the foundation:* "Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken

him to a wise man which built his house upon a rock." It needs only to be stated that in erecting a building the first and most important thing is the foundation. It matters not how fine and substantial the superstructure may be, it will soon be out of plumb and otherwise defective, if the foundation gives way or crumbles; and if the foundation is swept away entirely the house must of course fall to the hurt of its occupants and destruction of its contents.

But in speaking of the Christian's life just what are we to understand by the foundation? Jesus here makes His sayings a most important element in this foundation. Indeed we can say that Jesus' words are the very foundation upon which we must build. For by "these sayings of mine" He here means His entire Sermon on the Mount, of which our text is the fitting conclusion. In this sermon He sets forth many of the fundamental truths concerning His kingdom and the Christian life. So He says, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter the kingdom of heaven," and thereby tells us that God's kingdom requires the righteousness that God will accept and not simply what satisfies man. Therefore He says: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you." He furthermore declares: "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

But we dare not stop with the Sermon on the Mount; there are other sayings of Jesus that we must include here even though they were spoken upon other occasions. For instance, "Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" is also Jesus' saying. Likewise, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life"; and, "He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned." Nor may we stop at the words

uttered by Jesus' own lips; we must include the words of the Apostles, for the same Holy Spirit who anointed Jesus to preach the acceptable year of the Lord likewise moved the Apostles to set forth the things needful unto salvation. Nor is that yet all. The word of the Prophets must also be included, for they with the Apostles constitute the foundation, Jesus Christ being the chief cornerstone. The foundation therefore which we must lay into life's building is the whole Word of God, Law and Gospel; the Law to show us our sinfulness and the Gospel to show us the Savior and what we must do to be saved. It will not do to make a selection and take only what pleases us. For example, you cannot regard God, as loving and merciful and disregard His righteousness and holiness. When one builds a foundation for a house he runs up all the corners, not only one or two. So our life needs a basis rounded out in all truth, otherwise the superstructure will soon become lopsided and will not withstand the elements and the floods that are bound to come.

But there is something else said here about this foundation which we must by no means overlook. Jesus does not say that His sayings are the foundation. He does not represent the foundation as a thing, but as an act. The foundation, or better still, laying the foundation, consists in doing the words of Jesus, "He that heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them." That the emphasis is upon the doing is plain from the man who builds upon the sand; he also hears Christ's sayings but he does not do them. This distinction, that the foundation of the Christian life does not consist in the mere hearing or having the words of Jesus, but in the doing of them, is important. A builder may have an ample supply of good stones for the foundation, but if he does not put them into the wall and put them in right, he can build no substantial house. You may hear God's Word and have it in your intellect: you may know much about the Bible and be able to talk quite intelligently about Christ, about the Christian religion, about the Church and what is needed in a Christian life; and yet you may not be working the stones of divine truth into your life's structure; a mere hearer

you may be deceiving yourself, thinking that your life is safe whereas it is resting upon the shifting sand.

This hearing and doing needs further elucidation. A man builds upon the sand when he views Jesus primarily as a teacher of morals, when he thinks that the main, indeed, the only thing needful is a virtuous life under the inspiration of Jesus' example and to the extent of one's abilities. Such a man is building upon the sand of his own works. He is blind to the fact that his whole life, no matter how pleasing it may be to himself, is abominable in the sight of God. He does not see that Christ is the Savior of men, not because He is a moral teacher, but because He died upon the cross to atone for sin; that we are healed "by His stripes," not by His morals. There is no more unstable sand in all the world than a man's works, for the prophet long ago declared that they are all as "an unclean thing and as filthy rags." Such a building cannot stand when the judgment of God descends.

Again, a man builds upon the sand when he reasons that because God is a God of love and mercy therefore He will not condemn any one to everlasting punishment. Here, too, the wish is father to the thought. These men want it to be so. If God on account of His infinite love will not condemn any one, then the case is not so bad. All will be well in the end, it matters not how one may live; the house will stand no matter on what it rests. Such a notion is a delusion, for God is not only merciful but He is also holy and righteous and will punish evil to the full extent of His holy Law. He must do so for His own self-preservation. A law which does not maintain itself will break down and will soon be trampled into the dust. To hope in God's mercy therefore and to despise His wrath is a foundation of sand.

Again, a man builds upon the sand when he accepts Jesus' words and even makes a confession of Christ, but fails to live them. This is especially the point which Jesus here wants to drive home. He saw about Him Scribes and Pharisees who made loud professions of religion and thought

that only they and a few others were in the kingdom of God. But Jesus saw how corrupt their lives were, that the Word of God was only upon their lips; that they were continually saying, "Lord, Lord," but were not doing the will of God. The Baptist had already denounced them as a generation of vipers who thought to say, "We have Abraham to our father"; that is, we are descendants of Abraham and therefore as a matter of course we are God's children. No, says Jesus, you are not His children, but your father is the devil who abode not in the truth, and who is a liar and a murderer from the beginning.

Furthermore Jesus has in mind here not only plain hypocrites, but all those, too, who think that an outward profession will suffice. They say: I have been baptized and confirmed and I belong to church. Why should I not be counted a true disciple of Christ? Why should my house not stand? Those are likewise included who think that orthodoxy, the right doctrine, is the all-sufficient thing, who argue thus: I can prove every point of my doctrine by the Scriptures; it is all clearly contained too in the Confessions of our Church; these things I believe, they are God's Word, the everlasting truth, and the Bible says that "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." This is all very good; we need to make a confession and our confession needs to be one of the truth, of all the truth and of nothing but the truth. And yet if you have nothing more than this, you have not built the truth into your life, you are still building upon the sand.

What is it, then, that Jesus requires here? Two things are required in doing His words: First, that we really believe them, or to put it more directly, that we believe upon Jesus Himself, that He is the Savior through His shed blood, that in Him we have forgiveness of sins, righteousness before God and the gift of the Holy Ghost unto a new life. You cannot begin at all to do Jesus' sayings unless you begin by making Him the foundation of all your hopes and expectations. There is no other hope, no other foundation, no other way: "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

That means that you must feel yourself a lost and helpless sinner without even one vestige of hope outside of Christ. But your work dare not stop there. You have now laid the chief cornerstone which is Christ Himself. You must extend your foundation and make it a substratum for all your life, not only for knowing and believing, but also for living in Christ. When you have Christ you have salvation, that is true, but you do not have Christ, unless you are also ready to live in Him. That is the very point to be brought out here. Men know about Christ, have His words upon the lips, but do not have Him in the heart. There is no thought here of making our salvation dependent upon works. But Jesus does tell us in our lesson that unless He enters into our very life, and recasts and renews it, we do not really have Him and the salvation which He offers.

A house is not completed by simply laying the foundation. There must also be a superstructure, or the house proper. This leads us to the consideration of the second step in the Christian's life:

2. *Erecting the superstructure:* Jesus does not here speak expressly of a superstructure and of how it is to be built, yet that such a structure is implied is evident from the fact that He speaks of the house as standing or falling. There is a reason why He does not speak expressly of building the superstructure. The foundation is the all-important thing, for without the foundation everything else would be useless. Think for a moment of all that you might do, if you had the sayings of Christ, but not Christ Himself. For one thing you might go out among men and declare Christ to them; you might tell them that He is the Son of God and the Son of Man, that He died to save the world and that whosoever believes on Him will be saved. Or you might hold up Jesus as a great moral teacher, showing how His own life was without sin, how He went about doing good, how He was full of sympathy for all men, especially for the sick and the down-trodden. You might show the great power which He exercised, how He healed the afflicted with a word, drove out devils, fed the multitude,

stilled the tempest and even raised the dead. You might go about trying to better conditions among men, engaging in works of mercy and trying to lift people to a higher moral plane. All this is possible in the name of Christ, though He be not in the heart. But it would come to naught at the Judgment Day. One blast of God's wrath will sweep it all away and you with it, if you are not hid in Jesus' cleft side. Hear Paul: Though I speak with tongues of men and angels, though I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, though I have all faith so that I could remove mountains, and though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor and give my body to be burned, if I have not love, it profiteth me nothing. Many will say to Jesus at that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name and in thy name cast out devils and in thy name done many wonderful works? But He will profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. Many great things may be done in the name of religion, things that men admire, things that may even astound them, but the sweep of God's judgment will brush them all away as the oncoming tide carries away the unstable sand. Therefore Jesus says: Make sure of the foundation, make sure of that upon which life itself must rest. What that foundation is He makes plain elsewhere also when He says, "I am the vine, ye are the branches," and that "without me ye can do nothing." Without Christ you can do nothing that will stand the test of the final divine judgment — nothing either that will safeguard you against the terrific assault of death. Do not therefore be satisfied with simply hearing the words of Jesus, but receive them into an humble and penitent heart, confessing your sins and looking to Him for all pardon and righteousness. But then also accept His yoke, enter into His service and let His Word be the light for your eyes, the strength of your hand and the joy of your heart. Thus will you be laying stone upon stone on the one sure foundation and raising up a superstructure that will stand at that great day.

But this leads us to point out another reason why Jesus did not here speak expressly of erecting the superstructure.

The reason is this, that building the superstructure requires essentially the same kind of work as laying the foundation. What you did when you accepted Christ as your Savior, that you need to do every day. You then felt your sinfulness and that Jesus alone could help you. Think back for a moment and see if that was not the case? It matters not whether that experience came gradually or whether the conviction burst upon you like a flood. You felt the need of a divine Savior and that without Him there could be no hope and no peace. But that same feeling must be yours continually; indeed, you should feel it more keenly today than you did then. On that day too you cast yourself into the arms of Jesus and cried, "God be merciful to me a sinner." That brought relief, that filled your heart with peace. Then your heart was filled with rejoicing and your mouth with laughter. Then you took up the harp from off the willow tree and sang a song of love to your Beloved. But are you not resting in the arms of Jesus every day? Do you not need renewed assurance every day that your sins have been blotted out? Are you not rejoicing every day because of the peace of God that fills your soul? Again, when you accepted Christ you said you would make the Word of Jesus the rule of your life, that you would keep the great commandment of love, to love one another even as He has loved you and to walk in righteousness and holiness before Him all the days of your life. In your baptismal covenant the vow was made that you would renounce the works of the devil, the ways of the world and the thoughts of the flesh, and that you would walk after the Spirit. In your confirmation you promised to remain faithful to Christ and to His Word until death. In all these things you must continue every day. The moment you begin to neglect them and think that they are not necessary, so soon your building begins to totter, for the foundation has started to crumble.

Do not think it strange therefore that there is nothing said in our text about rearing the superstructure and that Jesus passes at once from the foundation to the completed house. Look you well to the foundation; see that you are more than a mere hearer; see that Jesus' words have entered

into the very texture of your soul like food into the texture of your body; see that Jesus' Word is your daily comfort, daily joy and daily strength for a new life. The superstructure will then take care of itself; it will rise higher with every day you thus live in Christ. There will be growth in knowledge, in faith, in willingness to serve Christ, in hope and in joyfulness. Then when your life's work is done, you will find that your house has been finished. God Himself attends to that, as He cares for your physical growth. You did not make your body grow, but simply ate and exercised and slept; you did not give the question of growth any thought whatever, yet at the proper age you were fully grown. So, too, will your spiritual building rise to completion, only keep you upon the right foundation. — But this leads us to say a word about:

3. *The final test:* Jesus speaks here of the rains descending, of the floods beating and of the winds blowing. We shall not attempt to specify just what each one of these elements means in your life. We can take them altogether as representing the adverse circumstances in life that try our faith and put our strength and works to the test. In times of persecution men's faith was tried by the tortures of their enemies. Your standing as a Christian is tried in the face of afflictions, sickness and other misfortunes. Often, too, the severest test is worldly prosperity. When the ox becomes fat he kicks at his master; so when it goes well with men they are apt to forget God. The only way to stand against these assaults is to have your feet on the right foundation.

But the elements already spoken of do not represent the severest test of your life's building. Jesus speaks of the final judgment. On that day He Himself will come to inspect our building. That will be the final test, for from that decision there will be no appeal. If your house is built upon the sand you may still stand many tests. In stoical fortitude you may hold out against reverses in fortune, against sickness, against the death of friends and of loved ones. Yes, you may present a bold front even against your own death and go down into darkness without a tremor upon your

lips. But that is not the end — the last storm has not yet broken. When He whose eyes are as flames of fire stands before you and pronounces your everlasting doom, then will your courage fail, your hope depart and your heart melt away as water. Then will you realize that in all your life there is nothing that will pass for gold and silver, but that all is wood, hay, stubble, worthless chaff and drifting sand.

Jesus adds significantly, "And great was the fall of it." The thought is not that the man had put up such a great house by his own devising, but that the destruction was a great destruction, complete, nothing is left to mark the spot where the building stood — building, foundation, contents and all swept away, no more to be assembled for a new structure. Consider well that thought. Then it will be too late to begin to lay a new foundation. There will be no possibility of repentance, of faith in Christ, of receiving the gift of the Spirit unto a new life; that will all be passed, the opportunity forever gone. The terrific wind of Divine Judgment will have swept the field and whatever was built upon the sand will have been hurled to everlasting ruin.

When Jesus calls the fall a great one He has reference also to the great worth and the immortal nature of the soul. What has gone down to ruin? A man, an immortal soul, created in the image of God, made for true knowledge, true righteousness and true holiness; made to live on throughout all eternity, in communion with angels and in the presence of God Himself; made for increased knowledge and love and rejoicing forever and ever. Such is the one who has gone down by the fall of his house into everlasting remorse and darkness. Stop then, and here consider the final outcome of a life outside of Christ. The storm may already be seen gathering in the west, the clouds growing thick and black. Turn in true repentance before it is eternally too late.

This warning should fall upon our ears with special intensity when we notice the impression which Jesus' words made upon the hearers in the lesson, "The people were astonished at his doctrine; for he taught them as one having

authority, and not as the Scribes." Note well that Jesus' words are words of authority; they are not the babbling of idle men, nor the prating of proud fools. He spoke, in whom are hid all the treasures of knowledge and wisdom and in whose hand are all the powers of heaven and earth. What He commands shall be done and what He promises shall come to pass. Amen.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

JOHN 5: 39-47

Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life. I receive not honor from men. But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you. I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive. How can ye believe, which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that *cometh* from God only? Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is *one* that accuseth you, *even* Moses, in whom ye trust. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me; for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words

THE great thought of our Epiphany lessons is Christ manifesting Himself to men as the Savior of the world.

The object of this manifestation is that men might believe on Him. This His gracious purpose, however, was not realized in His day in the case of all who heard Him. Then, as today, the mass of people refused to believe in Him as their Savior. This fact needs an explanation. If there were a sovereign remedy for tuberculosis and the majority of sufferers from that disease would refuse to use the cure, we certainly would ask for an explanation. There is a sovereign remedy for sin and all its ills. The remedy is Christ. The absolute effectiveness of the remedy has been demonstrated again and again. The fact, too, is being proclaimed in the ears of a suffering humanity. Yet comparatively few come to Christ that they may have life. Why is this?

We have in our lesson this morning

JESUS' TESTIMONY CONCERNING UNBELIEF

and in that testimony we have a full answer to our question. We shall consider first:

1. *The means of overcoming unbelief:* By nature we are all unbelievers, so far as the kingdom of God is concerned. During His entire ministry Jesus unceasingly tried to move men to believe on Him; and when the Twelve were

sent to preach the Gospel, the great object again was that men might believe. Born in skepticism, we came into the world; and that benighted state of the human heart may be taken as our starting point in entering upon a discussion of unbelief.

In pointing out now how unbelief is to be overcome Jesus tells us that the very first thing is to search the Scriptures. "Search the scriptures," He says. One element of unbelief is ignorance.

I cannot believe that there is a large city in England called London, if I have no assured knowledge that such a city exists there. You cannot believe that there is a heaven or a hell, if you do not have the necessary evidence of the existence of these places. So you cannot believe that there is a Christ who is a Savior from sin, if there is no evidence to that effect, or if you have not learned of that evidence. "How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?"

But the Scriptures are here for the very purpose of giving us that information. Do we consider that fact sufficiently? What do you find in the very first chapter of Genesis? You find the declaration as plain as words can make it that there is a God who made all things, made man in His own image and called all things good. Pass on to the second and third chapters and you learn how sin came into the world, how the whole world was laid under a curse on account of sin, but how God then already promised a Savior in the Seed of the woman, that should bruise the serpent's head. So all through the pages of divine Revelation you find the great facts and truths that are to open our eyes and lead us to believe. Many things are spoken of in the Bible, some of which are necessarily of minor importance; but the great prevailing object is to set forth those things that we need to know and believe for our salvation.

But the Scriptures not only impart light, they also carry conviction. A man may see a truth and yet not feel its force; and it is the latter especially that constitutes conviction. When the prophet Nathan appeared before David and in a parable told him of his sin against Uriah the Hittite, David

at once saw the wickedness of the act and was justly incensed. But it was not until the prophet pointed his finger at David and said, "Thou art the man," and thus brought the sin home to David's heart as his own sin, that real conviction was effected. Then David said, "I have sinned against the Lord." Paul stood before Felix, the Roman governor, and "reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come"; Paul spoke the Word of God to the governor; the governor heard it and saw the truth of Paul's reasoning and also felt its force, with the result that he trembled and answered, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee." Here was vision, seeing the truth; but here was conviction, also, feeling the truth as applying to oneself. That is what we mean by the power of God's Word to effect conviction.

But there was one thing lacking in Felix, he did not really repent and believe, he did not yield to the truth which he saw and felt. This is the explanation of the loss of many souls; they see the truth, they feel its force, but they do not accept it, do not submit to it, do not act according to its suggestion. If it were explained to you how eating plenty of wholesome fruit would produce a beneficial effect upon your body, and you would see the reasonableness of the advice but would fail to act upon it, your body would of course not experience any good results from your knowledge of those facts and your recognition of their reasonableness. Nothing short of eating would accomplish the purpose. Thus also nothing short of eating God's Word, accepting it, submitting to it, acting on its suggestions — nothing short of these things will accomplish the saving result.

But the Scriptures are also given for this very purpose. They not only impart light, they not only carry conviction, but they also offer the power to believe. They would not be an effective means for removing unbelief if they did not do this. Jesus' admonition to search the Scriptures would be useless advice. But it is not useless, it is the very best advice in the world, for "faith cometh by hearing." When Peter on Pentecost preached the Gospel to the multitude, three thousand not only saw the truth of his preaching; not

only were they convinced, "pricked in their hearts," so that they cried out "Men and brethren what shall we do?" but they also believed and were baptized on that very day and received the gift of the Holy Ghost. Not all who heard Peter believed, nor does it ever happen that all who hear the Word of God believe. But nevertheless that Word is still the means and the only means for awakening faith. The magnet exerts the power of attracting certain substances, even if other substances fail to be drawn towards it. They are not susceptible to its influence. So also many people, because of the perverted state of their hearts, are not susceptible to the converting power of God's Word.

But Jesus explains more fully yet why the Scriptures are the means for removing unbelief, for He says, "they are they which testify of me." We are not to seek our Savior in certain abstract truths or principles which we are to apply to ourselves, not in certain rules of conduct as for example, by being honest and truthful, nor in certain modes of living. Our Savior is a person — Jesus Christ the Son of the living God. So, too, the faith that saves is not a faith in certain abstract truths or principles, but it is faith in a person, it is holding to a person who is to drag us out of the slough of sin and misery and condemnation. If you were in the water unable to swim and on the point of sinking, what good would it do you to believe in certain theories about swimming? What you would need would be some power to pull you out and that you would hold fast to that power until you were out. Jesus is the power, the person who saves us from sin and death and believing means to cling to Him as the Savior. Therefore we find life in the Scriptures, for they testify of Christ by showing who He is, and what He has done to make our salvation possible.

Here, then, is the remedy for unbelief: hear the Word of God, study it, search it, become familiar with its truth; learn to know Christ concerning whom the Scriptures testify; study especially also the wonderful acts of God in His dealing with His people Israel; dwell long on the work accomplished by the Apostles as recorded in the book of Acts; and do all this in a humble way, with a mind willing

to learn and ready to obey. If this is done, faith will appear; not in full bloom, it may be, but "first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." But if you insist on holding fast to your own opinions and on following your own wishes, if you are not willing to submit to the demands of God's Word, to be directed by its gracious influences, then do not expect the beautiful plant of faith to spring up in your heart and to adorn your life. Then the fault will be your own and your blood will be upon your own head. — In the second place Jesus gives us:

2. *A fuller characterization of unbelief:* When we speak of Christian faith we mean faith in Christ as the Savior of men and the holding fast to Him as that Savior. Unbelief then means a rejection of Christ as that Savior, a remaining away from Him and either not seeking life at all or else seeking it at some other source. Unbelief is a negative thing; it is not faith, not seeking life and salvation in Christ. Jesus, therefore, in telling us what unbelief is makes frequent use of the word "not."

So He tells the Jews here first of all, "And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." There are a number of reasons why men do not go to Christ for life. One reason may be that they do not care at all for eternal life. The world is full of such people. This is a very nice world, they think; it is full of good things; they find enough here to interest them. The everyday life of work and wages, of eating and drinking, of pleasures and enjoyments innumerable — that is all they care for. They are like sheep, nibbling away on the seared hillside, without any thought of the tender grass and the running brooks in the valley below. Others there are who have become embittered; they have been forced into the shady side of life instead of the sunny side. They have become soured on the world, soured especially on men. They have eaten sour grapes so long that all their teeth are set on edge. They have lost all confidence in men and even doubt that there is a God, or if there is, that He is a good God. The invitation of Jesus to come to Him that they might have life has no attractions for them. Their very hearts are swallowed up

in sorrow and bitterness. There are others who make reason their god. They have great wisdom or, at least, think they have; they have powers of mind so that they can think and can find out the truth or the untruth of things for themselves. What they can see and understand, that is all real and worthwhile, but what they cannot grasp with their minds as, for example, the miracles of Christ, His resurrection, the atonement through His blood and other Gospel truths, all that is to them nonsense, or at the best only suitable for women and children. Others there are, who want eternal life, but do not want to go to Christ for it. Such were the Pharisees in Christ's time, the Jews of our lesson. They were very religious in their way, they made much of the kingdom of heaven; in their estimation, too, they were the only ones who were fit for that kingdom. But they sought all this in themselves; they "trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others." With the proud Pharisee they said, "God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are; I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess." There are still other forms of unbelief as well as other reasons why men do not go to Christ for life. But let these examples suffice. If there is unbelief in the heart of anyone present today, he will either find it sufficiently characterized above so that he can recognize it, or he will be able to discover for himself just why it is that he does not want to go to Christ to get life.

Another mark of unbelief is the lack of love to God, "But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you." What a searching declaration! What a crushing criticism! What more dishonorable or reproachful can be said of a man than that he does not love God! God is that great and benevolent Being who gives man every breath he breathes, every good he enjoys, who watches over him by day and protects him at night, yet here is a man who does not love Him, has no kindly or grateful feeling toward Him. Can wickedness or downright meanness go further? If a man dealt thus with those who befriended him he would be ostracised at once as an ungrateful wretch. Here stands the loving Savior, God incarnate, with His pierced hands and

wounded side, all endured for men, and says to the unbeliever, I know that you have not the love of God in you.

Furthermore, Jesus says of unbelief, "I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not; if another shall come in his own name, him will ye receive." How true this is! Elsewhere Jesus tells us that false christs and false prophets shall come and shall deceive many. We are told that sixty-four false messiahs have appeared since the days of Christ and all of them found a following. Among the modern false christs was the originator of Mormonism, Mrs. Eddy of the Christian Scientist cult, Alexander Dowie who called himself Elijah II. and others. All of them have their followers, some of them by the thousands or even millions. But these persons came in their own name, they did not come preaching the simple teachings of Christ, but came with their own doctrines and almost succeeded in having themselves honored as gods. But that is the nature of unbelief. It will not receive the message of the plain preacher who has been regularly called by the Church and who is in his pulpit, Sunday after Sunday, year after year, declaring in plain language the whole counsel of God, but when some self-appointed preacher comes along, there are always people ready to follow him and to declare, "Now we have it; this is the man, this is the way!"

Jesus points out still another mark of unbelief, "How can ye believe, which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that cometh from God only?" Faith implies humility, that a man recognizes his sinful and lost condition, that he can do nothing toward effecting his own deliverance, that no other man can save him, but that God alone must work his rescue. All honor therefore belongs to God. But just because God is the one who saves, the only real helper, therefore the believer seeks to do His will in order that he may have His commandments and praise. If you want some man to praise you, then you will do the things that please him; and if the praise of men is all that you seek, then of course you will do nothing to win God's favor. That is just what the Jews did. "All their works they do for to be seen of men," says Jesus elsewhere; they

“love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats at the synagogues, and greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi.” They prayed where they could be seen of men, their fasting was of the body instead of the heart, and their almsdeeds were proclaimed with a trumpet. If you become the servants of men in this matter, if you fawn upon them to win their favor, if you crouch before them like a cringing dog, then think not for a moment that you may at the same time hold to Christ as your Savior. — In the third place we have here in Jesus’ words:

3. *The condemnation of unbelief*: “Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father.” The words imply that at least some of the Jews might have thought that because they did not receive His Word Jesus might accuse them before God and so be instrumental in having condemnation pronounced upon them. Jesus did not do that; He came not “into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved.” He did not come to accuse men before God, but to intercede and plead for them. Jesus will come again and He will then come to judge; for “the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son.” But as He appears here in the lesson, in His mediatorial work, it is the saving, the interceding, the pleading Christ. It is the Christ whom the Gospel presents to us; this is the great comforting message of the Church. Jesus is marshalling all the forces of mercy and grace in heaven and upon earth to rescue men from sin and death.

But this does not help matters for the unbeliever. The case of the Jews was not improved because Jesus said that He would not accuse them to the Father. There is another who will accuse them. “There is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust.” Moses represents the Law and the Law declares, “The soul that sinneth, it shall die,” and, “Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.” That is what accuses men before God: Thou doest not keep the commandments of God; thou doest not fear, love and trust in God above all things: thou doest not keep His name holy;

thou doest not hold His Word sacred and gladly hear and learn it; thou doest not rightly honor thy parents and masters; thou doest not love thy neighbor as thyself, but harmest him in his body, doest commit lewdness with him, doest filch from him goods, doest speak ill of him and slanderest his name. This is the fearful accusation that constantly comes to the ear of God; and it concerns you, O man, whoever you are. For "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

Consider here also the awful irony of the case, especially as applied to the Jews, and to all who trust in Moses. It is brought out in the words, "in whom ye trust." Suppose you were trusting in a fancied friend: He is a very good friend of mine, you say; he never disappointed me and I am sure he never will; just now I am in great straits, but he will help me out, I know he will; I shall go to him at once. You go to him, but instead of helping you he turns upon you and with a club gives you a sound beating and drives you from his presence. That is what Moses will do to everyone who trusts in him. You may think that you are keeping his commandments by observing some outward ordinances and practicing a few superficial virtues, as thought the Jews. But when you appear before the Judge it will be only to receive everlasting condemnation by the righteous rod of God's holiness and of His vengeance upon the unbelieving and wicked. And it will all be just and fully deserved, for you never kept a single precept of Moses.

It is well enough for you to try to do Moses' law, for it is God's own law; and no one can hope to be saved even through Christ if he continues to live in sin. But do not trust in Moses. Make other use of him. Consider that Moses testified concerning Christ, for "he wrote of me," says Jesus. Study your Old Testament, its history, its prophecies, and consider that it is all a testimony concerning Christ, that He was to come into the world and save it from sin and death. Study that side of Moses and believe him in all he says and then you will find no difficulty in believing Christ, the fulfillment of Moses. Believe Moses' writings then you will believe Jesus' words. Amen.

SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY

LUKE 10: 38-42

Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman, named Martha, received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus feet, and heard his word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me. And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

ONE of the finest things to be said in honor of woman-kind is the fact that among all the women with whom Jesus came in contact not one became His enemy, nor reproached Him with even so much as a word. They were His truest friends. They came to Him, some with their sins, in deep penitence and humility; some, that He might deliver them from the cruel bonds of Satan; some, to anoint Him with the precious oil of love and devotion; some, to minister unto Him of their substance; even the wife of conscienceless Pilate sent her husband word, "Have nothing to do with that just man; for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of Him."

Jesus also appreciated the friendship and devotion of these women; and there was probably no place in all the land where Jesus, after a heavy day's work or a weary journey could turn with such assurance of welcome, comfort and good cheer as to that quiet home at Bethany, the house of the sisters Martha and Mary and their brother Lazarus.

We too are glad for our own sakes that Jesus found this home a friendly stopping place. From the flowers of love and truth which sprang up there we gather some of the finest honey. Here it was that Jesus showed Himself to be the Prince of life by calling Lazarus from the grave and uttering those wonderful words, "I am the resurrection and the life." Here was manifested the most beautiful devotion to the Master when Mary broke the bottle of costly nard and

anointed her Savior, and drew from Him the high commendation that "wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her." Here, too, in our lesson today and on the basis of the characters of the two sisters, Jesus shows us what we are to avoid and what we are to choose; in a few words, weighty with truth but of matchless sympathy and infinite tenderness, He presents us with

THE KEY TO A QUIET AND BLESSED LIFE.

In the first place we are shown here:

1. *What we are to avoid:* Whether Jesus was alone or accompanied by His disciples on this visit at the home of Martha and Mary, is hard to say. We read that as they went He entered into a certain village. But that does not necessarily mean that He was alone; it may simply be a way of indicating that Jesus was the guest of honor. Neither do we know that the sisters had been notified of His coming and had thus been in a position to prepare in advance for His entertainment. If the entire company, Jesus and the twelve, were present and if they came unannounced, there certainly was occasion for hurried preparation. We can well understand, too, how Martha, as mistress of the house did not want to honor her distinguished guest with a second-rate entertainment, but with the very best the house afforded. That is what women generally do upon such occasions; nor do guests take it amiss. Our sympathy is therefore apt to be awakened for Martha upon this occasion and we are almost moved to join her in blaming her sister for letting her serve alone.

We have purposely set the matter in the most favorable light for Martha. We have assumed that the twelve may have been with Jesus, that they may have come unannounced, that it was not easy for one under such circumstances to prepare even a simple meal for thirteen men; we have done this in order to place in the strongest contrast therewith Jesus' reproof, "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things." There must be some great thought

hidden in that reproof, some great lesson, some great principle that we need to apply to life.

For one thing Jesus could not have meant that the ordinary work of the household may be neglected on the part of His followers. Could we think for a moment that Jesus' own mother could have been indifferent to these things and untidy in her domestic affairs? She who at the marriage at Cana was so quick to notice that the wine was all gone and so prompt to have the supply replenished for the enjoyment of the guests, surely had a quick eye to see and a ready hand to do whatever was needful for the kindly entertainment of guests in her own home. Remember too that Jesus Himself furnished a new and abundant supply of the best wine at Cana; that He accepted invitations to dinners and feasts, so much so that His enemies, unjustly of course, charged Him with being "a winebibber and glutton"; remember too that certain women, Mary Magdalene, Joanna the wife of Chuza, Susanna, and others ministered unto Jesus of their substance and that He gratefully accepted the service. These things should satisfy us that Jesus by His reproof of Martha on this occasion did not mean to encourage neglect or untidiness in domestic affairs, or indifference toward the comforts and enjoyments of guests.

Furthermore, the Bible throughout teaches diligence in business and careful attention to one's work whatever it may be. Turn to the words of King Lemuel in Proverbs for the portrait of a virtuous woman whose children rise up and call her blessed and of whom Lemuel says, "Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all." Paul says, "Let everything be done decently and in order"; and may that admonition not be applied to household affairs and even to the entertainment of guests as well as to church matters? Does Paul not say too that we should not be "slothful in business" and that we should be "given to hospitality"? All these things require time and attention; Martha, at times at least, is kept quite busy. Christianity puts no premium on carelessness in domestic affairs; and while we preach the Gospel that saves the soul, we should

not fail to preach the Gospel that keeps the house dusted and the linen clean.

But we now come to what we believe to be the real point in Jesus' censure of Martha. Her mind was too distracted, broken up as it were into little fragments of interest; she was "cumbered about much serving," she was "careful and troubled about many things." Life for her was made up of a thousand little things of rather equal importance and each one must be attended to with painstaking care. This was a habit with her, a characteristic; what she did upon this occasion was in full keeping with her nature and disposition, a busy, bustling, careful matron. Jesus' reproof was therefore meant for Martha not only for this occasion, but for all her life. She must change her view of life, she must come to see that only one thing is needful and central and that all other things must be kept subordinate; that there must be one great purpose and end in life and that that must be kept in the foreground. That purpose must never be lost sight of, even when other interests come thick and fast, as when the dearest friends are to be entertained.

It was just at this point that Martha made her mistake. Here was an opportunity to give attention to the one great purpose of life and to get new light and strength with which to carry it into effect. Jesus the giver and sustainer of life was there; and He was there for the very purpose of supplying Martha with additional forces for the duties of life. But she failed to avail herself fully of the blessed privilege. Nor did she realize the fact that she could not please her Master more than by sitting at His feet as Mary did. She did not realize that He came to serve her rather than that she should serve Him. She did not think that she could first let Jesus serve her with refreshments for the soul and that there would still be ample time left to look after the needed refreshments for the body. Let us not for a moment think that Martha did not love Jesus, nor did not believe in Him, or did not like to hear His word; but she had not yet found the right poise of life. If a tower is not rightly balanced the center of gravity will pull it to one side. Martha's life was not rightly balanced, her heart was not

sufficiently centered upon the one thing needful and as a result she was drawn too much toward the distracting cares of life. Therefore she was easily peeved at her sister when she did not fall in line and help in the household duties of the hour.

There are many Marthas at the present day. We speak not of the multitudes of men and women who think only of eating and drinking and of other forms of enjoyment and entertainment, but who have no care at all for the soul. Neither have we in mind here that other large class of people who call themselves Christians, but who have little interest in real Christianity, who have little desire of having Jesus come to their house or of going to His house. It does not seem to us that Martha could have been of that class. We believe rather that she was a real and active disciple of Jesus, that she loved Him, was glad to have Him in her house and that she found pleasure in hearing His words. We can easily find admonition and warning here for this class of people. Many an one does not go to church, nor read the Bible, nor have time for private or family devotion, because of much serving. One of the most common excuses for not going to church is, I am so tired — have to work late Saturday nights — have to sleep late to make up on Sunday mornings — horses are tired because of hard work all week. There may be good reasons for such conditions at times, but speaking generally, what is all this but much serving, being careful and troubled about many things?

But the real Martha class is still another kind. They are those people who think that the chief and first thing is to serve Jesus instead of having Jesus serve them. There are some people — and we find them among the women especially — who are so busy doing “church work” that they have no time left for Jesus to do some soul work for themselves. Indeed, Jesus does not often find them at home. When He comes they are usually out at some society or committee meeting; and when they go to church it is not always primarily to hear Jesus’ word and to be served by Him, but to talk over or plan some “church work.”

Far be it here to discourage these good women in their well-meant intentions; the object is only to get the right poise of things, to give the first place to things that really come first. A light cannot shine until it has light to shine with. A flower cannot emit a sweet odor until the substance of odor has been imparted to its petals. A tree cannot bear fruit until earth, air and sunshine have done their part to make the fruit. So, too, no person can offer Jesus the fruit of acceptable service until he has received from Jesus the grace that enters into that service. "Without me ye can do nothing." That comes first, to be enriched by the grace of Jesus that we again may render unto Him the sacrifice of acceptable service. — The second point in our discussion is:

2. *What we are to choose:* "Mary hath chosen that good part," said Jesus. Let us first of all seek out the exact point approved in the conduct of Mary. We found in the case of Martha that Jesus did not mean to disapprove of all that she did, but only of this, that she failed to make the thing of chief importance the center of her life; and that in consequence she was distracted by a hundred other things all of which, however, would have found their proper places if she had fixed her heart upon the one thing needful. So too Jesus' commendation of Mary needs not to be taken as an approval of all that Mary did. The lesson does not say that Mary helped Martha in the serving either before or after the reported conversation. If she did not, we are loathe to believe that Jesus meant to commend her in that. But we rather believe that Mary was willing to assist in the serving, but that upon this occasion the serving should be considered a secondary matter.

This position, furthermore, was Mary's position in all things of life; that which was most important she chose as the most important thing and made it the center of her life. She did not mean to neglect the ordinary household duties. She found pleasure in doing them just as every true Christian finds pleasure in doing the things which God has given his hands to do. But she knew their place, that in the great plan of life they are secondary, that they dare not occupy the center of the heart, that they must not interfere with the

one thing needful; and that there are times therefore when they may be left undone. Mary had learned to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and felt that all things needful would be added, each at the proper time and place. There is a great advantage in taking one's position on the real vantage-ground in life. The victory of an army often depends upon its position in the field of battle; if the army holds a position where it is free to draw upon its reserve forces and at the same time command the position of the enemy either in his stronghold or in his attacks, victory is almost certain, other things being equal. So there is a vantage-ground in life where one is always free to draw upon the reserve forces of divine grace and from where one can command all the duties and difficulties in life. Mary chose that vantage-ground, and for that she was commended.

But just what is the one thing needful and that good part which Mary chose? Various opinions have been set forth by interpreters and they are not all clear water either. But why make the thing difficult? "The one thing needful," what else can it be but just what Mary did? Jesus commended Mary for what she did just as He had censured Martha for what she had done. But the thing Mary did was that she "sat at Jesus' feet, and heard His word." That was the one thing needful and the good part. You may speak here of the forgiveness of sin which Mary found, of the grace of God, or of salvation itself, or of Christ as the Savior, but these are all secondary thoughts in this connection. The first and foremost thing was to hear God's Word and in that Word she found the above and all other gifts of divine grace. Why do you eat bread when you are hungry? Because it satisfies your hunger, because there is pleasure in it and above all else because you expect to get nourishment out of that bread. So Mary chose hearing Jesus' word as the better portion; it gave her pleasure, it gave her strength, it gave her life. Martha was busy preparing a portion for the body, Mary chose the portion for the soul.

Jesus came to serve, to minister, not to be ministered to. He ministered to the people in various ways, by healing the

sick, by feeding the hungry multitudes, by even raising the dead; but His chief ministry, aside from His atoning death for our sins, was His ministry by the Word which He spoke unto the people. If He had not made known the truth, if He had not made known the way of life to the world, all things else that He did would have been useless in the end. Therefore He said of His words that "they are spirit, and they are life" and that if we continue in them we shall be His disciples indeed and shall know the truth and the truth shall make us free. The apostle catches up the same thought and says that "faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God" and declares that the Gospel is "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth," and that "it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."

Or again, when Jesus began to preach He cried, Repent and believe, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. That was the new thing in the world; the kingdom of heaven had come, and His preaching was to put it into the hearts of men. In His parables too we constantly see Him setting forth the kingdom of heaven — It is like this, it is like that. All this was done that people might know what the kingdom of heaven is and might grant it entrance into their hearts. In His wonderful prayer Jesus teaches us to pray, "Thy kingdom come." When Luther explains that petition he says, God's kingdom comes "when our heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we believe His holy Word and lead a godly life, here in time, and hereafter in eternity." You see, all the spiritual blessings are tied up in the hearing of God's Word. Many inventions and applications have been made in the use of electricity; but all these things have been set down in language, they have crystallized into a great message to the world on the uses of electricity. So Jesus wrought upon earth and died and rose again and sent down the Holy Ghost, but all those things have crystallized into the Gospel, the great message of life and salvation to the world. Hear that message, take it to heart, practice it, live it and you will have all the things of eternal life.

But if you are still not satisfied as to just what the one thing needful is and what the good part which Mary chose was, then go to some good old Christian mother who has sat for seventy or eighty years at the feet of Jesus hearing His Word, and ask her. For it cannot be that one who has sat so long at the blessed Master's feet, humbly and prayerfully drinking in His words of grace and truth, should not yet have found the "one thing needful" nor know what it is.

But how can it be said that hearing and learning God's Word — hearing and learning it in faith, of course, is the "one thing needful"? Are there not a hundred other things which we must do? We should not forget that Jesus sometimes in a few words stated some broad principle or rule of life, but did not Himself apply it in all its particulars. He left that for us to do and God has given us reason and understanding to do it with. Jesus said, "Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." Yet the sense is not that we must do that under all circumstances. Jesus Himself, when before Pilate, remonstrated with the officer who smote Him with the palm of his hand. The great rule of life which Jesus laid down by those words is this that we must not seek revenge, we must not retaliate, must not return evil for evil, but overcome evil with good. So here there are many things in life which we must do, but there is one thing and only one thing that is absolutely necessary to set our life right, to give it the correct poise, and that one thing is readiness to hear God's Word and then to keep it. He who makes that choice cannot possibly go wrong in his life in general; he will make mistakes, he will do things which he should not do and leave things undone that ought to be done, but his life in general will be right. As a steamship crossing the ocean may at times be driven a little from its course by some fierce gale, and yet it plows on in the right general direction until it has reached the harbor, so will the man journey who takes the Word of God as his compass; and though he be fearfully buffeted by temptations, yet will he hold steadily on in his course until he has gained the haven of eternal rest. Of such an one John

speaks when he says that "his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God."

We know too that Jesus did not encourage a mere passive or contemplative Christianity, that the best thing to do is to get away as much as possible from the ordinary work and from the affairs of men and to give oneself solely to the study of the Bible and to religious meditation. There have been people who did that, who withdrew from all associations from their fellowmen. You can find such people yet in Romish monasteries. But neither Jesus nor the Apostles have any commendation for that class. On the contrary they teach a live, active, virile Christianity. Jesus' own busy life is the best example of what He wants. You see it exemplified also in Paul and all the Apostles, indeed, in all the great men of the Church. Nor does the principle apply only to apostles and ministers of the Gospel, it applies to every Christian work and calling. Paul says, "Be not slothful in business; fervent in spirit"; in all things, of course, serving the Lord. He describes the acceptable widow as one "well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work." Methinks that the woman who does all these things is a very busy Martha. But mark you, she has made the Word of God the center of all her life and work; that Word must keep her, guide her, strengthen her; and that is the Mary part.

Of this part Jesus says yet in conclusion that it "shall not be taken away from her." Spiritual joys culled from the Word of God are eternal joys. What Martha was preparing one may be deprived of, or eating it one may become sick, yet Jesus does not say, Do not eat, do not drink, do not look at the green grass, do not smell of that sweet flower, do not listen to the thrush in yonder bush, close your senses to the beauties which your Father in heaven has placed before you. He has given you eyes to see the beauties of nature, but you must not look at them; ears to hear music, but you must not listen. No, that is not the thought, but this, that all these things are transient and must pass

away; you may be deprived of some of them at any time and you will be deprived of all of them at some time. Therefore do not make them the center of your interests; do not make your life to revolve about them. Some time your eye will grow dim that you cannot see and your ear dull that you cannot hear. Then only that will abide which has settled down deep in your heart, the everlasting grace and truth of God's Word. Amen.

SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY

JOHN 11: 20-27

Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him: but Mary sat *still* in the house. Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give *it* thee. Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this? She saith unto him, Yea, Lord; I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.

OUR text today deals with a great subject, resurrection and life. Wonderful are the words here uttered by the Son of God. It almost seems like unbecoming boldness for a mortal man to undertake to explain this utterance of the Lord. Yet Jesus addressed these words to a mortal woman that she might lay hold upon them in faith and find comfort. He meant that she should understand them, at least in part. Without seeming overbold therefore or presumptuous, we may address ourselves to the task of explaining the great saying of Jesus,

I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE.

To feel more fully their force, to see their great beauty, and to get the fullest possible comfort it will be necessary, not only to look at the words themselves, but also at the circumstances under which they were spoken. We shall first then give some attention to:

1. *The occasion upon which these words were uttered:* You are familiar with the family at Bethany, the sisters Martha and Mary and their brother Lazarus. In the lesson of last Sunday we were permitted a view of this happy family. Martha as mistress of the house had received Jesus as their guest. She herself was much busied with preparations for the meal, while Mary, in accordance with her more

quiet and contemplative nature, sat at Jesus' feet and heard His words. It was a pleasing scene; indeed it might almost seem that this family lived in a plane of faith and love entirely beyond the ordinary mortal's reach, were it not for the hurry and bustle of Martha and her impatience at Mary's seeming indifference to the work. These facts show that after all it was a human family, where weaknesses and passions prevailed as elsewhere. But for that very reason we can learn from them. The things that were needed there we need; the things that were applicable to them are applicable to us.

Today we find the scene changed. A shadow has fallen upon the quiet home. Lazarus the beloved brother became sick, sick even unto death. The sisters sent word unto Jesus who at the time was sojourning in Peræa beyond the Jordan. They did not expressly request Jesus' return to Bethany, neither did they ask Him to heal Lazarus from where He was. They simply said, "Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick." They left it to the Lord to do as He thought best and deemed it sufficient to have informed Him of their trouble, feeling that Jesus' love for their brother would move Him to do all or even more than they could ask. What fine faith! What calmness under the stress of mighty perplexities! Can you do that, friend, simply tell Jesus your great trouble and then be calm, deeming it enough that He knows?

Jesus however did not come but "abode two days still in the same place where he was." Not until the sickness had done its worst did He turn His face toward Bethany. He waited until the need was greatest in order that He might extend greater help and display the greater glory of God's love and mercy. Arriving at the village He sent word to the stricken sisters that He had come. Jesus remained outside the village, not only because the grave was there, but also that He might not at once come in contact with the Jews, His enemies, many of whom were at the house of mourning. Martha was the first to receive the message and to go out and meet Jesus, "but Mary sat still in the house."

Here then, outside the quiet village, possibly as they sat upon some rock by the wayside, were uttered the wonderful words, "I am the resurrection and the life." It was a most pathetic occasion. The family dearly loved each other, but they were also beloved of others. We are told that "many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother." These two sisters with their brother loved each other and entertained most kindly feelings toward others; and therefore they enjoyed the good will of the community, for with what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again." Yet this love was no safeguard against all trouble; it could not bar the door against death. That cruel monster entered unbidden and struck down the first member of the family, he cut down the very stock of the bush so that the roses fell withering to the ground.

The occasion was also a most significant one with reference to Jesus and His teaching and work. Jesus claimed to be the Messiah and the giver of life. He had already upon another occasion raised the dead. Here now was a family which He greatly loved, yet sickness came and death. Why did Jesus not prevent it? Did He not want to, or was He not able? The people stood ready to criticise. "Could not this man which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?" But Jesus pointed to the significance of the occasion already in Peræa when He said to His disciples, "I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe." And again He said, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby." These things show how significant the event was and therefore we need not be surprised to hear wonderful words upon this occasion. — In the second place let us give some attention to:

2. *The manner in which Jesus dealt with Martha:* Martha opened the conversation by saying, "Lord, if thou hadst been here my brother had not died." These words are not to be understood as reproaching Jesus for not having come when the sisters sent Him word. Yet the remark shows disappointment. Martha had hoped that Jesus would

come and being present, His great love for the family would not permit Him to leave her brother die. But the words interest us chiefly as an expression of Martha's faith in Christ. That they were spoken in faith is shown especially by what she added, "but I know that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee." So much had been told her about Jesus, she herself had heard so much from His own lips and had seen so much that she believed that there was nothing impossible for Him to ask of God. The words seem to imply distinctly that if Jesus would ask of God the restoration of her brother, God would grant the prayer. Consider whether that was not showing strong faith on the part of a woman at a time when there was so much doubt and uncertainty about Jesus? And this was the Martha who about two months before, when Jesus was her guest, was so busy with the serving and so impatient of her sister who sat at Jesus' feet that Jesus earnestly admonished her to give more attention to the "one thing needful." Martha was not without faith then, but doubtless Jesus' admonition was fruitful of good and she was making fine progress.

Jesus' reply was, "thy brother shall rise again." The reply was quite definite as to the fact of her brother's resurrection but quite indefinite as to the time thereof. But that was the very point upon which she wanted light. Martha believed that he would rise again at the last day, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." But what she wanted to be assured of was, Will he rise before that day, will he rise soon, will he rise at once? Jesus purposely made His answer indefinite in order to try her and see how much she would be able to take out of His words. Unfortunately she did not take all that they warranted. A comparison between her faith and that of the woman of Canaan is interesting. When Jesus said to the latter, "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it to the dogs," she seized upon every thing the words implied in her favor. Very well, Lord, Thou lookest upon me as belonging to the household, even if I am only a little dog, I am therefore entitled at least to the crumbs that fall

from the table. Martha's faith was not yet capable of such quick sight and of such a wide grasp. We are all apt to seize upon too little in the promises of Jesus. We look at the stars through the wrong end of the telescope. We take only small slices of bread whereas Jesus offers us the whole loaf. In consequence we go skimping along through life with our little faith, magnifying our hardships and minimizing our blessings. While cultivated trees are laden with luscious fruit we keep plucking the sour persimmons that pucker our lips and set our teeth on edge.

Jesus now gave the promise a different form — enlarged it before her eyes — made it stand out more distinctly so that she might see the full meaning of His words. He said, "I am the resurrection and the life." You believe the resurrection, but you seem to connect it necessarily with the last day. I want to assure you that such is not the case; it is not essentially connected with the last day, but with Me. Where I am, there is resurrection and there is life. All men shall be raised at the last day, but that will be the case because I shall be there.

Jesus also wanted Martha to see that Lazarus was really not dead and that she and her sister should not die. "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." Could Martha lay hold on all this? Would she be able now to take the whole basket of bread? "Believest thou this?" asked Jesus. Now notice her reply, "Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, that should come into the world." She did not commit herself to an exact statement of faith on the subject of the resurrection. She did not say, Yea, Lord, I believe that Thou art the resurrection and the life and that those who have died in the faith in Thee are not dead to Thee and that Thou canst at any time restore their bodies to life. She contented herself with stating her faith in Him in general as the Messiah. Yet we must not infer from her reply that she did not accept in full and believe what Jesus had said. She could not understand it all just as we cannot understand it all, but she

nevertheless believed and was willing to wait for further light.

Martha now returned to the house; she seemed to be satisfied for the present. Jesus also was satisfied, for He had led her to a clearer and more personal faith in Him. — Now in the third place let us consider:

3. *The facts and doctrine implied in these words:* The very first thing that is plainly shown here is the reality of sin and death. What had occurred to Lazarus was a reality, not something imaginary. Lazarus was really dead and the cold fact could not be denied. When Jesus said of the daughter of Jairus, "She is not dead, but sleepeth," that was said for the benefit of those who believed in Him. He did not mean to minify the reality or the severity of death as the fruit of sin. The hot iron burns when you come in contact with it, no matter what your thoughts may be. Death is a real fruit of sin, no matter what people may think or say about it; and if death at times does not do its worst, it is because Jesus the Prince of life is there to interfere. Why does Jesus say of Himself that He is the resurrection and the life? It is over against death that He makes that claim. They who sit in the valley of the shadow of death are to find life in Him. "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." Death goes skulking about among all people, he sneaks into every family and with his poisoned dart touches every heart. Death reigned from Adam to Moses and from Moses till now, except where the Prince of life has been enthroned.

Nor dare we stop at the material side of death. There is another side that is even more frightful. The rich man's experience with bodily death did not seem to be particularly striking; at least nothing more is said about it than that he died and was buried. But his real troubles began in hell, for there on lifting up his eyes he found himself in torment and begged for a drop of water to cool his burning tongue. Do not think for a moment that this expression is a mere figure of speech without any reality. It is just as real and infinitely more agonizing than a man struggling in the throes of bodily death.

These are facts, too, which need to be made plain to people at the present day. Some look upon sin and death as only imaginary evils, evils which the Church especially is inclined to sketch in too strong colors. Or they look upon death as a mere natural process without any serious consequences. It is simply nature's way of getting people out of this world and of freeing them, perhaps, from much suffering. Such people are like men at work in a mine without any particular fear, but where at any moment an explosion may occur, snuffing out their lives or else cutting off every way of escape. They are like persons hurled from a sinking ship in sight of the shore but unable to cope with the breakers and without life preservers. And that no one may hear amiss let it be added that these things are true of every one who has not laid hold upon Jesus Christ, the resurrection and the life. He is the only antidote for death.

But this brings us to another great fact and truth, namely, that Jesus is the resurrection and the life. Consider well who He must be who made such a declaration. It has well been said that this one word of Jesus, "I am the resurrection and the life," is sufficient to overthrow the entire system of rational religion, which holds that Jesus was only a man and a great moral teacher, but not a divine Savior through His shed blood. Words like these in the mouth of even the greatest and purest man could only be empty presumption or wicked blasphemy; and how could we look upon a man who makes such a claim or indulges in such empty boasting as a great teacher or a safe guide? The claim which Jesus makes here is a simple impossibility for any mere man. Only He in whom "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," who hath "life in himself," who is "very God of very God" — only He can say, "I am the resurrection and the life."

Notice now that Jesus does not say, I can raise the dead to life, I can give life. He says both elsewhere; He says of him that believeth in Him that "I will raise him up at the last day"; and of His sheep He says, "I will give unto them eternal life." These sayings are true and they mean

much, but it means much more when He says, "I *am* the resurrection and the life." It does not only mean that He has the power to give us these things, but also that they are His to give, yes, that His power, or rather, His person is the very source and substance of these blessings. When you drink water from a fountain you are not simply drinking water which the fountain gives, but you are drinking of the fountain itself. Take the water away and there is no longer a fountain there. So too when you take Christ away there is no longer any resurrection or life. When you therefore receive life from Christ you are not only receiving the life which Christ gives, but you are receiving Christ Himself. Resurrection and life are inseparably united with Christ's person. You can get them only with Christ; aside from Christ they are not to be had. "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."

Friends, are we clear in our faith on this point? Do we make enough of the person of Christ as the object of faith? We believe of Christ that He has done this and has done that for us, that He gives us countless blessings, that we may go to Him and ask for whatever we need. Are we perhaps forgetting about the person of Christ, that we must have Christ Himself before we can secure His gifts, that we must be joined to Christ Himself before we can enjoy His saving help? If we live we must be able to say with Paul, Not I live, but Christ liveth in me. Where Christ is, there and only there is resurrection and life. When Jesus came to the gate of Nain it was the Resurrection and the Life that crossed the path of death and made the dead to live. When Jesus entered the house of Jairus it was the Resurrection and the Life that stood before the sepulchre and caused the dead to come forth. Therefore too, when Jesus Himself was laid in the grave He came forth again on the third day, for it was not possible that He should be holden by the bonds of death.

This was the great truth which Jesus wanted Martha to grasp; namely, that she need not wait until the last day for the resurrection of her brother, but that the Resurrection was right there with her at the time of speaking. That is

the great truth which we too are to believe. We must, of course, not expect Christ to raise up our friends at once; But of this we should be sure that our friends who have died in Christ are not dead, but live; "He that believeth in me; though he were dead, yet shall he live." And as for ourselves who are still living, we should know that we shall never die. And these things are so because we have Christ; for all those who are Christ's, whether living or dead, are joined to Him and shall live in Him forevermore.

We should not overlook the fact either that Jesus here declares of Himself that He is the resurrection *and* the life. We may not see clearly just in what relation these two things stand to each other, whether Jesus is the life because He is the resurrection, or the resurrection because He is the life. But this is plain that the resurrection alone would not be enough. All will be raised up at the last day, but all will not have life. Martha was much concerned to have her brother restored to life again. Jesus would have her to understand that more is needed than a mere resurrection of the body. The chief thing is not the life of the body, whether the first time or the second time, but life itself — life of the soul and of the body. And this life is found alone in union with Jesus Christ. That thought needs to be driven home with all the force at our command. Who does not want to live? Are not all men seeking it — life of some kind? And if there are different kinds of life there must be one kind that is better than all the rest. There are many imitations of diamonds but that fact only shows that somewhere there are genuine diamonds. Who would not prefer the genuine diamond to the imitation? If men now are wise in the search of diamonds, why should they not show even greater wisdom in the search of life? For even a lower kind of life is worth more than genuine diamonds. Oh, that men would therefore learn wisdom! Christ stands among you and declares that He is the resurrection and the life. Will you not take Him at His word? and will you not say with even a stronger faith than Martha's, Here is the only life worth seeking; and I will seek it in Christ in whom alone it is to be found?

There is a third great fact and doctrine implied in the words of our theme, namely, that it is alone by faith that we become united with Christ. Jesus did not say that he who sees Me or knows Me or is near Me or who talks about Me shall never die, but he that believeth in Me. There were many Jews at the house of mourning at Bethany; and later they went out to where Jesus was and stood about the sepulchre; and among them were many who had enjoyed a considerable acquaintance with Jesus and had a very good opinion of themselves; but there were only a few there who believed in Him. To these Jesus was the resurrection and the life, but not to the rest. The unbelieving went away in the hardness of their hearts with the darkness of death upon their souls.

This faith, furthermore, must be the right kind of faith. If you were upon a sinking ship you would not be satisfied with any kind of a life preserver, you would want one that would really keep you from sinking. So you need a faith that really saves, not simply to acknowledge the fact that Jesus is the resurrection and the life, not simply to make confession of Him with the lips. It must be a personal living faith by which you are joined to Christ in mind and heart. It means to hold fast to Him, to love Him, to serve Him, to live to Him. Believest thou this, friend? Martha believed in Jesus before this day, but here Jesus wanted to lead her to a fuller, stronger and more personal faith in Him. Doubtless He succeeded.

But how about ourselves? Is He succeeding in this with you today? He is here in your midst as the resurrection and the life. He did nothing more to Martha than to declare to her the words of life. He is doing the same for you today. Do you realize that fact and are you ready to lay hold upon Him with a stronger faith? Do you say, fully conscious of the meaning of the words, "Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world"? It should be easier for you to find this faith now than it was for Martha, for since that day Christ Himself has died and risen again, has ascended into heaven and sent down the Holy Spirit to guide you into

the truth. Christ with you, do you now feel safe over against death? Can you now say: Lord, since Thou art here, my brother will not die, my sister will not die, I shall not die and those who have died in Thee are now living in Thy presence? What are all earthly treasures and expectations compared with this — that Jesus is our resurrection and our life and that by faith we have Him altogether as our own. Lord, keep us evermore in this faith. Amen.

QUINQUAGESIMA OR ESTOMIHI

MARK 10:35-45

And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto him, saying, Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire. And he said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you? They said unto him, Grant us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory. But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask. Can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? And they said unto him, We can. And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of: and with the baptism that I am baptized withal, shall ye be baptized: But to sit on my right hand and on my left hand, is not mine to give; but *it shall be given to them* for whom it is prepared. And when the ten heard *it*, they began to be much displeased with James and John. But Jesus called them *to him*, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give his life a ransom for many.

NEXT Wednesday which is Ash Wednesday, is the beginning of Lent — that holy season in which the Church meditates especially upon the passion of Christ. Christ the crucified one is our Savior and therefore the suffering, death and resurrection of Christ must always constitute the central subject of the church's teaching and meditation.

The lesson of the preceding Sundays, although they belong to the Lenten cycle, as yet contain no distinct note of that suffering. However, they are meant to be preparatory to the passion of our Savior; the first, that we are to sit at the feet of Jesus who died for us and learn of Him; and the second, that He who died for us is the resurrection and the life.

In our lesson today we hear a distinct note of our Savior's passion. Jesus speaks of the cup that He must drink, of the baptism with which He must be baptized, and says

of His ministry that He came to give His life a ransom for many. These things do not constitute the leading thought of the lesson, but they throw a flood of light upon the situation. James and John came to Jesus with the petition that He would grant them to sit, the one on His right hand, the other on His left in His glory. Jesus made use of the occasion to point out to His followers

THE WAY TO TRUE GREATNESS

showing them plainly that it is first, *the way of suffering*; secondly, *the way of service*. — In the first place, true greatness lies along:

1. *The way of suffering*: The ambition of James and John stands out very prominently in our lesson. They desired the chief places in the kingdom which Jesus was establishing. Nor were they alone in this; according to Matthew's account their mother, one of the beautiful characters of the Bible, joined them in this request. A mother's love and ambition played an important part in the incident. We shall not question their motives much; doubtless they were moved by the same feelings and passions as we should have been under similar circumstances. We are glad that Jesus had such men to deal with. If they had been much better we might feel that there is little hope for us, who seem to be so much worse. If they had been worse we might despair in our work, not being able to win men for Christ, who are not so bad as they were. But finding the twelve to be about the same as men of today, we conclude that the same means will suffice today also to bring about conversion, and that the same kind of work is required.

Jesus did not rebuke these men for their ambition; He did not dissuade them from their object; He did not even aim to discourage them. There were features about their ambition that were not praiseworthy. For one thing, their heart was set, as it appears, primarily upon personal glory; but we are told to glory alone in the Lord, not in ourselves, nor in any position of honor among men. Then too they made their request without considering the rights of their

fellow-disciples. They did not seem to consider that there might be others among the twelve who deserved the chief position as well as they or with even more right. But Jesus does not condemn their purpose; He allows their aim and ambition to stand. He however corrects them where they are at fault and seeks to purify their motives. The plant is allowed to stand and grow, but it is pruned and trained that it may bring forth better fruit.

Jesus said to them first of all, "Ye know not what ye ask." The disciples did not know as yet what the nature of the kingdom would be in which they were so deeply interested. At this time they were still expecting some sort of earthly kingdom, whereas the kingdom which Christ was establishing was purely spiritual. Much less did they have any proper conception of all that was involved in gaining entrance into that kingdom and in attaining a high position therein. There are positions of honor among men and they often dazzle the eye of the beholder. Few, however, realize all that was involved in attaining that high estate. Read the lives of great painters, musicians, writers, inventors and the like and you will find, with few exceptions, that it was a long and weary way of toil and privation. So Jesus would have these men consider well what they will be put to in order to gain the object of their desire. He did not want them to turn back; He only called attention to what lay before them in order that they might be prepared for the worst and not fail in their attempt. Jesus never deceived people by saying that the way to glory was easy. Strait is the gate and narrow is the way and few there be that find it, that is His statement. A certain scribe came to Jesus and said, "Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." Jesus replied, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." He did not seek to discourage that man from following Him, He only wanted to prepare him for the difficulties in the way.

There is a great lesson here for us with reference to praying for temporal good things. How often we pray and know not what we ask. We see only the supposed good,

but not the possible evil; we see the rose, but do not detect the thorn; we catch the sweet odor, but we do not discover the poison lurking in the bloom. A mother insists that her sick child must be made well, not knowing that God may be taking it away from some misfortune more terrible than death. Parents seek a wealthy husband for their daughter, not considering that such wealth may be coupled with a godless character and that it may lay a withering curse upon their child's future life. A man seeks greatness in the eyes of men, not thinking that such a position of greatness may be surrounded by a thousand snares and that in the end it may be abject littleness in the sight of God. It may not be wrong in itself to strive for these great things, but Jesus would have us, for one thing, consider well the perils that are involved; and for another thing, He would have us know that there is always a greater good that is absolutely free from dangers. We may ask for temporal blessings even as He has taught us to pray for our daily bread, but since we know so little about them we must leave the answer alone to Him who knoweth best.

Jesus next showed His disciples in a somewhat indefinite manner what lay before them, "Can ye drink the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" The aspirants for honor are told that if they would attain to glory they must go the same way which He is going, the way of suffering. Jesus at this very time was on His way to Jerusalem to drink the bitter cup of suffering and death. In Gethsemane He prayed that, if it were possible, the cup might pass from Him. There was no unwillingness to drink the cup, for He promptly added, "Not my will, but thine be done"; and later when the band came to take Him He said, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" It was a bitter cup, yet Jesus was prepared to drink it to the dregs. A terrible baptism was awaiting Him, a baptism with blood. In the garden in untold agony He should sweat drops of blood; His back should be lacerated with the scourge and His temples pierced with thorns; His hands and feet should be bored through with nails and His side laid open with a

spear. At this moment already He saw it all and it weighed heavily upon His soul.

But Jesus saw, too, that some such cup and baptism were in store for His faithful followers. The disciples did not realize at this time what the words meant. They did not at all understand that Jesus should die at the hands of His enemies; much less did they think that they themselves would be called upon to offer their blood in testimony of their faith in Him. What Jesus asked did not seem so hard and therefore they said, "We are able." But they promised more than their present strength was equal to; for we easily overestimate our strength or else underestimate the difficulties in the way. Jesus was aware of that fact and the correctness of His view appears when, on the night of His capture, they all forsook Him and fled. But they redeemed their word afterward when they received power from on high by the Holy Ghost. They were able to do and to suffer for the name of Jesus. About eleven years afterwards James suffered Herod Agrippa I. to take off his head; and John, though it is thought that he died a natural death at a great age, was ever ready to suffer for Jesus; on the isle of Patmos, where he was an exile on account of his faith, he says that he was a companion in tribulation with Jesus Christ.

What these two men and their fellow-apostles met with in their future was just what Jesus had promised them. "Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized." But He did not expressly grant their petition; for "to sit on my right hand and on my left hand is not mine to give; but it shall be given unto them for whom it is prepared." There are places of special glory in Christ's kingdom, but we are plainly told here that these positions of glory are not dealt out in an arbitrary manner to favorite persons as a king may assign posts of honor to friends. Jesus does not so deal with men; favoritism is a coin that is not current with him. The words declare even that these matters have all been determined in advance: "It shall be given to them for whom it has been prepared"; and Matthew

in addition reports Jesus as saying, that it is "prepared of my Father." It was settled ages before who should receive places of glory in the kingdom of God. Jesus did not come to deal out these posts of honor, but that He might by His suffering and death make it possible for men to attain everlasting glory. We may well thank God that all these things have been determined in advance — that nothing is left to chance or to some one's arbitrary will, but that every-one shall without fail receive that which in the gracious purpose of God is coming to him.

Jesus, however, though He has not told us just what position this one and that one will receive, has not left us in ignorance as to who shall attain to glory. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Simply to be saved will already be glory enough. If only we shall be permitted to stand in the vestibule of our Father's house we shall be satisfied, for the very least will be infinitely more than we have deserved. But the Lord of heaven and earth will not leave us in the vestibule, for "in my Father's house are many mansions." There will be a mansion for each one of us; and in some way we feel, too, that each mansion will have its own peculiar glory; every redeemed saint will have his own peculiar reason for rejoicing. Nor will there be any envy if some appear to shine with greater glory than others, for Daniel already said that "they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." And to the twelve Jesus said, "Ye are they that have continued with me in my temptation, and I appoint unto you a kingdom as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." No envy will be there, for each one will be perfectly happy in his own estate; and love moreover will have cast out of the heart every remnant of sin and vestige of bitterness.

But we must not forget that the way of glory is by way of the cross. The most prominent thing in this part of the lesson is the cup of suffering, both for Jesus and for His followers. We need to be prepared for these things before-

hand so that we may not be offended when they come. Jesus knew that they were coming, but He did not falter; He "for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." As for ourselves, we shall be "heirs and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." Nor does this life hold naught but sorrow and trouble; that is not what Jesus means here. There is far more sunshine than shadow. The Rev. John Stauch who labored and endured much, said that in his life there were a thousand joys for every pain. There is a cup of joy as well as a cup of sorrow; and of this cup of joy the Psalmist says that it runneth over; "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of my enemies; thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over; surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever." But we must also be prepared for the cup of sorrow. It is needed to make our lives fruitful, just as clouds as well as sunshine are needed to fructify the earth. And remember that in the end the sufferings of this present life are not worthy to be compared with the "glory which shall be revealed in us." — The second great thought of our lesson is that true greatness lies along:

2. *The way of service:* In some way the ten heard of the request which the two had made of their Master, and they "began to be much displeased" with them. They were indignant that two of their number, without a word with the rest, should seek out for themselves the two chief positions in the kingdom. It was not according fair, open, brotherly or even manly treatment to their fellow-disciples. They should at least have consulted the others and should have agreed among themselves how the various posts of honor should be distributed among them. One expects that much even of politicians. But the fact that the ten became indignant shows them to have been made of the same clay as their brethren; and what possibly chagrined them was the fact that James and John got their application in first. A wrong conception of things and a wrong spirit prevailed all

around; a wrong conception, for they had pictured to themselves a sort of world kingdom with various posts of honor; a wrong spirit, for each one was preferring himself instead of in honor preferring one another.

This two-fold error still obtains. There are those who look upon the Church as in part a sort of worldly kingdom, the possessor and dispenser of certain worldly prerogatives and honors. Therefore we see such a figure as the pope at Rome, decked with the habiliments of a king and ruling in royal splendor. Hence, too, the spirit of display that is so often manifested in church functions as though it might be said, Lo here, lo there, is the kingdom of God, instead of understanding that the kingdom of God is spiritual and must be within us if we have it at all. But possibly more prevalent is the other error, the indignation that is felt when others are honored above us. How quickly the thought of unfairness arises and that one's worth is being overlooked or one's own right ignored. We should therefore not forget to apply to ourselves the admonition given to the twelve.

Jesus now called the twelve to him. It appears that the ten were not in His immediate presence when they began to manifest their indignation at the two. One writer has said that they had "the decency not to quarrel in His presence." But Jesus knew their thoughts; He saw the ugly spirit showing itself and took steps at once to curb it and to show His followers the more excellent way: You want to become great. I do not say that your ambition is wrong, I do not want to dissuade you from your purpose, but I want to point out the way to true greatness. It is not the way followed by the gentiles who know not God and the truth. They see greatness in the exercise of power and authority over others: "Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the gentiles exercise lordship over them." They want to lord it over others. That is the spirit of the world.

Nor has the world to this day changed any for the better. What an unseemly scramble for office are we not obliged to witness during every political campaign and at every change of state or city officials; and it is by no means always fitness that seeks or gets the office. The question of

fitness is often not taken into consideration at all. Indeed it may be said that the fittest men are usually at home attending to their business until the call to public service comes to them. The opinion quite generally prevails — and there seems to be good reason for holding it — that it is usually the person with some sort of “pull,” political, social or financial who gains the position of authority and trust. Yet it seems necessary to modify our Savior’s description just a little to fit present conditions exactly. He declares that the desire for leadership or authority was the primary motive of the gentiles; now it is rather the desire for money — “graft” — that is the controlling evil principle in politics. But the difference is not essential. In either case it is seeking one’s own instead of that of others; in either case it is the desire to be served instead of the desire to serve.

This brings us to the next point in Jesus’ argument: It shall not be so among you. You are not of the world. You belong to God. You have a knowledge of God and of what His commandments require. You are to be guided by God’s Word and will, not by the thought and desires of a sinful heart. You are of another kingdom where other principles prevail. Wherefore “whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: and whosoever will be chiefest, shall be servant of all.” That principle does not abolish authority and honor. On the contrary it provides for them and points the way by which one rightly attains to the position of ruler, namely, by serving. Any position of authority in the church or state, where the object is not to serve the people, is not rightly held and the person holding such position should abdicate at once and make room for one who is willing to use it for the good of the people. “By love serve one another.” That is what we are in this world for — not to lord it over each other, but to serve one another.

Brethren, how are we living up to that great lesson? One has said that “the first lesson in Christ’s school is self-denial”; and another declares that “whoever will labor to get rid of self, to deny himself according to the instruction of Christ, strikes at once at the root of every evil, and finds the germ of every good.” Serving others implies denial of

self, readiness to forego one's own convenience and pleasure for the sake of another man's good. We may say that this means self-denial; and yet it is the very finding of real self. Thus shall ye become great, is Jesus' thought. He that loseth his life shall find it. By giving we grow rich. And as to honor, who is it in your own community that holds the warmest place in your heart and whom you most delight to honor? Is it not the man who in the spirit of genuine kindness has done most for his fellowmen, for his community? If he exercised authority, that was a secondary matter. But that he served among you, that is the excellence that elicits your gratitude and your praise.

Here Jesus again places Himself before His disciples as an example, "For even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give his life a ransom for many." Jesus does not ask His followers to do what He Himself did not do. In all things He places Himself before us as an example. The Son of man is the one perfect man and we can therefore do no better than to follow in His footsteps. How apparent it is that He did not come to exercise authority by external position or outward force. He indeed exercised authority. The people said that He taught as one having authority and not as the scribes. The people were also amazed because with authority He commanded the unclean spirits to depart. No man ever possessed or exercised greater authority than did Jesus Christ. He even said when His work on earth was done, "All power is given unto me in heaven and on earth." But it was not the authority of the sword that He wielded, nor the authority of political position, but the authority of the truth. He spoke the everlasting truth to men's hearts and minds and in that way moved them. And He used the authority of infinite divine love and mercy and compassion, which are but manifestations of divine truth. By these things He influenced men and won them, or controlled and subdued them. And all this authority He used to heal men of their diseases and to make them free from sin and to deliver them from the fear of death and from the power of the devil.

All along, His life was a life of service. He went about doing good.

Jesus' greatest service as He Himself here indicates, is that He gave His life a ransom for many. These words can mean nothing else than that Jesus Christ by His death made atonement for our sins in order that they might be forgiven and that we might be reconciled with God and receive everlasting salvation. This service He rendered because of His great love. He wanted to save us. "When Jesus knew that it was not possible for the cup to pass from Him, with love to God He held it fast and with love to man He drank it all." And it was through this act of sacrifice that He became great: "He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God hath also exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name." Why do millions today sing praise to Him and crown Him Lord of all? Why did John on Patmos hear the song of "the angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and blessing"? It was because the Lamb was slain, because He gave Himself a ransom for many; "for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by the blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth." His glory becomes our glory. Bless the Lord! Amen.

INVOCAVIT

MATTHEW 16: 21-26

From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art an offence unto me; for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men. Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any *man* will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

WE have entered the holy season of Lent. Last Sunday we heard a note of the coming passion ode; today, the melody sounds full on our ears. We have in our lesson this morning a pre-announcement of Jesus' sufferings. He had spoken of this matter before, though indefinitely or figuratively. To the Jews He said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I shall raise it up." Nicodemus was told that "as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness even so must the Son of man be lifted up." Again He said, "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." Jesus knew all along what was before Him. But neither the people nor the disciples had understood these sayings. Even now they were not yet able to grasp the situation. But the time had come when the twelve especially needed to be prepared for the event and therefore Jesus speaks plainly here. All that had been said of Him concerning suffering must soon be accomplished, and that too in Jerusalem, the people's holy city.

However, Jesus does not speak here only of His own cross, but also of the cross of His followers. He speaks in such a way as to show that there is a connection between the two crosses. As He bore a cross, so must we bear a cross;

and as He bore His cross for us, so must we bear our cross for Him. We shall therefore this morning speak of

THE TWO CROSSES,

of Jesus' cross and of our own cross.

1. *Jesus' cross*: The cross of Christ was this that He must "suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed."

We know what things Jesus had to suffer. There was the agony in the garden, there was the spitting and the buffeting, there was the purple robe and the crown of thorns, there was the scourging, and last of all the terrible death upon the cross. These were the things which were weighing upon Jesus' soul at this time; these the cup of which we spoke last Sunday and the baptism wherewith He was to be baptized.

Death by crucifixion was a Roman mode of punishment and in the earlier times, we are told, it was "applied only to slaves and the meanest criminals, such as highway robbers, assassins, and rebels." There seems to be a reference to this shame of death upon the cross in Paul's words concerning Christ when he says that "He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Among the Romans therefore, and indeed among all men, the cross became a symbol, not only of great suffering, but also of unspeakable shame and disgrace. But behold the transformation in the meaning of that word, wrought by the wisdom and love of God. It is still a symbol of suffering, but through Christ it has become to us the very means of our forgiveness and reconciliation with God — our very life and salvation. Nor is it for us any longer a symbol of shame, but we glory in the cross of Christ above all things else. We glory even in our own crosses, borne for the sake of Christ, just as the apostles counted it all joy to be permitted to suffer for the name of Jesus. In the cross of Christ are centered all our hopes; indeed that cross has become the very center of the world's history, the pivot upon which the ages revolve. And for the individual there is no protecting shadow like that of the

cross. "There is one spot on earth" says Moody, "where the fear of death, of sin, and of judgment need not trouble us, the only safe spot on earth where the sinner can stand—Calvary."

Of this cross Jesus says here that it is necessary, it must be: "From that time forth began Jesus to show unto His disciples, how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things."

There was no outward necessity or compulsion; He was not driven to Jerusalem by a band of soldiers, nor forced to the place of execution like a slave. It was of His own choice that He went; no one even told Him to go. Yet when His disciples tried to dissuade Him from going, He went nevertheless, declaring that it must needs be. There was therefore a necessity, but it was an inner necessity, the necessity of love. But love begets the most urgent kind of necessity. Love is the greatest tyrant in the world. What love says, that must be done; or rather, that will be done. What will a mother not do for the loved child, or a lover for the loved one? God loved men and He wanted to save them. There lay the necessity of Christ's going to Jerusalem. Love's will must be done, the world must be saved; and there is no other way of saving it except by the way of the cross. If my Father's will is to be done, I must go to Jerusalem. If man is to be saved, I must go to Jerusalem. If the Scriptures are to be fulfilled I must go to Jerusalem. If it is not possible for the cup to pass from Me, if man cannot be redeemed in some other way, I must and will drink the cup.

We do well to note in particular the necessity of Christ's going up to Jerusalem to suffer "many things." That necessity is the very keystone of the arch of all our hopes and expectations. It is the cornerstone of the Church; it is the great thought that binds together all the teachings of the Bible; it is the bond of unity, holding together all true believers in Christ Jesus. If this necessity drops out, the arch falls to the ground, the building collapses, the Bible goes to pieces, the Church disintegrates, believers scatter, yea, we cease to be believers. For what is there still to

believe, if Christ did not need to go to Jerusalem and there of His own accord offer Himself as a sacrifice for the sins of the world? Then there is no Savior, there is no Redeemer, there is no Reconciler between earth and heaven. Let each one then believe what he pleases; let each one follow his own ideas, for then one man's idea is worth about as much or as little as another's.

It was just this necessity that Peter at this time could not see. He therefore remonstrated with Jesus and "began to rebuke Him saying, Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall not be unto Thee." Peter rightly understood Jesus' words, that in Jerusalem His enemies would take Him and put Him to death. But he did not understand that that death was necessary, and yet it was the very thing for which Christ came. Peter supposed that Jesus would submit to that death simply because He could not help Himself. His mind was therefore made up as to what should be done: I will see to it, Lord, that this shall not be done unto Thee. Therefore we find Peter, when Jesus was seized at the entrance to the garden, promptly drawing his sword and striking in defense of his Master. There was great zeal on the part of Peter, but it lacked knowledge; there was close attachment to the Master and strong love, but there was still much of the flesh.

We therefore find Jesus promptly and severely rebuking His foremost disciple, for He "turned, and said unto Peter, 'Get thee behind me Satan: thou art an offense to me.'" Jesus recognized in Peter His old foe whom He had conquered in the wilderness at the beginning of His ministry, but of whom it was said there that he left Jesus only for a season. We are not told how often Satan returned to tempt Jesus anew; but here was one of his assaults, and a most powerful one. For in the first place it concerned the very chiefest thing in the ministry and the work of Jesus, His death by which the power of Satan should finally be broken. In the second place, Satan sought to turn Jesus from His course through one of His best friends. Just before, in reply to Jesus' question, Whom say ye that I am? Peter made the noble confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the

living God." In response to that confession Jesus said to Peter, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." So spoke Peter under the influence of the Holy Ghost, but here this pillar in the kingdom of God seeks to dissuade Jesus from taking the final step that is necessary to establish that kingdom. Oh, what blindness, what fickleness, what inconsistency! But Jesus at once explains the whole matter when He says, "Thou savorest not the things that be of God but those that be of men." When Peter made the great confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," he set forth the things that are of God, he spoke by revelation. But when he rebuked Jesus, then he spoke from the flesh — the things of men, even the things of Satan himself. He opposed the cross — and such opposition is of men.

If in His day Jesus, in addition to going about teaching, doing good, working miracles, had formed some outward organization and placed Himself at its head and had then called for members, then He would have had followers in abundance; the world would have gone after Him to make Him its king. But when He began to speak of the necessity of going up to Jerusalem and of suffering a voluntary death, then people began to wonder what a strange course this was for one who had come to build up a kingdom, and even His most faithful followers remonstrated with Him. He had a great following at one time, but when He told them that the bread of heaven was His flesh which He would give for the life of the world, then scores turned back, murmuring, This is a hard saying, who can hear it?

Friends, it is so yet. We can get along very well with people so long as we deal only with the social and ethical teachings of Jesus, so long as we keep only to the Sermon on the Mount, at least, as it is generally interpreted by the world. But when we come to speak of Jesus' blood as the atonement for sin, of man's utter depravity and helpless condition, of the need of confession of sin and forgiveness, of salvation alone through faith and as a free gift of God, of a cleansing from sin and iniquity alone through the blood of Jesus, then they begin to rebel and no longer want to follow.

We can lead them along nicely until we come to Golgotha and begin to say: Here our Lord was crucified; here stood the cross; here He said, "It is finished"; here on the sand trickled the blood and the water from His cleft side, that blood which alone can take away sin and in which one must wash if he would be clean. It is then that a chill begins to creep over people; their grasp of hand that has been so warm and firm begins to loosen; they begin to turn away with a feeling of disappointment and displeasure or even disgust and go down the hill from Calvary, where they had been so near the gate of heaven, down in the dark valley of their own ideas and notions, down where Peter is talking according to the flesh and as a mouth-piece of Satan: and they look back to fault or even ridicule the Church and the believers, who prefer to remain up near the cross and where Peter spoke from the Spirit, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

But in spite of Peter's remonstrance and the opposition of the flesh and Satan, Jesus remained firm in His purpose to go up to Jerusalem. He said unto Peter, "Thou art an offense unto me." The word literally means a sort of trap or snare by which Jesus should be caught and prevented from carrying out His purpose. Let us thank God that Jesus could not be dissuaded from His passion. That is our only hope. Lent is a season of sadness because we are compelled to look at our sins and the suffering they caused our blessed Master. Yet Lent is at the same time a season of joy, because here we love to think of that stream from Calvary which forever washes away our sins. — But Jesus speaks here also of:

2. *Our cross*: Jesus did not stop with the rebuke which He administered to Peter. He here saw a good opportunity to say something to His disciples about cross-bearing. What Jesus had to say was not calculated to please them; it was not after the flesh, but of God. It was something too which not only the twelve needed but which we all need: "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."

Three things are said here: The first is, you must deny yourself. By self is meant your natural self as you come into this world. It does not mean only some thought or desire or habit about yourself. Jesus speaks of that point elsewhere when he says, If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee; or if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee. But He is here speaking of your whole self and of the very center of your being. Your whole self as you are tied to this world by your thoughts and desires, that, you are to deny; and you must become a stranger to the world. When Peter denied Christ He said, I know not the man, I am no disciple of His, I have nothing to do with Him. So you must deny yourself, not this or that sinful pleasure or evil habit only, but your whole self. You must cut away the entire old man with one swing of the sword. You must say, I do not know this person. I am no friend of his, I have nothing to do with him. This self-denial is the very first step in following Christ — the very first lesson in His school. The disciples left all and followed Jesus, and that “all” must include self first and above all. You cannot give yourself to another so long as you allow self to be your master.

Secondly, you must take up your cross. But the cross you are to take up is not Jesus' cross, it is your own cross. No one can bear Jesus' cross but Jesus Himself, for that was not only personal suffering and death, but it was suffering and death under the load of the world's sin. Your suffering or death cannot be of that character; you cannot atone for even the least sin, no matter how much you may suffer. Neither are you to take up some one else's cross. We are to bear one another's burden and so fulfill the law of Christ. We are here to comfort and cheer and strengthen one another. If we can lighten the burden of some other poor wayfarer we must do it. How could we even dream of being disciples of Christ if we did not? Yet for all that, each one has his own cross to bear.

Neither are you to understand by this cross the ordinary ills of life, as sickness, misfortunes, reverses and the like. These come to all men very much the same, whether they

be followers of Christ or not. To cast your lot with Christ enables you to bear these ills more easily, but it does not rid you of them. Your cross, of which Jesus speaks here is that cross which comes to you because you are a follower of Him. It means the things that you must suffer for Jesus' sake. What that cross was in the case of the apostles we know. Paul declares concerning himself and his fellow-workers, "We are made a spectacle unto the world, and to the angels, and to men, we are despised, we both hunger and thirst, we are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place, we are defamed, we are made as the filth of the world and are the off-scouring of all things." What that cross was for the thousands of martyrs who poured out their blood for the name of Jesus we also know.

Have we today such a heavy cross to bear? We are not persecuted, we enjoy perfect liberty in the exercise of our religion; indeed in this day and country to be a Christian is even a badge of honor before men. Let us thank God that the discipleship of Jesus is in this respect made so easy for us. Yet let us not forget that if we are fully faithful to the truth in all things there will also be a cross for us to bear, for "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution." The nearer we get to Christ the more the world will hate us, for "the friendship of the world is enmity with God." It is no hopeful sign when professed Christians find warm welcome with the unbelieving; there is a likely possibility that their path lies nearer to the world than to the things of the kingdom of God. A clear testimony against the world in both word and deed will always draw the enemy's fire; and where there is no firing we may well fear that our testimony is not what it should be.

Thirdly, you must follow Jesus. This means, for one thing, that you accept Jesus as that which He in reality is and as He has revealed Himself in the Gospel; namely, the eternal Son of God and the Son of Man, God and man in one undivided person, who has given Himself an atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world. You cannot be a true follower of Jesus and say that He is a great teacher and

the great exemplar of a pure and noble life, but deny that He is your Savior from sin through His shed blood. That were denying Christ in the very heart of His being and work; for at this very time He was about to go up to Jerusalem, not primarily to teach, neither to show men how to live, but to die for the world's sin.

To follow Jesus means, furthermore, that you believe His every word. Would you say that you were a true follower of Jesus if you reserved the right to believe only so much of His teachings as pleased you and to reject the rest? No man can be your full master and leader if you are not prepared to trust his every word. If some things which Jesus asks you to believe or to do are not according to your ideas, then it is not for you to deny them, but to deny yourself. Jesus' word must be all gold and precious stones to you and every word a light from heaven pointing the way to righteousness and peace and glory. "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

To follow Jesus means also that you place yourself wholly in His service. You must forsake every other master and follow Him, for no man can follow two masters. That may not mean that you must leave your present occupation and give yourself exclusively to some form of church-work. Well were it if more did that; there would be more light in the world and more real happiness and yet probably just as much wealth. But you can follow Jesus in your occupation, whatever that may be, if only it be an honorable and a Christian one. But you must be occupied as unto the Lord; you must seek to serve Him in the work you are doing; and with that spirit you will find many opportunities to serve the Lord directly. You will find time to speak to your unbelieving neighbor about his soul's welfare, or to apply a kindly admonition to an erring brother, or to help along a weary traveler on life's pathway.

What these things all mean Jesus explains more fully when He says, "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it." If you refuse to deny yourself, that is, if you want to save

this self of yours which is given to the service of the world and sin, then you will lose your real self and life. For what have you after you have kept yourself, or saved all these things toward which your sinful self is inclined? How much of what you have saved is real life or can produce real life? One of the vanities of this world is that the good things thereof do not last and the joy thereof soon ends. Moreover, these things, if you live for them, stand in the way to eternal life. They are like the flaming sword, keeping our first parents out of Eden. If you could have both it would be safe enough to keep yourself, but that cannot be. You cannot have darkness and light at the same time. The plant of eternal life does not grow in earthly soil. No young man can spend his youth sowing wild oats and then, when he wants to, settle down in life, have a good stock of physical strength, mental vigor and strong character to start with. So too you cannot indulge the natural bent of your heart here upon earth and then when death throws open the gateway to eternity expect to be clothed upon with the life which Jesus now offers you. If you are going to keep yourself you cannot have Jesus who is the way, the truth, and the life. Jesus does not mean that you must literally cast this life away. He did not cast Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple, nor did He go about as an ascetic, but eating and drinking like other men. What is sinful must of course be cast away, what is not sinful you may retain; yet not as a thing to live for, nor as an end in itself, not as the highest good. But you are to use it as a means to something better and higher. Make to yourself friends of the unrighteous mammon.

To make the matter still more emphatic Jesus says, "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his soul?" What a tremendous comparison! The whole world not equal in value to a single soul! Look at a lesser comparison. If you had a million dollars, but a fatal disease were preying upon your body, of what account would your wealth be? You might call in all the renowned physicians and take all their costly remedies, but the disease would not be driven off; death would claim you. And now

for the greater comparison. What would the rich man not have given in hell to be delivered from the fruit of his doings upon earth? But hell had no remedy.

It is just this that Jesus wants to emphasize here in particular, "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" What has the world to offer you in the place of your soul, so that your soul might be sent to the place of torment and you still be happy? There is not enough gold in all the earth to make the exchange; nor are there precious stones enough to redeem you from the bondage of your sin. There is no price, in all the world, in heaven above, or on the earth beneath, except the blood of Jesus Christ: Behold, we go up to Jerusalem and the Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of sinners and He shall be put to death that men may live. Amen.

REMINISCERE

LUKE 10: 17-20

And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name. And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.

REJOICE in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice." These words of St. Paul are meant for believers; they are to rejoice. But you cannot cause a person to rejoice by simply commanding him to do so. Rejoicing does not come in that way. If it did, it were an easy thing to fill the world with gladness. No more would be needed than to bid the downcast soul look up and be of good cheer, and forthwith the clouds of sadness would be dispelled, and the sunshine of gladness appear. There must be some real ground for rejoicing. Jesus said to the paralytic, "Son, be of good cheer," but He at once added, "Thy sins be forgiven thee." He said to the widowed mother at Nain, "Weep not," but at once also touched the bier and her only son sat up. Jesus always accompanied His admonition to rejoice with a real cause for rejoicing. Natural sunshine is a cause for rejoicing, but you cannot rejoice in it unless you experience and enjoy it. We can rejoice only as we experience the good and gratefully acknowledge its blessing.

Our lesson this morning speaks of the very greatest reason for rejoicing. We may add too that there is really no more appropriate season for true rejoicing than the season of Lent. We saw last Sunday how Jesus, against all opposition, went to Jerusalem to die. The fruit of that passion is our eternal deliverance. That is the ground of our rejoicing. Let us this morning look at certain reasons, presented in the text.

WHY BELIEVERS SHOULD REJOICE.

Our lesson presents in general two such reasons: First, that which we do for Christ; secondly, that which Christ does for us.

1. *We rejoice in that which we do for Christ:* We shall speak first of what we do for Christ, not because that logically comes first — for the fact is that Christ must first do something for us before we can do something for Him — but simply because it comes first in our text and we always prefer to follow the order of the text whenever possible.

“And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name.” Jesus had first sent out the twelve to preach the kingdom of God, to heal the sick and cast out devils. Afterwards He also sent out other seventy, “two by two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come.” They also were to declare that the kingdom of God was come nigh and were to heal the sick.

This, we may say, was the beginning of the Christian ministry. Jesus Himself had come to establish the kingdom of God among men. He did this by revealing the gracious will of God in its great fundamental truths and by offering Himself as an atoning sacrifice for the redemption of men from sin, death and the power of the devil. But the work which Christ began was to be continued by others; He only laid the foundation, others were to rear the superstructure. To this end He gathered about Himself a company of disciples especially the twelve, but also the seventy, whom He prepared and fitted to carry on the work after Him.

At the present stage of their training the disciples were doubtless not yet prepared to do much thorough preaching. They were yet far from comprehending fully the meaning of Christ's words and works and the character of the kingdom of God which had come so nigh. To them the vision was still much like the view of mountains on the hazy horizon, one not being certain whether they are mountains or clouds. Yet they could do preparatory work. That, too, was about all that Jesus expected them to do, for it was His

purpose to follow them in all the places where they would come and do the real preaching. They, however, could declare that the kingdom of God had come, that the Messiah was on the ground; they could tell the people something, at least, about His teaching and could speak of the works which He was doing; they could testify too of His love, His mercy, His compassion, His friendliness and sympathy for people in their troubles; they could tell the people that the Messiah Himself would shortly come into their midst and that they should be prepared to receive Him; they were also empowered to heal diseases and to do this in the name of Christ, in order that it might be seen that these men did not come in their own name and were not delivering their own message, but that they were sent and empowered by some higher one and that the higher one was the Messiah.

When the seventy returned they reported to their Master with glad hearts how successful they had been. Theirs was the joy of having accomplished what one sets out to do; and the greater the task the greater the joy. They had declared the advent of the kingdom of God, and had healed the sick and had even cast out devils. This last achievement seems to have been a kind of surprise to them. These devils were evil spirits, doubtless fallen angels, which had taken bodily possession of various individuals. These cases of possession were probably more numerous in the days of Christ than at any other time. It was one of the schemes of the devil who was then doing his utmost to hinder and frustrate the work of Christ. To cast out these evil spirits was considered a mighty work. In the instruction to the seventy there is no express direction that they should drive out devils, only that they should heal the sick. However that authority may be taken as having been implied in the instructions; and yet possibly it was more than the seventy expected to be able to do. But they did the preaching and they healed the sick and, succeeding in these, they found courage to go on and attack the devil more directly in his strongholds; and they succeeded.

Here then was a great work which these men did for Christ and the kingdom of God. Their preaching was doubt-

less very simple and elementary, chiefly a declaration that the expected Messiah was come and that the kingdom of God was near. But they backed up this message with their mighty works; the sick were healed and devils driven out. These things made an impression on the people. There must have been great expectation and eager waiting for the great Master Himself to come; for if the seventy already can do such great things, what must not the Master Himself be able to do?

The seventy might well rejoice at what they had done. Nor did Jesus mean to deprive them of their joy when He said, "Notwithstanding in this rejoice not that the spirits are subject unto you." Why should God's people not rejoice in the work, which by His grace they are able to do for the Lord and for His kingdom? Paul said to the Philippians concerning the fact that Christ is being preached that "I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice." In the introductions to his letters one of the emotions to which the apostle especially gives expression is thankfulness and joy at the grace and faith of believers. And Saint John says, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in the truth." Hence the Savior's thought here was not that the seventy should not rejoice over the success of their work and the opening of doors in various cities and villages for the entrance of the kingdom. Jesus did not mean to deprive the disciples of the joy which they already felt, but rather to add to it, for He had a so much greater joy to tell them of that compared with it the first was no joy at all. But before we speak of that greater cause for rejoicing we need to make a more direct application of the above to ourselves.

The seventy were sent out in the service of Jesus. There is also a work for us to do. We need not think here only of the public preaching of the Gospel. That as a matter of course comes first, for "how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?" And again we are told that it hath "pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." There is no greater work among men than the preaching of the Gospel. It is to the kingdom of men

what sunshine is to the kingdom of plant life. The greatest men in Israel at this time were the twelve and the seventy, just as the greatest men in former times had been the Prophets, the mighty teachers sent from God. They were great not because of personal excellence, but because of the glorious message which they delivered from the mouth of the Lord. However, Jesus did not send all His followers out to preach in public and to heal diseases and to cast out devils. At the present time too, not all are apostles or preachers or public teachers.

Furthermore, when we are seeking the work that Jesus wants us to do, let us not look around for something great and striking. Jesus sent these men out to heal the sick and to cast out devils. We have not been so commissioned. Yet there is a Christian service, a Christian sympathy and benevolence, which does much toward removing even bodily ailments. At the last day Jesus will want to know of you whether you fed the hungry, clothed the naked, visited the sick and took in the stranger; for inasmuch as you do these things unto the least of the brethren you do them unto the Lord. This is not the preaching of the Gospel expressly, but it is doing that without which preaching has often very little effect. We are not inclined to believe the man who has much to say about his good works, but whose poor sick neighbor across the street does not receive so much as a crumb of his charity. It will do no good for the rich man to preach the Gospel so long as Lazarus is left to lie at his gate uncared for. The preaching of the Church would be more effective if the good works of the Church were more evident. Medical missionaries do no miracles, but they do much toward paving the way for the Gospel and toward confirming the message that is delivered. Jesus called His miracles signs of the kingdom of God and of the presence of the Messiah. So are the works of believers signs of the presence of Christ in the heart and of the power of the Gospel to convert and to save.

However, let us not overlook the fact that these men were sent out primarily to teach the Gospel; healing the sick and casting out devils were secondary things. Preaching is

still the great work of the Church. Let us be mindful of that fact also during the season of Lent. As we draw near to the passion of our Savior, as our hearts are moved by His cries and His bitterness and as we think of our own souls saved by His atoning death, let us not forget that He died for others as well as for us; for our scattered brethren in the west, for the unchurched and the unconverted of city and country, for the negro of our own land, for the yellow man of the far east and for the black man of the wilds of Africa; and that He expects us to tell these people that the kingdom of God is nigh and that there is a Savior mighty to save them from their ills. Nor can anyone excuse himself from this work by saying, I am not called to preach. There are many other ways in which you can help to make Christ known. One has said that "a kind work spoken for Christ may create a wider vibration in eternity than the grandest sermon of the greatest preacher." Think of that and speak kindly for the sake of Christ. Besides you have a heart to pray and you have the time to pray; will you not pray for the extension of the kingdom? And will you not help to hold up the hands of the men who are preaching? Why should it be necessary to speak so often of the different ways of preaching the Gospel? What we most need is more love for that Savior who bled for us. That will lead us to find ways a plenty to go forth and tell the world that the kingdom of God is nigh. And that, too, will move us to rejoice as did the seventy; for wherever we see the Gospel entering in, there the devils are being driven out. — In the second place:

2. *We rejoice in that which Christ does for us:* Here now we get down to fundamentals, to first principles. We rejoice because we are able to do something for Christ. Who gave us the power to do that something? Who commissioned the seventy to go forth and preach and heal diseases? Christ. In whose name did they cast out devils? Through Christ's name. Do we feel that great truth as we should? Paul said, I can do all things — through Christ which strengtheneth me; and Jesus said, Without me ye can do nothing. There are three things which this fact should do for us. For one thing, it should make us humble; it

should lead us to feel our weakness and not to lean on our own understanding, for "cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord." For another thing, it should drive us to Christ for grace and strength that we may do the work He expects us to do; and the third thing is that we should never cease praising Christ who gives us grace and power to work.

This last thought suggests something about the rejoicing of the seventy. We saw above that Jesus did not mean that they should not rejoice at all over their success. But may we not see in the words, "in this rejoice not," a warning against self-glorification? Even if this were not Jesus' thought here, we know the Scriptural admonition that "he that glorieth let him glory in the Lord." It is true these men said, The devils are subject unto us through *thy name*; nor will we say that they did not ascribe all the glory to the Lord. Yet we know how prone human nature is to glory in itself and to claim the honor of another man's deed. *We* healed the sick, *we* cast out devils; *we* did it, of course, in Jesus' name, yet *we* did it. Men will honor *us*, men will think *us* great, men will esteem *us* holy.

And there is another thing against which we must guard in the matter of our own salvation. Not only does Jesus enable us to do something for Him, but also what we do for our own salvation is likewise altogether His gift and grace. The first and chief thing is always what Jesus does for us, not what we do for ourselves. This fact needs to be kept clearly before us at the present day especially when so much importance is attached to doing things. The purpose, however, must not be to do less but rather to do more, and that all the glory for our doing be given to Christ.

But we must go back further as regards that which Christ does for us. He gives us grace and strength to do something for Him and also as Paul tells us, to work out our salvation. Whence is this? How has it become possible? Our text tells us, for Jesus said unto them, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." Heaven is the dwelling-place of God. Satan has ever attempted to storm that stronghold and dethrone the great King in order that he himself

might be master in God's stead. That he falls from heaven means that his power over against men is broken. Hitherto he had exercised his mighty sway over the nations of the world. Notice, for example, the fearful idolatry, the awful crimes and vices, the inhuman wars into which pagan people were plunged. Even Israel, the chosen race of the Lord, welcomed the rule of Satan rather than that of Jehovah. And does not Jesus elsewhere call him the prince of this world? He was the old foe of mankind; in Eden he began his fell work and it grew under his hand until violence and wickedness so filled the earth that God was necessitated to sweep it clean with the mighty flood. But his power was not broken by that flood; the mystery of iniquity began at once to work again within the chosen family of Noah and the pages of history to the day of Christ were stained with blood and reeked with the abomination of wickedness.

But now Satan's power was to be broken. Hitherto the strong man had kept his palace in comparative peace; but now the stronger than he had come. Now there would be a sharp, decisive conflict and the strong man would be bound and his armor and goods wherein he trusted would be taken from him and he himself cast out of the palace. And now, says Jesus, shall the prince of this world be cast out; now shall the head of the serpent be bruised according to the promise. That is the thought of these words, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." New conditions and new forces were to be put into operation among men. The devil should no longer have his own way in everything; he must be cast out as the seventy had been doing. Christ came to atone for the sins of men and to reconcile them with God. They should stand in a new relation to God; love and mercy and forgiveness and power to save on the part of God should effect that new relation. Christ came to give men the light, the truth; no longer should they walk in darkness; the light of truth should shine into their hearts and guide them into the way of peace. Christ came to give men the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, who should call them by the Gospel, enlighten them with His gifts, sanctify and keep them in the true faith. These are the forces and

agencies set to work by which men are to be freed from the power of the devil.

We are not to assume, however, that because Satan's power is broken, he has been deprived of all power. When Jesus here declares that He saw Satan fall from heaven, He is representing the final result rather than a completed present fact; the work in which Christ is engaged will result in the final complete overthrow of the devil. For the present he is still very powerful and active. Just look about you and see the wickedness which still prevails in spite of almost twenty centuries' influence of the Gospel. Peter was aware of that fact, hence his admonition, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." Luther in his day recognized the fact when he said:

"The old bitter foe now means deadly woe;
Deep guile and great might are his dread arms in fight,
On earth is not his equal."

But his power is broken:

"Though devils all the world should fill, all watching to devour us,
We tremble not, we fear no ill, they cannot overpower us.
This world's prince may still scowl fierce as he will,
He can harm us none, for he is judged — undone.
One little word o'erthrows him."

The greatest cause for rejoicing is left for our last consideration: "In this rejoice not that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven." Names written in heaven! What greater ambition could one have? Men seek to have their names written in some hall of fame; men are proud to have their name inscribed upon some building or other monument; men vie with one another to carve their names higher than their fellows. But what is all that compared with having your name written in the Book of Life that is kept by angels in the palace of the King of heaven?

And consider whose names may be written there. Not the names of kings and princes only, of victorious generals,

of great philosophers, discoverers, inventors, of millionaires and the elite of the earth; but the names of the unknown, of the poor and the lowly. Those who have no distinction on earth may become famous in heaven.

Consider again whose names are written there, for there is one thing here that above all else must make our hearts bound with joy and gladness. It is this that in that book are written the names of sinners, even of such as we are. Oh, the joy that Christ came into the world to die for sinners, to seek and to save that which was lost! Oh, the blessedness of the passion of Christ, that God's love was so great that He spared not His own Son, but freely gave Him that we might have an inheritance beyond the skies! Great things the Lord has done for us, whereof we are glad!

And in our rejoicing let us not forget either who it is that has written our names there; it is none other than God Himself. There is great comfort and assurance in that fact. For one thing we know that there can be no mistake, for God makes no mistakes; God really makes these people His everlasting heirs. For another thing we know that God is very much interested in us; He has done these things of His own accord, of His own will and love. He must really want to make us happy. For another thing we know that no one shall be able to blot out our names from that book; Satan cannot do it, for he has been hurled from heaven; wicked men cannot do it, for they never get to heaven. No one can cause our names to be blotted out, except if we ourselves should prove unfaithful to the truth and to our Master. Keep us therefore, O Lord, by Thy grace unto the day of Jesus Christ. Amen.

OCULI

LUKE 9: 51-56

And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, and sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. And when his disciples James and John saw this; they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village.

THE time had come when Jesus should be received up. This "received up" refers to His ascension into heaven; or to give the phrase a little wider compass, to the closing scene of His life and work which should end in His glorious ascension into heaven and His sitting at the right hand of God and the full use again of that power and glory which He had with the Father from eternity.

There is noted here the beginning of a new epoch in the life of Christ. Up to this time He had gone about, mostly in Galilee, teaching and preaching and doing signs and wonders, without very much reference to what should take place later on at Jerusalem; but now He is drawn irresistibly toward Jerusalem, for these the closing scenes of His life's work should be enacted. One of the remarkable words concerning Jesus that was uttered in the days of His childhood was that of Simeon when he said that "this Child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign that shall be spoken against; that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."

We have an instance of such revelations in our lesson today. We may say that

THREE TYPES OF MEN ARE REVEALED IN THEIR
RELATION TO CHRIST:

The Samaritan type; the James and John type; and the Jesus type. Let us look at these three types this morning.

1. *The Samaritan type:* And He "sent messengers before his face; and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him." The Samaritan type is the man who will not receive Christ. But let us observe here at the start, that not all Samaritans belong to this class. We know of another village, the village near Jacob's well, where they begged Jesus to remain with them. We know of ten lepers whom Jesus cleansed, one of them being a Samaritan, and he the only one who returned to give God thanks. We know of that good Samaritan who, while a priest and a Levite passed by the man fallen among thieves, rescued him and tenderly cared for him. These facts show that men differ in their stand toward Christ, that one individual or one community is more ready to receive Him than another. We may not be able to explain these differences fully, yet they exist. At Sychar they prayed Jesus to remain and teach them the Word; here they refused to grant Him even so little as a night's lodging and rest.

But why did these Samaritans refuse to receive Christ? Was it simply because of that racial antipathy which existed between the Samaritans and the Jews, on account of which they had little or no dealings with each other? Not on that account alone. The real ground of their opposition is found in the words, "because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem." Jerusalem was the center of Jewish worship and religion. But the Samaritans had a religion and faith of their own and their own place of worship. For anyone to go to Jerusalem and worship meant a rejection of their religious system as false and the recognition of the Jewish as true.

Jesus was now on His way to Jerusalem for the purpose of engaging in worship; so the Samaritans believed, for the time of the Passover was drawing nigh. In addition, it had become generally known, even along the border of Samaria,

that Jesus claimed to be the promised Messiah and He was expected by many to declare Himself as such sooner or later and to set up His kingdom; but to all these things these Samaritans were opposed. They might have befriended some other Jew, or even Jesus under other conditions; but now that He was on His way to the center of Jewish religion and worship, they could not receive Him and thereby as they believed, stamp their own religion as false.

But how about this type of men at the present? There are of course many who are not followers of Christ, and when we go out among them as Christ's messengers, what do we find? We might ask you to take your Bibles and go out among the people and learn for yourselves. Even among many of those who call themselves Christians you would be given an indifferent and even a cold reception; you would find many whose chief interest seems to lie elsewhere than in close proximity to Jesus. Especially would that be your experience, if you presented to them a positive Christianity, a resolute cutting loose from the world and a positive holding to Jesus as the crucified One who had to go up to Jerusalem and suffer and die for the redemption of men.

But when you go out into the broad field of the world the reception is cold indeed. You will find a few who are willing to accept Christ. There were a few among the Samaritans. There are the pleasant places in the missionary's life. But the more common experience is that they have no interest in your message; they might be quite ready to befriend you as a fellowman, might not be averse to opening their door to you as a tourist, but as a messenger of Jesus sent before to prepare a reception for Him in the heart, that does not appeal to them. This is not said to discourage any one, but rather to fortify you against discouragement.

Setting one's face toward Jerusalem is a testimony against the world and against much that is called religion and therefore opposition may be expected. Christian of Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress found few friends on his way to the holy city. To go to Jerusalem is a testimony against the treasures of the world, a declaration that there are better

things in Jerusalem than this world can give. It is a testimony against the sin of the world. You cannot go into a house with your Bible in your hand without declaring that fact. "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin," said Jesus to the Jews. But the world does not want to hear such testimony. It is a testimony also against the righteousness and the religion of men. In this especially are these Samaritans a type of many at the present day. They had a religion of their own and they opposed Christ because He testified against it. Men are not averse to some religion and righteousness, provided it be of their own making. Who does not admire virtue in men? But they do not want it said, that they need some one else to give them a religion and to make them righteous. They may not be unwilling to take a little religion, to go to church once in a while, to indulge in a little religious sentiment, especially if these things are conducive to their business or social standing, or act as a salve to their conscience. For then even the devil a monk would be. They are willing to have a sprinkling of religion in their life; it leaves a better taste in their mouth. For these reasons the quantity and quality of a religion that is found in the lodge, for example, is just about what the people want. But to acknowledge their sins in all their greatness, to cast aside the whole pack of their virtues, and to go with Jesus to Jerusalem and there behold Him die upon the tree and there and then fall down and confess their sin and look alone to Him for life and salvation, that they do not want.

But we need to be a little more personal here; and the question requires constant repetition, Have you received Christ? He is on His way to Jerusalem during this Lenten season, has He found an abiding place in your heart? Are you ready to go with Him to the place of His passion and to behold that all these things were done for you? Or are there some things in this testimony that are still disagreeable to you? Oh, then ask for grace to have your heart set fully right before God. Do not allow this Lenten season to pass without ridding out the things which are still opposed to Christ. Be ready to confess all and to forsake all that Christ

may dwell in you in all His fulness of grace and power. If these Samaritans had received Him, He would have repaid them richly even as He repaid those in Sychar; so too will He richly repay us; there is nothing which we may surrender for His sake for which He will not give a hundred fold.

2. *The James and John type:* "And when His disciples James and John saw it, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, even as Elias did?" Jesus had called James and John "sons of thunder," not because of what occurred here, but because of their zeal and impetuosity of spirit. This incident was simply one occasion on which their fiery spirit manifested itself. They were highly incensed at the treatment their Master had received at the hands of the Samaritans. Their motive in one respect was not bad, for it was from love and zeal for Jesus that they acted. They felt, too, that they would be justified in their resolve by what Elias had done under a somewhat similar provocation. Besides they did not undertake to execute their wish without first getting the consent and authority of Jesus.

Nevertheless their intentions here showed a spirit directly contrary to that which Jesus was inculcating. They showed a spirit of vengeance and destruction. These Samaritans had committed a wrong against Jesus; and for this offense they are to be summarily destroyed, root and branch, without a moment's warning or time for repentance. Could we well conceive of anything farther from the Spirit of Jesus who came, not to destroy men's lives, but to save them? The fact that Elijah had called down fire from heaven upon two successive companies of soldiers, sent by the wicked king Ahaziah to take him, was no reason why that punishment should be invoked upon these Samaritans. That occurred under the regime of the law when God often inflicted judgment in extraordinary ways to show men the fruit of disobedience and sin. So Elijah also slew the four hundred prophets of Baal at the brook Kishon. But even Elijah himself was taught a different lesson at Horeb where the Lord passed by and revealed Himself, not in the storm,

not in the fire, not in the earthquake, but in a still small voice; that is, the Lord's real, saving work should be done, not by outward force, violence and judgment, but by His Spirit of grace and love and truth.

But did this type of man in relation to Christ become extinct with the later change in James and John? The history of the Church shows the continuation of the type up to the present. We need but remind ourselves of the bloody work of the Inquisition by which it was sought to crush out Protestantism, or of the horrors of St. Bartholomew's Massacre when some twenty thousands Huguenots perished at the hand of Rome because of their faith, or of the expulsion of the Salzburgers because they held to the Protestant faith, or of the enforced exile of the Pilgrim Fathers because they did not conform to the established Church of England; and even these Puritans again, when they became the ruling class in New England, in turn persecuted such as did not conform to their faith and religious practice. There have ever been attempts to call down fire from heaven upon such as did not receive the Lord Jesus after the model set by others. To put the very best possible construction upon these things we can say that persecutors were moved by their zeal for the faith and for the honor of Jesus as they conceived things. But that was the very thought and purpose of James and John, and yet Jesus condemned their action.

Just what was it then that was condemned? Not their zeal for the honor of Jesus; not zeal for the faith or the truth; but the thought and purpose of bringing destruction upon others, instead of seeking by other means to bring them to a knowledge of the truth and to repentance and faith. Punishing sin, whether it be sin against moral law or against divine truth as an article of faith, is God's prerogative, not man's; we are not to avenge ourselves, nor are we to avenge divine truth; vengeance belongeth to the Lord. Our part is to pray, to intercede for and to labor with, in order to bring men to see their sins and repent. We must of course contend for the faith and on that ground polemics and contention for the truth are in order. This, however, must not be done in bitterness, but in love; and the object must be, not only to

defend the truth, but also to win the person in error; and that can only be done by speaking the truth in love. There are few things so difficult to engage in as a religious controversy; and, if anywhere, it is here that a man needs to think twice before speaking once. If at any time in life there are demanded clear insight into the truth, good judgment and above all calmness of spirit and an abounding measure of grace and love, it is then. It is so easy to look chiefly only at one side of the subject; it is so easy to become prejudiced; passions and feelings are so easily aroused, that everyone needs to make thorough preparation upon his knees before entering upon religious and theological controversy. The fires that burn in these conflicts are not alyways kindled by the Spirit of God.

3. *The Jesus type:* Here we have the true representation of the followers of Christ, the Man Jesus. Him we are to follow, "for even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps."

First of all, let us recall here that we are within the season of Lent; Jesus is on His way to Jerusalem: "He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem." The Spirit in which He did this is indicated by the word "steadfastly." He was fixed in His purpose. He knew what was before Him; beyond all the suffering in Gethsemane and in the palace of the high priest, before Herod and before Pontius Pilate, He saw looming up the cross on Calvary with its shame and ignominy, with its racking and burning thirst; but all these things did not divert Him from His course; "He steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem."

We have here the spirit of obedience. It is instructive to read through the Gospels with the single purpose of observing this spirit of obedience on the part of Jesus. Already at the age of twelve He said, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" When the Baptist hesitated to baptize Him Jesus said, "Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness." Later on He said, "I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me." And later when that work was

about done He said, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." The climax of it all we find in the garden where the bitter cup was offered Him and He said, "Father, not my will, but thine be done."

Do we comprehend sufficiently this spirit of submission on the part of Christ? He Himself was God, the Lord of heaven and earth; His was the power to rule, to command and to destroy whatever opposed His will. But the use of this power He had laid aside; He came as a servant, He placed Himself under the law that He might obey in all things and fulfill all righteousness. And to what end? That the world might be redeemed, that rebellious man might be saved, that you and I might find favor with God and the hope of everlasting life.

Obedience to the will of God and submission to His ways is one of the finest Christian virtues, one of the most precious jewels of divine grace. We cannot be children of God without obedience, we cannot be followers of Jesus without obedience, we cannot say to our troubled spirits, Peace, be still, unless we are willing to obey divine truth. Hear the terrific language of Saint Paul when he says that "the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." Here Jesus would not suffer fire to be called down upon His enemies, for now was the day of grace, now He was living and pleading and dying to save men. But this day of grace shall end, it shall not continue forever; then the meek and lowly Jesus shall appear as the stern Judge, as the great King with the rod of iron in His hand and the disobedient shall at that day be as dust before Him. If then the obedience and submission which we see in Jesus during His passion is not enough to move us to follow in His footsteps, if His tears and His crying, His furrowed brow and His torn temples, His pierced hands and His rent side, if these things will not move us to love Him and to obey the truth for His sake, oh! then let us take warning that it is through

disobedience that we bring judgment upon ourselves and cut off every way of escape.

But Jesus represents the child of God here not only in the spirit of obedience, but also in the spirit of meekness and forbearance. James and John wanted to call fire down from heaven upon the Samaritans, but Jesus rebuked them and said, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of." Ye are My disciples. I am of the new covenant, the covenant of love, of mercy, of forgiveness. That is the spirit ye are to be of. Do you not know that yet? Will ye mar and impair My work by methods of violence and revenge? I have gone about showing God's mercy and love, forgiving and showing compassion, forbearance and longsuffering; will ye now go back again to the days of Moses and resort to fire and to the sword in order to force through your purposes?

And if I should want to take vengeance for the insult, should I begin with these poor Samaritans who have grown up largely in ignorance? Have not your own people heaped insult upon insult against Me? Have they not called Me a sabbath-breaker, a glutton and wine bibber.

Have they not said that I have a devil and am in league with Beelzebub? Have they not abused and insulted Me times without number and are they not now seeking to kill Me? More than that; one of your own number shall betray Me, another shall deny Me and all of you shall forsake Me. Nor is that all: your leaders shall take Me and scourge Me and hang Me upon the tree. Yet I shall not at once take vengeance, but shall pray, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

But whatever else might be said here yet concerning the spirit of Jesus as the correct representation of what the child of God should be, that which is deepest and broadest is His love for dying men. That is the bearer of all other virtues. Therefore He says that "the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." Love moved Him to come into the world; love moved Him to go about doing good and teaching men the way of salvation: love moved Him in these days to set His face to go to Jerusalem there to finish the great work, that the power of the devil

might be broken and that men and angels might rejoice for evermore.

That is the spirit of Christ. Are you of that spirit? Are you ready to forgive, ready to bear a wrong, ready to be patient and meek under provocation? Or do you want to avenge your wrongs and remain implacable until all wrongs have been righted according to your own ideas? Can you, during this season of Lent go to Jerusalem with your Savior and behold Him upon the cross praying for those who nailed Him there, and still remain implacable, still remain hard-hearted?

And let us remember, too, that it is by the spirit of love that the great work of the Church must be done. It was love, eternal divine love, that redeemed the world; it is still love that must save the world. It has been said that a "warm blundering man does more for the world than a frigid wise one." Not simply by the swing right and left of the sword of truth, not by the bearing down of all opposition by sheer weight of learning and logic, great as these things are in the service of the kingdom, but also — or, shall we say chiefly? by those who serve and suffer in patience and in submission to the will of God and for the love of Jesus and His fellowmen, must the Church's work be done.

Nor should we deem these graces weak. Jesus steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem. At the trysting place in the garden when Jesus was seized, those men who wanted to call down fire upon the Samaritans forsook Him and fled. Even the mighty Peter, when he was commanded to sheathe his sword, could stand it no longer, and though he mustered enough courage to follow at a distance, he feared a weak maid and denied his Lord. But Jesus, the loving Jesus, the gracious and meek Jesus, braved it all and without a tremor of fear endured the savage cruelty of men and devils. Amen.

LAETARE

JOHN 6: 47-57

Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I give is my flesh which I will give for the life of the world. The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat? Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me."

CHRIST presents Himself under various aspects as the Savior of men. He calls himself the good Shepherd that giveth His life for the sheep; He represents Himself as the door to the sheepfold by which one may enter in and be saved; He speaks of Himself as the vine that bears the living branches; He declares that He has the waters of life of which, if a man drink he will not thirst again.

In the sixth chapter of John, Christ uses another comparison to set forth the fact that He is the Savior. On the preceding day He had fed the multitude with a few loaves of bread and a few fishes. The people were greatly impressed by the miracle, declared that He must be the Messiah and sought at once to make Him their king. Jesus withdrew; but on the next day they came to Him again in great numbers. Thereupon He took occasion to speak to them about the bread of life in contrast to the bread that perisheth. Let us this morning attempt to review in part what Jesus said to the multitude on that memorable day on the shore of the sea of Galilee. Naturally our subject must be:

THE BREAD OF LIFE.

We shall present the thoughts of Jesus on the subject chiefly under two heads: First, Christ is the bread of life; secondly, we must receive the bread of life.

1. *Christ is the bread of life:* "I am that bread of life," said Jesus. The fact is more fully put in a preceding declaration, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world." The people boasted that their fathers had eaten manna in the wilderness, "bread from heaven," as they also called it. Moses gave them that sign and therefore they knew that he was sent of God. They ask that Jesus show them a similar sign that they might likewise believe that He was sent of God. Jesus therefore declares Himself to be the true bread that cometh down from heaven. The manna of the wilderness was only a type or figure of the true bread that should be given at a later day, not the true bread itself; and it was given only for the body and was not food for the soul. The perishable character of the manna is indicated especially by the fact that if kept over night it bred worms and became putrid. Such bread could not forever sustain life. Therefore Jesus says, "Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead." It is almost like saying of a man that he took poison and died. The manna of course did not hasten death; on the contrary, it preserved bodily life during the journey in the wilderness, but it could not ward off death.

Christ as the bread of life is placed in contrast also to the bread of this world generally. When the people came to Him upon this occasion Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled." The miracle of feeding the multitude was not looked upon by the people as a sign that Jesus was the Messiah who should come and give them spiritual blessings, the real kingdom of God; but rather as the beginning of an earthly reign among them

in which they would have all their natural desires and appetites gratified. Their eyes were chiefly upon the loaves and fishes, upon the good things and the glory of this world. All this, however, is perishable; it cannot give life. A farmer may have wide acres; a financier may have bundles of bonds; a man may have much to eat and drink; much pleasure, honor and glory; the voluptuary may clothe himself in linen and purple and fare sumptuously every day, and yet they may all miserably perish.

This bread of life may also be set over against human virtues and righteousness and all human plans for gaining salvation. There is the man who thinks that doing as nearly right as he knows how is all that is necessary; there is the man who thinks that keeping the commandments outwardly like the Pharisee of old is all that is required; there is the man who thinks that all religion is summed up in humanitarian works of mercy; there is the man who thinks that everyone has within himself all the power needed to do the will of God. All this is perishable; it cannot renew the man nor deliver him from sin and death.

In contrast to all this Jesus says, "I am the bread of life." In Him alone is found that which feeds and satisfies the soul. In Him alone is forgiveness of sin; in Him reconciliation with God; in Him the righteousness that avails before God; in Him peace and a good conscience; in Him the new life and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit; in Him the power to overcome temptation and to do the work that has been given us to do; in Him is the final great victory over death itself; and in Him the possession of everlasting life. These things are imperishable. "A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee."

Of this bread of life Jesus says further, that it cometh down from heaven: "This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die." We do well to note especially the fact that this bread is not found in this world; you cannot grow it in your garden or upon your field; you cannot manufacture it in your shop nor discover its ingredients in your laboratory. Go home and look

in your pantry, your cellar; go to the city and search through stores and shops; examine your library of applied sciences, discoveries and inventions; nowhere do you find a bread that satisfies the real wants of that heart of yours. It is not large, that heart of yours, but it has great aspirations, so great that nothing upon earth can satisfy it. It wants to be free from sin; it wants to have righteousness; it wants to be reconciled with God, it wants to see God and dwell in His presence and be at rest. But it is the Bread of heaven alone that can satisfy all these wants. The Psalmist in one place tells us of his anguish of heart because of sin, oppression, lamentations, crying and weeping; of fearfulness, trembling and horror of death. Then he breaks out in these words of yearning, "Oh, that I had wings like a dove, for then would I fly away, and be at rest; lo, then would I wander far off; and remain in the wilderness. I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and the tempest." We are thus carried into another figure of speech, but there are storms and tempests that sweep the human breast and the only refuge is Christ who alone can still the commotion.

Furthermore Jesus says, "I am the *living* bread which came down from heaven." Possibly no difference of meaning was intended by the two expressions, "bread of life" and "living bread"; yet a difference suggests itself. He is the bread of life, the bread that gives life to all who eat it. That term therefore specifies power or ability of the bread to give life; it shows what the result is when one eats that bread. The term "living bread," however, may be taken as specifying the very nature and character of the bread in itself; in its very nature it is life and has life and, therefore, it imparts life to others. Jesus cannot only give life, but He is life, "I am the resurrection and the life"; "I am the way, and the truth, and the life." Therefore, too, when Jesus was put to death, it was not strictly speaking a taking of His life, but He laid it down of His own accord. "No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." We find such life nowhere except in God. Kill an animal and it is dead; kill a man or if it were possible, an angel or

the devil and so far as their own power is concerned they would be dead. But when Jesus was killed, He lived again by His own power. When we therefore have Christ, we are joined to Him as the living branch is joined to the vine; then we have life and shall live forevermore.

There is still another fact about this bread of life that must not be overlooked. Christ is the bread of life for men, because He gave His life to save men. "The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." Christ is here speaking of His sacrificial death for men. It is repeatedly spoken of as a *giving*. "God gave His only begotten Son"; Paul says, "The Son of God gave himself for me"; again He says, "Christ hath *given* himself for us"; and Jesus says that He came "to *give* his life a ransom for many." Strange and mysterious indeed is the fact that is here declared: He who is life itself gave His life for us. But just that fact is our redemption. If He had not been life itself then the giving of Himself would not have availed for us; but because He is the life He could give life and yet live, and live forevermore to make intercession for us.

But note well here the condition which makes Christ the bread of life, namely, that He gave Himself a sacrifice for sin. If in our characterization of Christ we stop before we get to that point we have no Savior. In this sixth chapter of John Jesus says much about Himself, that He is the bread of life, the living bread, that He came down from heaven, that He giveth life to the world, that those who come to Him shall never hunger and that they who believe in Him shall never thirst.

But all this is conditional, it is all dependent upon the great climax of truth and fact: "The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." Thus it becomes apparent too what kind of a Savior those have who stop short of Christ's atoning death, and who accept Him only as a great teacher and exemplar. They may find much in Christ that is helpful to a moral and respectable life, but they do not find in Christ the bread of life, they are still in the wilderness among those who eat

manna and perish. We dare not stop simply with Christ, but we must go on to Christ and Him crucified.

2. *The Bread of life must be eaten:* Bread is intended to be eaten; so also Christ, if He is bread, must be in some way appropriated, otherwise there can be no nourishment unto life. The fact is made very emphatic in our chapter. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life"; and again He says, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." This declaration is made again and again in the text; and elsewhere in this chapter He repeatedly says that men must eat this bread, receive Him, believe in Him.

The truth that Jesus must be received is practically just as important as the truth that He is the bread of life. Of what use can Christ be to you as a Savior, if you do not accept Him? A man is greatly in debt; a friend promises to help him cancel the debt, but of what avail is that promise, if the man will not accept his friend's assistance? You sit down to a well-loaded table; but what benefit does your body derive from all those viands, if you do not eat them? You may think about them, talk about them, praise the good cooking, but all that will not satisfy your craving hunger, nor nourish your weakened frame. Jesus does not say: He that thinks about Me, talks about Me, reads about Me, praises Me, shall live. All these things are proper and necessary, but they are not enough, it must come to the eating.

Note well, furthermore, that it is Christ Himself that we are to eat and to receive, and not merely something about Him, something that He has said or done, but Christ Himself. We must not forget that we cannot be saved except in union with Christ's person. We sometimes speak of forgiveness of sins and of righteousness as things apart from Christ, that God gives them for the sake of Christ; but as a matter of fact no one gets those gifts of grace apart from Christ's person. If one will not accept Christ, he cannot have these; and if he will have these, he must take Christ with them. Christ is a personal Savior, in the sense that one must be joined to Him. He that hath the Son of God

hath life. This eating of Christ's flesh and drinking of His blood can mean nothing else than believing on Him; "He that believeth on me hath everlasting life." There should be no difficulty here. Christ speaks of eating because He speaks of Himself as bread; and as was seen above, He speaks of Himself as bread here, because of the miracle of feeding performed the day before. Throughout the entire Bible it is plainly shown that the way to receive Christ unto salvation is by faith. If then, other expressions are occasionally used to designate the act of believing, such as eating His flesh and drinking His blood, such expressions must be interpreted in the light of the plain and common term used throughout the Bible. That term is faith, trust in Christ and full surrender of one's self to Him as the Savior. There is therefore nothing essentially new in the term which Jesus here uses, nothing that needs to disturb our minds. On the contrary, we should be glad that Jesus has set forth the plan of salvation in various ways and under various figures. This should make matters clearer to us, it should help us grasp more fully the wealth of meaning and lay hold upon the boundless assurance and comfort of divine grace and truth.

The Jews here stumbled at these words of Jesus and fell. "The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" They understood Jesus' words as of a natural eating of His natural flesh just as Nicodemus thought of natural birth when Jesus declared that a man must be born again of water and the Spirit. These men were carnal, their thoughts were of the world and according to mere human reason. Their minds would not carry beyond that in which they lived and of which they naturally thought. When Jesus therefore used the language of the table with which to clothe divine thought and spiritual meaning, they missed the mark completely. They could not comprehend the heavenly. If they had been willing to believe, if they had received that other word of Jesus, "He that believeth on me hath everlasting life," they would have found no difficulty with these words. The twelve found no difficulty with them. When many of Jesus' followers went

back from following Him and He asked the twelve, "Will ye go also?" they said, "Lord to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life."

But there is an instructive lesson here for us and an earnest warning. We possibly have no difficulties with these words of Jesus, nor is it wrong to argue with one another in the proper spirit about the meaning of certain words and divine things. But we must never let such arguments interfere with our faith in the declarations of Christ. These we are to believe even if we cannot understand all. When you eat bread at your table, do you first analyze all the processes through which it passed before it became bread, and all the processes through which it must yet pass in order to nourish your body? When you go into your house at night, do you understand fully just how when you turn a switch the rooms are instantly filled with light? No, you eat the bread and enjoy the light without a thought of how the things are done; you act on faith. You do not know how these things are done, but you know the results are always forthcoming and that is sufficient. So in regard to the words of Jesus; let others argue, if they will, and miss the eating, but let us eat. When it is said that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin, let us believe; when we are told that we are justified by grace through faith, let us believe; when Jesus says, that we are to be born again through water and the Spirit, let us believe; when He says, "Take, eat, this is my body," let us believe; when He says as here, "And I will raise him up at the last day," let us believe.

These words of Jesus, however, about eating His flesh and drinking His blood have occasioned some difficulty even among true believers, not however so as to interfere in any way with their faith, but moving them to ask whether Jesus was here already referring to the Lord's Supper. But inasmuch as the eating and drinking spoken of here are absolutely necessary unto salvation, they cannot mean the eating and drinking of the Lord's Supper, for that is nowhere represented as absolutely necessary unto salvation. And yet there seems to be a reference to that blessed sacrament, especially since He speaks not only of eating His flesh, but

also of drinking His blood. We may take it then, that there is here already a reference to the Sacrament of Christ's blessed body and blood and that we have in the Lord's Supper complete fulfillment of these wonderful words.

Such then is the bread of life that is here offered us, and such the eating that is necessary. Through it we have eternal life and Christ shall raise us up at the last day. We have life, because by eating this bread we have Christ Himself; there is complete union with Him; He dwelleth in me and I in Him. What blessed assurance! What great desire there should be for this bread! You eagerly eat the bread that perisheth; there is no sure promise that it will sustain even your bodily life; death may seize upon your body at any time, in spite of the bread you eat. But here is absolute assurance of life, if you eat. What more could God do to induce you to eat? And remember that Christ is this bread because He gave Himself for you. Reflect upon that blessed truth especially now during this holy Passion season. Amen.

JUDICA

JOHN 13: 31-35

Therefore, when he was gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him. Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go ye cannot come; so now I say to you. A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

WE are drawing near the closing scenes of Christ's great work. In two weeks we shall celebrate the glorious resurrection of the world's Redeemer. But before that illustrious morn breaks upon us there will be a night of darkness. "The sun shall hide his face and shut his glories in." Our lessons are telling us that this night is near. The Sun of Righteousness with healing in His wings that arose so auspiciously is rapidly sinking in the west. So thinks the world, so judges human reason. But, strange to say and glorious is the fact, Jesus Christ does not think so. On the contrary as the shadows lengthen, as the night comes on, He sees beyond it beams of brighter glory than any that have fallen upon His past life. As the rose gathers material for its gorgeous colors, not only from the bright rays of the sun, but also from the vapors of night and from the dark damp earth at its roots, so does Christ find in that coming night a means for His own glorification and the glorification of the Father. That is one of the mysteries of divine grace and truth, that Christ could glory in His sufferings and that for us there is really nothing else to glory in except in the cross of Christ. In keeping with these thoughts let us this morning speak of:

DIVINE GLORIFICATION THROUGH THE CROSS:

First, the Son is glorified in Himself; secondly, the Father is glorified in the Son; thirdly, both the Son and the Father are glorified in believers.

1. *The Son is glorified in Himself*: "Now is the Son of man glorified." There are two ways by which a person may attain glory. A man receives glory by doing those things that are a credit and an honor to him. If a man's life is full of noble works, there is glory in them for the doer; his works declare his glory. So says the Psalmist, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork." And again he says, "All thy works shall praise thee, O Lord!" And of the god-fearing and industrious woman King Lemuel says that her works shall praise her in the gates. Such praise too is genuine honor and glory; it cannot be taken from the person. It may be denied by some and belittled by others, but it continues to stand because it rests upon solid worth.

The other way of receiving glory results from the first; it is when one is honored by others because of his works and his worth. Not only do the works speak for themselves, but men speak because of the works. We can never stop with the consideration of a work in itself, no matter how great and good it may be, we must go on to the person who did the work, and give him the honor that belongs to him. When Joseph interpreted Pharaoh's dream and pointed out the way to save the nation against famine, the king honored him with the second position in the kingdom. Daniel's wisdom made him a prince in Babylon. Here again it is genuine honor that comes to the person. Not all will agree to the honor; doubtless not all in Egypt bowed the knee to Joseph, or if they did, it was not done willingly. Yet the honor of such a man stands; it cannot be taken from him. It stands because it rests upon real worth.

In these ways was Christ also glorified. He was glorified in His own works and that, too, throughout His entire ministry. Such glory was His already as a child when He was subject unto His parents. It was His as a boy, for then already it was His great purpose to do only that which His Father had sent Him to do. At the age of twelve in the temple He said, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" And this was said not only for the honor of His Father, but it reflected at the same time His

own honor. But especially did His activity in His public ministry speak His praise; His teaching, His wonderful works, His going about and doing good, His love for all, His sympathy, His compassion, His great devotion to His work; all these things declared His greatness, His love, mercy, compassion, sincerity, earnestness and purity.

But when Jesus says in the text, "Now is the Son of man glorified," He has reference to some special work yet to be done: He is speaking of His impending death, which shall be the occasion of His greatest glorification both in heaven and upon earth. Jesus knew that His death was near; He speaks of the event as coming "straightway." They were in that upper room. Jesus and His disciples, eating the last Passover. When Jesus had dipped the sop and had given it to Judas, the betrayer went out. We know why. Then Satan entered into him as never before and he went out at once into the darkness and gathered the band to seize Jesus and to betray Him unto His enemies. The last scenes in the great work of redemption were soon to be enacted; and they were to surpass in import all that had gone before. All that had preceded was only preparatory; as the preparation of the Lamb for the slaughter. Now the atoning sacrifice was about to be offered; now that symbolic meaning of all the blood that for centuries had flowed upon Jewish altars should find its fulfillment in the blood of the God-man sacrificed for the sins of the world. Now man was about to be redeemed from sin, from death and from the power of the devil and be reconciled again with God. Therefore because of that impending death and because of what should speedily follow upon it Jesus said, "Now is the Son of man glorified."

We call attention here in particular to the importance which Christ attaches to His death. We do so frequently, because it is necessary. We must keep the cross of Christ ever before our eyes, not only during the season of Lent, but during every other season. It is not always best, nor is it always necessary to make comparisons as to the relative importance of different parts of Jesus' work, but if we want to make such comparisons, His death must always stand out as chief. His teaching was great, His wonders astonished the

world, His benevolence was upon every man's lips, but it was when He came near to the cross that Jesus said, "Now is the Son of man glorified." People then who praise Christ as a great teacher, a beloved philanthropist, a benefactor of His people, a model and inspiration for all nations find much in Christ indeed; but the greatest and best in Him they miss; they do not find in Him their Savior and Redeemer; they do not find that over which the angels already at His birth rejoiced when they sang, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will toward men."

But there is another part to this glorification of Christ. Christ is glorified not only by the work which He has done, but also by the glory which God bestows upon Him: "If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself." Christ here speaks of the glory that shall be conferred upon Himself in consequence of His death, the completing act in the great redemptive work. That glorification began with His descent into hell there to proclaim Himself conqueror over all His foes; it shone forth in His mighty resurrection, when He was raised up by the glory of the Father; it was declared especially by His ascension into heaven and His session at the right hand of God, in full and active possession of that glory which He had with the Father before the world was — for thus Jesus prayed, "O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." These things were the glorious fruit of His humiliation: "He humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Great, then, is the glory that belongs to Jesus Christ. Many great and good men lived before Jesus' day, many have lived since; but they are all lesser lights; indeed they shone only with borrowed light, for Christ Himself is the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

Wherever the Gospel of Christ is known there every other name pales as the light of the stars before the rising sun. Wherever the Cross has been planted, there no name is praised and honored, revered and adored, glorified and worshipped as the name of Jesus. And in heaven are ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands of voices saying, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing." — But our text speaks not only of the glory of Christ, but also of the glory of the Father, that:

2. *The Father is glorified in the Son:* "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him." You notice, Jesus does not say that the Father is glorified in the Son, but that God is glorified in the Son of Man. The former is of course also true, but here Jesus wants to bring out especially this fact that God, the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost is glorified through Him who is also man. Therefore He speaks of Himself here as the Son of Man. It brings God nearer to us; it bestows the great honor upon One who is of our own flesh and blood. It should make us feel that we have an interest in this glory, both of the Son of Man and of God Himself, and that we here have an opportunity, a privilege, yes, even a claim. It is a glory that is meant for us also and therefore we should rejoice in it.

But how is God glorified in the Son of Man? God is glorified in His works just as Christ is glorified in that which He did. We glorify God because He has built this beautiful world in which we live. There are great reasons here why we should glorify Him. Read the Psalms and notice how often men are called upon to praise the Lord for all His goodness and all His wonderful works. Even the trees are represented as praising Him. All streams and fountains and the hills and mountains clap their hands, and at the dawn of creation "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." We do well to keep in mind these admonitions to praise God for His goodness in the realm of nature. If we are not willing to praise God for this, we shall not find hearts to praise Him for

greater blessings. He who is not faithful in that which is least will not be faithful in the greater. He who does not recognize God's goodness in the kingdom of nature, will be slow to seek it and recognize it in the kingdom of grace.

But when we come to look for God's glory in the kingdom of grace, where do we find the most extraordinary and illustrious example of His goodness? Is it especially in this that God sent His Son to be a great teacher, a doer of miracles, a benefactor of His people, an example and inspiration for all the world? God could have raised up men to do these things even as there had been great prophets and teachers and exemplars before the time of Christ. Or God might have clothed one of His mighty angels in human form and sent him among the children of men to show us how to live. No, these things were not the greatest, not the all-important things; there was something which no man could do, however good and great he might be; something which no angel could do, with whatever heavenly might and glory he might be clothed. No one but the Son of Man, who is at the same time the Son of God, could do this; for what was required was an atoning sacrifice to still the wrath of God and to redeem us from our sin.

It is for this that we praise God above all things else; in the death of Christ in our behalf we see the greatest exhibition of God's goodness, love and mercy. In this, that God gave His only begotten Son, gave Him unto death, has God glorified Himself more than in all other works. Therefore Jesus says here that God shall be glorified in the Son of Man. Jesus was about to give Himself as an offering upon the altar of God's infinite love; all the world should come to know this and glorify God for it. God was glorified in the Son of Man throughout all His life: "I have glorified thee upon earth," said Jesus on the night of His betrayal, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." He spoke here in anticipation of that moment upon the cross when He said, "It is finished." In that act the glorification of God in the Son of Man attained its highest point.

Take these things to heart, people. You may have many things for which you need to thank and praise God.

Not a day passes in which you do not experience His goodness in many ways. But that which should elicit your praise above all things else, that which should be uppermost in your hearts, is the glorious truth that God gave His Son unto death and that the Son was willing to undergo the shameful death upon the cross, all to save you from your sins. If a friend has been very kind to you in times of trouble and need, you surely owe him many thanks; but if he at some time actually saved your life, should not that fact above all others call forth your thankfulness? That is what God has done for you in Christ Jesus; and the deliverance effected was not from mere bodily death, but from everlasting condemnation. There is still another kind of glory spoken of in our text, not only that of the Son of Man in Himself and that of God in the Son of Man, but also that:

3. *Both the Son and the Father are glorified in believers:* It is the same kind of glorification as the former, only in a lesser and imperfect degree. As God is glorified in that which the Son of Man did, so are both the Son and the Father and also the Holy Spirit glorified in that which believers do. And the work which believers are here called upon to do is summed up in a new commandment: "A new commandment I give unto you."

By way of introduction Jesus says, "Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, whither I go ye cannot come; so now say I to you." He had told the Jews, His enemies, that they could not come whither He was going. The emphasis was placed upon *could not*; they could not because of their sins, for they would die in their sins. He now tells His disciples likewise that they cannot come to where He is going — not at that time; later they also would follow Him. For the present, however, they would seek Him, for they would miss Him as we know they did when He was taken from them through death. This fact touched Jesus' heart and He was now moved to speak to them as a father about to leave his children. He leaves them a legacy, a parting admonition; and that admonition is that they should love one another: "That ye love one another; as I

have loved you, that ye also love one another." This is the new commandment.

But you will say, How can this be called a new commandment? Did it not exist from the beginning? When Cain killed Abel, did he not transgress this commandment? Is it not expressly stated already in the Law, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself"? And had not Jesus before declared that this is the second great commandment? Yes, yet there is something new here. The love of the old commandment had its basis chiefly in the fact that men are fellow-creatures, all of the same flesh and blood. We know that this feeling may become very strong even among men who do not know God; but when it becomes purified and strengthened by God's own Spirit, as in the cases of Ruth and Naomi, and Jonathan and David, then we find most striking examples of this love. But the love of the new commandment has its source in the grace and love of Christ and in the Spirit whom He gives. This was not fully known in the Old Testament, it could not at that time yet be fully seen or experienced; but now it was to become manifest, and to be realized in Jesus' disciples.

That love is to move us to love one another as Christ has loved us. He loved us so as to save us. So are we to love one another — attach ourselves to one another for that purpose. Two ship-wrecked men are upon one plank; it cannot bear them both. The one says, I will drop off that your life may be saved. The other says, No, but I will drop off that you may live. To help and to save one another is the nature of all love; but the love of Christ shows this quality as we see it nowhere else. Therefore He is our model: "As I have loved you."

But He is not only our model; He is also the source of our love. Because He first loved us, therefore we can love one another. Therefore, too, we are to love one another for Christ's sake. We should love our fellowmen already because they are fellowmen, because God is our common father. But we must go further, we dare not stop with "the brotherhood of man and the fatherhood of God." We must love our neighbor especially because he has been re-

deemed by the blood of Christ. This is not so easy, it does not come naturally. Bodily suffering readily enlists sympathy, but one may help here without a single thought of saving the soul through the redemption that is in Christ. Not so did Christ love His fellowmen. Jesus lamented when the cleansed lepers accepted only the healing of the body but not the healing of the soul.

But this is not yet all. Ye are to "love one another." Some may say: Is that not narrowing down the case? Is it not a kind of selfishness of which there is too much at present? No, Christ is showing where the right kind of love dwells and has its beginning. If you do not love those who are within, you surely cannot love those without. But if you do as Jesus did you will love those without likewise. Love that begins on the outside is not of the right kind. If when away from home you are kind and genial, but in your own family cross and grouchy, then understand that you have not yet caught the true spirit of love. If you are lovable with men of the world, but distant and cool among believers, then you have the spirit of the world and not of Christ. If you are all sunshine among members of other churches, but given to criticism, fault-finding and carping among your own brethren, then neither love to Christ nor true love to your fellowmen has yet found an abiding place in your heart. Love to outsiders under such circumstances is only a pretense and a sham. Think not that you are thereby serving God, nor that you have come rightly to know Christ. Love one another in Christ then will you also love others for the sake of Christ. There are many so-called fraternal organizations among men where love is made much of, but if it be not love of Christ, nor love for Christ's sake, it cannot pass for true and acceptable service in the sight of the blessed Master.

Of this love of the new commandment Jesus says, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." Jesus wants His disciples known as such. Through them and their works He and the Father are glorified: "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit." If, now, you are to be known by your love,

then love must be all-important. Paul names three great things: faith, hope and love, but the greatest is love. No matter how great your wealth, how brilliant your accomplishments, how profound your learning; men may admire you — stand amazed at the results of your doings; but if they do not find the love of Christ in you, they can not know you as His disciples. Note once more that these things are said of love to one another. The Church is often criticized for not loving those without; but the fault lies deeper, nearer the center; her members do not love each other as they should. Hence many things occur among Christians which injure their reputation. Continuous quarrels and jealousies in a congregation, for example, do not reveal love, nor can persons of such disposition be accounted as the right kind of disciples of Christ. Of the early Christians the world said, "See how they love one another." Amen.

PALM SUNDAY

JOHN 12: 1-8

Then Jesus, six days before the passover, came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead. There they made him a supper, and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him. Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment. Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's *son*, which should betray him, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein. Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this. For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always.

IN the progress of the church year we have entered Holy Week. It is the solemn season of the year when the Church commemorates in a special manner the suffering and death of our Lord Jesus Christ. It should be a precious season to us. Of all the great things that Jesus did for us nothing is more fundamental to our hope of salvation than His sacrificial death, followed by His glorious resurrection. We always appreciate highly that which costs much. Nothing in the world has cost so great a price as the salvation of our souls, not indeed in terms of gold and silver, but in what was infinitely more precious, the blood of Jesus. The price was not required of us, but of Him who loved us and gave Himself for us. These things should make the death of Christ precious to us, and the day of His death should be the red-letter day in the calendar of the Church.

But where so much has been done for us, there we should be prepared to do great things in return. We love God because God first loved us. In our lesson this morning we have a fine example of love and devotion shown to the blessed Master. Let us see what we can learn from

MARY'S LOVING SERVICE TO HER SAVIOR.

We shall notice in the first place:

1. *The nature of Mary's loving service:* We shall the better understand this deed of Mary if we first glance at her character and disposition. We met this beautiful character upon a former occasion when her sister Martha entertained Jesus at her house. There we found Martha very much busied with the preparation of the meal, while Mary sat at Jesus' feet and heard His words of grace. Martha was gently reprimanded for being cumbered about many things, while Mary was commended for choosing the one thing needful that could not be taken from her. That characteristic incident reveals Mary's inmost thought and purpose. She was doubtless willing to assume her share of the ordinary household duties, but these were only a very secondary matter with her. The center of her life and thought was Jesus and His blessed word. That was the sun in her world about which all things else revolved. She was therefore loath to miss any occasion where she could come in closer touch with the Sun of her life. In His light she found light, and not only light but also peace and joy as well as strength and courage for the realities of life.

Is this not the true philosophy of life, that we seize upon the chief thing, make that our own and then let all things else fall into their proper places? That philosophy will always hold us true to God's purpose with reference to us and to a final blessed outcome of life. When upon the former occasion we found Mary forgetful of present household duties, intent only upon hearing Jesus' words, one might think that it was only a sort of charmed spell into which she had fallen; that in a day or two it would pass off and she would lend the affection of her soul to some earthly passion just as ardently as she did to Jesus' words. But no, her character was permanent. She had laid hold upon the deep things of life and they kept her true at all times. Therefore upon this occasion we find Mary showing the same spirit of devotion to her Master. That is what we mean by the right philosophy of life — getting hold of

the vital things, the right things that are true and strong and lasting and which hold us firmly to life's great purpose. The vessel upon the sea is attacked by many storms that are likely to turn it from its course, but there is a strong hand at the wheel that holds the ship steadily to its course. Thus Mary, who had chosen the one thing needful was held steadily to her course in life, unmoved by the storms of passion that might divert a less stable heart. Upon the former occasion Mary's act of service consisted entirely in receiving from Jesus, in hearing His blessed word. That however is one of the highest honors we can render any man. No teacher is more highly honored than when he has about him a circle of ardent hearers. Jesus came to teach men and nothing pleased Him more than to have them listen with intent hearts. But upon this occasion Mary honored her Master by doing something for Him. And here again what she did was the most beautiful thing that could be done. The value of the ointment used was according to the business mind of Judas three hundred pence, in our money between forty and fifty dollars, certainly a great sum to be spent for a single bottle of ointment and for a single anointing. But the money value of Mary's act was only representative. The "ointment of spikenard, very precious," suggests the precious unction of Mary's soul, her love and devotion to her Master.

It is not an easy thing to serve God. Joshua said to the people of Israel, at the solemn assembly preceding his death, "Ye cannot serve the Lord: for he is an holy God; he is a jealous God, he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins." Joshua wanted the people to know that if they chose to serve the Lord they must be prepared to do great things for Him, to give Him the very best they had as well as to be deeply humble and contrite for their sins. It would not do for them to place polluted bread upon His altar, nor to offer Him the blind and the lame out of their flocks; God would not accept them. They must bring the very best bread, sweet and fresh from the oven, and offerings without spot or blemish. Nor would it suffice to tender the Lord

God an outward service without the heart—a cold formality without the warm affection of the soul

It was just in these things that Mary's service here was so precious. The precious character of the ointment showed how great and precious was her love. Doubtless Mary had no such sins to account for as that other woman who anointed Jesus' feet with her tears of penitence, yet Mary too was deeply conscious of her sinfulness. Here also was great humility, for she wiped her Master's feet with her hair. Here too was love—deep love, strong love, consecrating love, for Him who was about to give Himself for her.

It is said of this ointment that the house was filled with the odor thereof. You have already scented perfume in a room; every nook and corner was filled. It is a pleasant sensation. But there is something infinitely finer; it is the odor of a loving spirit, the scent of kindly deeds. Oh, that we realized what a precious thing love is in the sight of God! The angel that appeared to Cornelius in a dream said to him, "Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God." So precious were his devotions and his works of love that the sweet smell thereof had not only filled the house in which he was but had risen to the very throne of God.

And what we especially need to have impressed upon us here is the precious character of loving service to our Savior. We shall later speak of service to others; let us not forget that here it was Jesus whom Mary anointed. Do you often think of the fact that Jesus is your best friend, that no one in all the world has done so much for you — no parent, wife, or husband? We shall not here again point out what Jesus did for you. As His disciples you should know this. But do you think of these things oft? And do they give character to your life? You probably know persons of whom it is said that they are always the same — the same kindly expression on their face, the same courteous treatment, no matter where or under what circumstances you meet them. You like such people, you know they are true; they do not go by whims and spells and you can depend upon

their friendship. Such was Mary in her relation to Jesus; wherever she appears she is the same loving, devoted person. So should we be in our devotion to the blessed Master. We may not always have a full bottle of the precious ointment, we may not always be able to stand on the very top round of loving service to Christ; our devotion may not always be up to blood heat; we may not always bring in the very best of the flock and the choicest loaf, but we should strive that at all times there may emanate from our person the precious odor of the ointment of our love to Christ. The house should always be filled with the pleasant perfume. Its scent should always be plainly noticeable, no matter where we may be. Never should it be said of us: This person bears aloft the colors of the Christian, but the essence thereof I do not find.

There is another thing about this act of Mary that we must not overlook. Jesus remarked farther on, "Against the day of my burying has she kept this." This reveals a still deeper motive for her act. It is not love to Jesus on general grounds that appears here, but love that centers in His death. Jesus said of God that He so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. The greatest exhibition of God's love in all time is the giving of His Son unto death for a sinful world. Just so must that death of the Son of God for us sinful creatures awaken in our hearts the greatest, the highest, the purest love of which the human heart is capable. Is it any wonder then that Mary used such very precious ointment? She could not do otherwise. She was about to manifest the highest possible love of the human heart, and she must therefore use the most precious thing in all the world adequately to set forth her great purpose. It is not our purpose to inquire here whether Mary was conscious of anointing Jesus for His burial. Such is the interpretation that Jesus put upon her act, whether she herself was fully conscious of it or not. Jesus Himself beheld His impending death as the great act by which the world should be redeemed and hence as deserving of the greatest admiration and praise of His true followers. Let us get that thought of Mary's act. Christ died for us. Let that elicit our greatest love and

our warmest service. Let us embalm His death in our hearts as the precious and only remedy for sin and all its ills. — In the second place we shall consider:

2. *The disciples' criticism of Mary's loving service:* "Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?" From Matthew and Mark we learn that some, possibly all, of the other disciples entertained similar thoughts, but Judas was the spokesman and by his bold declaration carried the rest with him. There is, however, a suggestion of truth in this remark of Judas. One of the prevalent sins of the present day is prodigality, extravagance and wastefulness of the gifts which God bestows. And this is true not only of the rich, for they have it to spend; yet in their case too extravagance is sin. But we find the same vice among those who have it not — a perfect craze to be as lavish in their expenditures and as showy in their appearance as the rich. Many a man who for years has enjoyed good health and has had plenty of work at fair wages, nevertheless finds himself almost destitute if sickness interferes with his work or his employment ceases. The day is coming when the people of this land, as individuals, as families and as a nation, will suffer for their uncalled-for expenditures and senseless extravagance.

But economy, the best use of money, was not what moved Judas to speak upon this occasion. Strange to say, it is the Evangelist John, the apostle of love, who completely unmasks the rascal: "Now this he said, not because he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein." His motive therefore was neither economy nor charity, but the increase of his own purse. Judas had been chosen treasurer of the little company of Jesus and His disciples. Quite probably Judas was of a business turn of mind and was made the financier of the company for that reason. He was thus given opportunity to use his special gifts directly in the interests of the kingdom of God. He was to be a preacher of the Gospel just like the rest, but during these days of preparation he was in addition entrusted with the care of the common fund and made the necessary purchases. But he proved unfaithful. The evan-

gelist significantly states here that Judas was that disciple who should betray Jesus; and he did betray Him and, as we know, betrayed his Master for thirty pieces of silver. He had a weakness for money; he was greatly tempted along that line, and because he did not pray and watch sufficiently he fell — so deep did he fall that he could not be lifted up again.

When it is said here that he should betray Jesus, or as when it is elsewhere stated that the betrayal took place in order that the Scripture might be fulfilled, it is not to be understood as though Judas was forced into this act, that he did not do these things of his own free will; or that there was some resistless impulse that drove him on, an impulse that he *could* not and that the grace of God *would* not overcome; and that he was therefore helplessly borne on into the awful gulf as an empty and helpless boat is carried over a mighty fall in a river. If such were the case, Judas should be pitied and not blamed for what he did. But such was not the case. Judas did these things of his own accord. In spite of the daily influence of Jesus and in spite of Jesus' sharp warnings against the love of money, Judas clung to the money bag and laid his hand on that which was not his own. The fearful hold which the love of money had upon him may be seen especially in this, that under cover of charity for the poor he hoped to enlarge his own purse. To rob the contribution box for the poor is about as mean a piece of thievery as can be committed, and we sometimes hear of such things being done. Judas was not only trying to do that here, but practiced deception and hypocrisy in addition.

Let everyone take warning. The downward pull of sin is fearful and the delusion and seductiveness of the love of money are frightful. You have all been entrusted by the Lord Himself with the care of a purse; some with more, some with less. God has made you stewards over some measure of earthly goods and you are surrounded by the possibilities and the opportunities of making money and of increasing your possessions. Remember Judas, one of the twelve, under the direct influence and teaching of Jesus, and yet falling to such fearful depths. May you not be in even

greater danger of falling, under less strong influences for good and surrounded by possibly greater temptations? Judas finally committed suicide and the real cause was his covetousness. We hear of frequent suicides today, the number in fact is appalling. Do you notice that many of them are directly connected with some piece of speculation, and that many others are due to worry over financial conditions, even if no direct dishonesty is involved? Once more then let us take warning. Mammon, the god of wealth, is a bloody monster. And it is not only blood that he sheds, but the soul is eternally lost. — In the third place let us consider:

3. *Jesus' defense of Mary's loving service:* In addition to what John here reports Mark records, "She hath wrought a good work on me." Jesus thus came to Mary's defense and called her work a good work. But good in what sense? Judas did not see the goodness of it and made the suggestion for a better use of the money involved. Do we clearly see the goodness of Mary's act? We have already noticed that she therein showed her love and devotion to her blessed Master. Such an act is always a good work even though outwardly it may not appeal very strongly to our sense of what is useful or needful. Judas spoke only of the good which the value of the nard might have done the poor. He could not see Mary's act as an exhibition of her love and devotion. Love, gratitude, devotion, must show themselves in some way. If you have a friend whom you dearly love and to whom you are greatly devoted, you will show that love and devotion in some way; nor can others always prescribe to you just how you are to show your love. So our love and gratitude to God must show themselves. Ordinarily they will do so in accordance with Jesus' own words: Feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick, take in the stranger, for in doing these things to them ye do them unto Me. But love to God may show itself in another way also.

If a man of means builds a nice church or installs some fine art-glass windows or otherwise beautifies the house of God and does this from love to God — not of course for the purpose of making a show, nor of getting for himself a name — but solely to show his love and in that way to honor

his Savior, who can call that act in question or prove that God is not well pleased with the service? And such an act is not only a manifestation of the person's love, but it is also honoring God. There are other ways of honoring Jesus besides building cathedrals and donating costly windows. We can easily conceive of circumstances where it would be very wrong to use money for any such purpose. It would be folly and sin, for example, for a struggling mission to try to build a cathedral and it would also be sin if, in a community where there are many worthy poor who are suffering, a rich man would do nothing for the poor, but would use his wealth in beautifying the church beyond ordinary requirements.

Jesus Himself gives us the key to the situation when He says, as Mark records it, "Ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good; but me ye have not always." Jesus wants the poor cared for and He has given ample instructions on that point elsewhere. But if there are occasions when He can be served in some other manner, should we not do so? Here Mary could now anoint Him, a few days later she could not do so; therefore He was pleased that she did it now. Here is a mission, for example, that needs a church; now you have an opportunity to assist; in a few months perhaps they may not need your help, therefore do it now.

There is this implied too that the poor are not going to suffer at any time because of what you may do directly for Jesus. As a rule those who do most for Jesus and for the Church are also the most liberal toward the poor. And when you hear criticism of church people because they expend so much in beautifying their churches, look well to see whether it is not some Judas that is complaining.

However, let us at the close come back again to the main thought of our text, that this anointing was done for Jesus' burial. Here was one person, who seemed to see what was coming, that Jesus should die and die as the Savior of men. She hastens to show her love and her faith. This is a comfort to Jesus; it is a good work for Him. He sees that His work is bearing fruit, that even before His death men are

looking to that death as the hope of salvation. We see in Mary's act then a beautiful confession of Christ as the Savior through His atoning death. We therefore have that additional commendation of Mary's deed as recorded by Matthew: "Verily, I say unto you, wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her." What high praise! What a memorial Mary erected for herself! Not, however, with a costly pound of ointment — that was but an incident in the case — but with her precious love, with her deep devotion and with her strong faith. Amen.

MAUNDY THURSDAY

LUKE 22: 14-21

And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him. And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer; For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide *it* among yourselves: For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come. And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake *it*, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body, which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup *is* the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.

THE event described in our text is one of the most solemn in the whole history of the kingdom of God. The disciples did not realize it at the time; they doubtless did afterwards. Jesus, however, felt its full significance. Within a few hours He should be betrayed into the hands of sinners as He repeatedly declared; and on the morrow, after enduring unspeakable indignity and suffering, He should be nailed to the ruthless tree. We, too, should be impressed with the solemnity and the significance of the event, for we now know what these things meant for Jesus and what they mean for us. Especially should we here again feel the enormity of our sins and bow our heads in deep humility, for it was for our sins that Jesus gave His body and shed His blood. But on the other hand there is also occasion here for the greatest rejoicing, for this solemn feast was held and the blessed Sacrament instituted that we might have this additional means of grace to comfort our troubled hearts and to strengthen our weak faith.

Let us approach what Jesus here said and did with a simple child-like faith. Here are things which we cannot fully understand or explain. Christ did not mean that we should, at least not in this world, nor did He even for the twelve explain at length His words and actions upon this occasion. Let us leave the words stand just as they read

and let us in simple faith accept the facts as they are given. Our right view of the Sacrament as also the right reception of it is altogether a matter of faith. Therefore let us take our reason captive and only believe and we shall see the glory of the Lord.

It would be impossible in a short discussion to dwell fully on all that is contained in our text. We shall only undertake to answer three simple questions concerning

THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

First:

1. *What is the Lord's Supper?* In our catechism we say, "It is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, under the bread and wine, for us Christians to eat and to drink, instituted by Christ Himself." When we now look at the words of Christ as recorded in our text we see that the definition given in the catechism is correct. For of the bread He said, as He gave it to His disciples, "This is my body," and of the cup He said, "This is my blood." He gives us His true body, the body given upon the cross; and that was His true and real body; and He gives us His true blood, the blood shed upon the cross, and that again was His true and real blood. That Christ no longer possesses His body in its natural form as it was here upon earth does not change matters in the least, for though He now possesses a glorified body, it is still the same body that hung upon the cross, though now in a glorified state.

That His body and blood are given under bread and wine is also plain from His own words, for the bread remained bread and the disciples received it; and the wine remained wine and the disciples received that also; but with the bread and with the wine, in a heavenly and in a sacramental manner, which we, however, cannot explain, He also gives His body and blood.

That this body and blood are intended only for Christians to eat and drink is also clear, for He gave it to no one but His disciples.

That the Sacrament was instituted by Christ is likewise evident, for not only do the three evangelists, Matthew,

Mark and Luke, report Jesus as instituting the Sacrament on the night in which He was betrayed, but Paul likewise declares that he received the account of it from the Lord Jesus Christ.

In view of the fact that the doctrine of the real presence of Christ's body and blood in the Lord's Supper is so much disputed and that the Lutheran Church alone among all Protestant churches holds to this doctrine, it may be well to give a few additional passages in proof of her position. Paul says, (1 Cor. 10: 16) "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" The word "communion" here means a being together, and that the wine and the blood of Christ are in some way together, and that the bread and the body of Christ are also in some way together. That the Apostle is here speaking of the Sacrament is plain. They are therefore together in the Sacrament when the elements are received by those communing, and therefore the body and blood of Christ are really present. Paul again says, "Whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord." That is, such a person commits a sin against the body and blood of the Lord, and therefore that body and blood must be present in the Sacrament. Again the Apostle says, "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." That is, he uses the bread and the wine as common articles of food and does not consider that the Lord's holy body and blood are in communion therewith.

Let these remarks suffice. This is the simple testimony of the Scriptures as to what the Lord's Supper is. Nor should it be difficult for us to accept their testimony. It *will* not be difficult if we approach these words in simple faith. Remember who it is that speaks here. It is the Lord Jesus, the omnipotent God, who healed the sick with a word, opened the eyes of the blind with a touch, multiplied the loaves with His blessing, stilled the tempest with His command, raised the dead with His voice, came forth from the

grave by His own power, ascended to heaven in His glory and who at the right hand of God holds all power in heaven and on earth. Do not for a moment doubt these things. What Jesus said in instituting this Sacrament is true; and what He promised will be done. You cannot understand them, you say, neither can I nor any other mortal. But what of it? There are many things in the natural world about us, which we do not understand, yet we do not deny or even question them. Once more then, pray for a simple faith, be a child here and believe what your Lord and God says. — In this same childlike faith let us answer the second question:

2. *What does the Lord's Supper profit?* It is plain that the Lord had some gracious and benevolent purpose in view in instituting this Sacrament. He was about to undergo the most shameful suffering and a cruel death. He might have preferred to be alone on that evening that He might spend it in communion with His heavenly Father and get strength and comfort for the coming ordeal. Later in the evening Jesus did snatch a few moments for prayer in the garden, where He was visited by an angel from heaven and strengthened. But upon this occasion as at all other times Jesus was not thinking of Himself, of His own safety or glory; for He came not to be ministered unto but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many. Jesus' thought was of His disciples and of the future welfare of His Church. He therefore gathered the twelve about Him in order to celebrate with them the last Passover upon earth and to provide a sacramental blessing for them and the church for all time to come. What now is the profit, the blessing which this Sacrament is meant to convey?

Our catechism in speaking of the benefit of the eating and drinking in the Sacrament says, "That is shown us by these words, Given and shed for you for the remission of sins; namely, that in the Sacrament forgiveness of sins, life and salvation are given us through these words. For where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation." We are not to expect something new in this Sacrament in the way of grace not received elsewhere. It

is the same grace of God received in Holy Baptism. It is the same grace that is imparted by the Word when through the preaching of the Word you are brought to faith and receive forgiveness of sins, life and salvation. If the Lord's Supper offered you an entirely new grace — one different from the grace of Baptism and the Word — then could no one be saved unless he received this Sacrament. But there is no such teaching in the Bible. There is no other grace unto salvation than the grace of forgiveness of sins. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity." That was the Psalmist's blessed experience and Paul repeats the words for the comfort of all who believe. Where there is forgiveness of sins there is also life and salvation. When God forgives us our sins then does He look upon us as righteous and holy, or without sin, and He bestows upon us then every other grace and blessing needed for our full salvation in time and eternity.

But if there is no new or additional grace imparted in the Lord's Supper, why the Sacrament at all? Why should not Baptism and the preached Word have sufficed? It is because of God's bounteous goodness. You could live on bread and water and a few other simple foods, but behold the endless variety of eatables with which God in His goodness has provided you. So in the kingdom of grace God has made abundant provision for our souls so that in different ways we may receive the bread that nourisheth unto eternal life. He wants to make us sure in every possible way that there is forgiveness of sins.

This forgiveness of sins now is inseparably connected with the death of Christ. The Bible knows no other way of forgiveness except through the death of Christ. This fact is brought out most strongly in the Lord's Supper. The Sacrament is a memorial of His death. Paul says, "As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come." Jesus also expressly said of His body and blood as He instituted the Sacrament, Given and shed for you for the remission of sins. The whole Sacrament was designed to center our thought and interest

on Christ's death in our behalf, that through that death and through that alone we get forgiveness of sins. Therefore Luther is correct when he says that these words, namely, "given and shed for you for the remission of sins" are, besides the bodily eating and drinking, "the chief thing in the Sacrament, and he that believes these words, has what they say and express, even forgiveness of sins." These words are the Gospel in a nut-shell. Everything that we preach is summed up in this that Christ gave His body and shed His blood for the forgiveness of our sins. Upon forgiveness of sins every other gift follows, righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost; and these things, says Saint Paul, constitute the kingdom of God, for where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation.

Though there is no new grace here, yet there is something new in this Sacrament, and that new thing may also be called a grace; for it is an additional mercy of God that He provided this new way of assuring us of our pardon. The new thing is this that in addition to His word Jesus in the Sacrament also gives us His very body and blood. Is not that an additional assurance of your redemption? He does not only tell you that He gave His body and shed His blood for you, but He also at the same time gives you that broken body and that shed blood as the surest possible proof and seal of His atoning death for you. That too is the additional comfort which we get in this Sacrament, when we take Jesus' words literally and believe that with the bread and wine He gives us His real body and blood.

Furthermore, speaking generally of what Jesus said and did in instituting this Sacrament, there are three things that may be noticed: First, these things were done in the night in which He was betrayed. We can not well conceive of a more enormous sin than the betrayal of Christ on the part of one of His own disciples. Just in that very night, fully aware of what Judas would do, Jesus institutes this Sacrament for the forgiveness of all sins, even the sin of betrayal.

We should see assurance in this that however great our sins may be, Christ will forgive them with His broken body and shed blood, if only we come in true repentance and faith.

Secondly, you are assured here that *you have* the offering for sin; not that such an offering will be made, or that it was made at a certain time, or that there is somewhere such an offering; but that in this Sacrament, if you come in true repentance and faith, you actually receive, with the bread and wine, and hold and possess such offering for your sins. Thirdly, He says that we are to do these things in remembrance of Him. That should remind us of His faithfulness; He will always be mindful of the offering He made, that sacrifice will always avail for the forgiveness of sins, no matter what change may take place, or how many centuries may have rolled by, or what our condition in life may be, there is that all-sufficient offering for sin, unchangeable, the same yesterday, today and forever.

Such then are the great benefits to be found in this Sacrament, and he who believes these words has what they say and express, even the forgiveness of sin and with this forgiveness life and salvation. — In the third place:

3. *How is the Lord's Supper to be received?* Jesus Himself in instituting the Holy Supper said nothing expressly as to the manner in which it is to be received. However, the solemn manner in which the Sacrament was instituted, the purpose thereof, as we have observed, the persons also for whom it is intended and the elements and blessings that are thereby imparted, all these plainly indicate that the blessed Sacrament is to be received with due preparation and in a most holy manner. But the essential thing, according to Jesus' own teaching, in order to attain to that holy state of preparation is faith. It is through faith that we become children of God and true disciples of Jesus Christ, and only for such is the Sacrament intended; "For us Christians to eat and to drink."

Here again our catechism speaks with great plainness. "Fasting and bodily preparation is indeed a fine outward training; but he is truly worthy and well prepared, who has faith in these words, 'Given and shed for you for the remission of sins.' But he who does not believe these words, or doubts, is unworthy and unprepared. For the words, 'For you,' require truly believing hearts." When all em-

phasis is laid upon faith as the condition of worthiness, the thought is this; faith is the means by which we receive forgiveness of sins and the righteousness of God. Through faith we accept Christ and His atoning death; and for the sake of God Christ forgives our sins and declares us righteous, just and holy. God now looks upon us no longer as sinful, but, being in Christ Jesus, as holy and without sin, indeed as though we had never committed any sin and as though we had fulfilled all the Law; for all these things have been done for us by Christ and that fulfillment has become our own through faith. The thought then is not this, that faith is the only thing we have, but that through faith we have all those things that are needed to make us true children of God and worthy recipients of the blessed Sacrament.

The classical passage on right preparation for the Lord's Supper is Paul's solemn explanation and admonition: "Who-soever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." These solemn words call for prayerful preparation. Do not think, however, that Paul wants to frighten you away, or that you should come with fear and trembling. If you invite people to a dinner, you expect them to come cheerfully and joyfully. The very motive of the occasion makes that necessary, for it is a festival occasion. You may ask the guests to observe certain rules and forms, but you want them to feel free and to be cheerful and happy.

Jesus expects the same at this great feast. He has the greatest possible things to offer us, as we have seen. He wants us to come with great desire, feeling certain that He wants to do us good, and only good.

Yet Paul's call for examination has a solemn purpose. Just because the blessing offered in the Sacrament is so great and the elements received are so holy, even the body and blood of Christ, therefore any abuse of the Sacrament must

be accounted an awful sin. Therefore we need to examine ourselves; and this examination pertains in general to two things, the one being our faith in Christ. Do you have that faith? Do you really look upon Christ as your Savior through His shed blood? Is your faith also of the heart, not a mere saying that you believe, but an actual faith and trust of the heart? Such a faith is at the same time faith in the Sacrament, that in the Sacrament He give with the bread and wine His body and blood as seals of your redemption and of the forgiveness of sin. The other thing to which this examination pertains is your life. Sometimes we are not sure of our faith until we look at our life, for by their fruits ye shall know them. Our life must be in harmony with our faith, otherwise something is wrong. But the thing above all others in our life that needs watching is our relation to sin. True faith and right preparation call for true repentance, to know and feel our sins, to turn from them, to walk in the ways of God, in holiness before Him and in righteousness and peace with our fellowmen. Amen.

GOOD FRIDAY

LUKE 23: 39-46

And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering, rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise. And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst. And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.

FOR weeks the Church has been meditating much on the Passion of Christ. As Christians we indeed never lose sight of the suffering and death of our Savior, for it is Christ and Him crucified that must be preached. But just because Jesus has become our Savior through His death, therefore the Church at this season of the year dwells especially upon the incidents, significance and importance of that death. We want that death to take a strong hold upon us so that we may draw from it comfort and strength.

We have followed our Savior along through His life. We first met Him at Bethlehem; we followed Him to the temple, to Egypt, back to Nazareth; later we again found Him at the temple; when He began His public ministry we met Him at the Jordan seeking baptism and then we beheld Him in the wilderness being tempted of the devil; afterwards He returned to the Jordan seeking disciples and then He continued His work, incessantly teaching and preaching and doing miracles, going from city to city, visiting every nook and corner of the land; then at length after about three years of work we followed Him to Jerusalem for the last time; we saw Him at Bethany; we followed Him to that upper chamber, to the garden, to the high-priest's palace, to Pilate's judgment hall; we followed Him

as He bore His cross outside the city wall and here we now stand on Calvary's hill and witness the Son of man, the

CHRIST LIFTED UP.

It is an awful scene, words could not describe it, even if we should attempt a description. The sacred account gives us all the description we need. Let us dwell on those things that come nearest to the interests of our souls. In speaking of this lifting up of the Son of Man let us consider in the first place:

1. *The necessity of it:* Jesus Himself was aware of the necessity of His death from the very beginning. In the beginning of His ministry Jesus said at His first cleansing of the temple, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." Neither the Jews nor the disciples knew at the time just what He meant, but at a later day the Evangelist could write that "he spoke of the temple of his body," namely, that His enemies would put Him to death, but that He would rise again the third day. A little later Jesus said to Nicodemus in that wonderful conversation which He had with him at night, that "as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up." From the very beginning Jesus therefore knew what was before Him, what obedience to His heavenly Father required, what a bitter cup He must drink and with what a cruel baptism He must be baptized.

Jesus also steadily kept that death in view in all His teaching and work. During about two and a half years of His ministry He did not speak of the matter frequently nor in express terms. The disciples were not able to receive it. But during all this time the matter must have weighed heavily upon His own mind. At one time He said, "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straightened till it be accomplished?" We are not to suppose that because Jesus was divine His impending death did not at all disturb His mind or affect His soul — that there was no dread at all and no fear as in the mere human heart. In Hebrews we read that Jesus in the days of His flesh "offered up prayer

and supplications with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared." The climax of this praying and of these fears we find in the garden where He thrice besought His Father that if it were possible the cup might pass from Him, but doubtless His whole public ministry was marked with crying and tears, though not apparent to the human eye.

If now the necessity of Jesus' death weighed so heavily upon His own mind; if it so filled Him with fear and distress, that He even prayed that if possible He might be spared the ordeal; how should not the death of Christ weigh heavily upon our minds — the necessity thereof, that in no other way could man be redeemed and saved? And how can anyone think of eliminating Jesus' death from the redemptive work and still look upon Him as a Savior. No, "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission." The Son of Man *had* to be lifted up, otherwise there could be no salvation. Therefore when the time of His offering drew nigh Jesus began to show unto His disciples, "How that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed." These things must be, there is no other way, there is no escape. If man is to be saved the Son of Man must die.

And when we now ask more particularly what occasioned this necessity, our answer must be that it was sin. "The wages of sin is death." "The soul that sinneth it shall die." "Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things of the law to do them." These are declarations of God's holy Law. They declare that in the justice and righteousness of God everyone who commits sin forfeits his life. His life is the price he pays for his sins. It is an awful price, but it is fixed by the Lord God Himself in His eternal righteousness. Men may not understand just why it is so; it may seem unreasonable to them; by the dim light of their reason they may even declare the penalty unjust. But it is all of no avail, it does not change matters in the least. God's will and Law are going to stand, no matter what men may think or say or do. The sun may shine very

hot and in the burning drought consume the farmer's crops; he may raise loud objections and even lift his hand in cursing God, but it avails nothing, the sun and the drought keeps on burning until the Lord Himself is pleased to send refreshing rain. It is useless to resist the Almighty, either in the kingdom of nature or in the kingdom of grace. It is God's eternal law that sins shall be punished with death and men must abide by it. But the glory of it is that in the end we shall see that His law is holy and good and even merciful.

Here then is the necessity of Christ's death. The penalty of sin is death. Man could not pay that penalty and live; to pay it would mean eternal death, everlasting condemnation. To deliver us from that fate the Son of God became man and took upon Himself our sins that He might with His own precious blood and holy life pay the penalty and deliver us with a mighty deliverance. For it is not the life of a man only that is here offered, but the life too of the very Son of God. A great penalty had been imposed, a great life was given and now we rejoice in a great deliverance.

Jesus therefore could not look upon His work in any sense as completed until this offering had been made. He had done with His teaching about all that could be expected to be done. He had wrought mighty works sufficient to show that He was the Christ, but the greatest, the most essential thing, yet remained to be done. Not until the great offering was made could He say, "It is finished." Now, too, that great veil in the temple that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies could part, and throw open the great sanctuary to all men; for now free access to God was granted, not by blood of bulls and goats, but by the blood of the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world. Our great High Priest has entered once into the most holy place and has procured eternal redemption for us.

Let us get the full significance of Christ's death. All righteousness had been fulfilled, for the Lamb that was here slain was holy, without spot and without blemish, Christ having done all the will of God in every particular. All sins

atoned for, nothing left to be required of us in the way of making satisfaction for sin. The great debt has been canceled, every whit of it; the hand-writing against us is blotted out; no charges can be brought against us, for the whole account has been balanced in the blood of God's only Son. We are reconciled with God and, of course, God with us and so there need be no further fear. When you become reconciled with a man you are not always sure that his anger has been appeased; but here there can be no question, God can never again become an enemy of those whom His own Son has redeemed and who have accepted that redemption. The summary of the whole work is this, that eternal salvation is provided for all who will accept it. — But this brings us fully to our second part. The necessity of Christ's lifting up is evident, let us now look at:

2. *The benefit of it:* Two malefactors were crucified with Jesus, one on the right and the other on the left. The prophet had already declared that He should be "numbered with the transgressors." The divine purpose in having the Savior of the world put to death in company with evil-doers was to bring out forcibly His relation to them. He was not among them as an evil-doer sharing their guilt, for He was without sin, neither was guile found in His mouth; but He was among these evil-doers in their stead, suffering the divine and eternal curse for them.

We should pause to think also that the men who were crucified with Jesus were not ordinary transgressors. Death by crucifixion was a cruel form of punishment even among the Romans; it was a form of punishment invented for the worst criminals. Luke tells us that these two men were malefactors, doers of evil deeds; that seems to have been their occupation. Matthew and Luke call them thieves, not that they stole once only, perhaps under the stress of hunger, but stealing was their profession — possibly highway robbers; and if their hands were stained with the blood of their victims that should not surprise us. Men they were then who had well-nigh lost every feeling of humanity; no deed was too cruel for them, if only they could thereby gain their own selfish end.

In company with these men Jesus was crucified — men whose practice it was to sacrifice others for their own gain, while He sacrificed Himself for their gain. In the sand of Calvary the most innocent blood of Jesus mingled with the most guilty blood of men. And when we yet consider that these men may be regarded as representing the whole human race for which Christ died, and hence us also, we should surely hang our heads in shame. Malefactors they were, evil-doers, thieves, robbers, murderers, cut-throats. That, my friends, is the moral or rather immoral blood that flows in our veins by nature. We are evil-doers; that's our profession by nature. There is not a precept in all God's holy law that we have not trampled under foot.

And yet, behold the love and mercy of God. Jesus Christ chooses to die between these malefactors that He might save them. Looking at it from this point of view we are glad that Jesus in His death was associated with thieves. It gives us the assurance that no man's sin is so great that it cannot be blotted out in the blood of Jesus. If Jesus had been crucified with ordinary sinners we might feel that His blood might possibly not reach to the depths of human depravity, that the ordinary transgressor may be saved, but that there is no hope for the real malefactor. But now there can be no question. James and John had requested of Jesus that they might sit, the one on His right hand and the other on His left in His kingdom. Here in His death, on the very threshold of His kingdom, He places a malefactor on His right and a thief on His left, to show that even these are welcome in His kingdom if only they repent. And to make it absolutely certain that such are His intentions, He takes one of these thieves with Him to Paradise. Oh, the wonder of God's love and mercy!

But let us here now notice the twofold result of Christ's death as shown in the two malefactors. We should leave to the learned the fact that Matthew and Mark represent both thieves as reviling Jesus, while Luke represents only one as doing so. It is sufficient for our purpose here to say that at the first both may have joined with the priests and the sol-

diers in reviling the Savior, the one, however, with more bitterness than the other, but that the latter later on reflected and changed his reviling to a plea for mercy. The one thing that we should here note in particular is the fact that though Jesus was pouring out His blood alike for both, only the one received the benefit. Because of his impenitence and hardness of heart Jesus could do nothing for the other. As the waters of a brook wash the rock lying upon its border but do not fructify it, so the blood of Christ trickled hard by the cross of the impenitent thief but did not soften his heart. He could not do a thing for the man, He said not a word to him; for what Jesus was here doing and suffering spoke louder to the heart than any words which He might have uttered. He simply left that man to his fate.

Oh, it is an awful thing to be left of Jesus — to be passed by! Notice how Jesus did that all along in His life. He had some hot combats with His enemies, but He never did more than to characterize them and to foretell their doom. He never raised His hand to touch them, either for a blessing or for a curse. He simply left them to their fate. When He describes some of the scenes at the judgment, He simply says to the impenitent, "Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity, I know you not." He does nothing to them, He simply sends them to the place whither they themselves had been going all the years of their life. That is enough. Sin is its own tormentor, its own executioner. But it is an awful fact, a solemn thought that when the sinner has gone his full length and has persisted in rejecting Christ till the last, Christ then simply leaves him to his fate. Let the impenitent pause and tremble at that fact. There is where dark despair begins to show his horrid form, there is where the blackness of hell begins to appall.

From this dark scene we turn to a more pleasing fact. To one we are the savor of death unto death, to another the savor of life unto life, said Saint Paul. That is the double effect of the cross of Christ. The one malefactor goes to his own place in impenitence, the other is lifted up in hope. Why the one thief repented and the other did not is, of course, a mystery to us. We shall not here speak of it.

In some way by the grace of God this man's eyes were opened that he saw in that humble meek form on the middle cross the Savior of the world. He had heard Him called the Son of God, the King of the Jews, and that He had saved others; he had seen the daughters of Jerusalem weeping for Him — had heard the jeers of the rabble, the reviling of the Jews and the mockery of the soldiers — had himself, it appears, joined in the reproach, but had also seen how Jesus meekly bore it all, with not a word of retort, with only an indescribable look of pity and with that most gracious prayer, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." These things were enough for this man, for by them the Spirit of God touched his heart, opened his eyes and loosed his tongue so that he could see his own sins, confess his guilt and plead with Jesus for acceptance, "Lord remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." This man's time was short and the outlook hopeless; it was a time of extremity, something must be done at once else all is lost. A certain writer says, "If a man really learns in such seasons, the teaching of years may be compressed into moments, and the dying thief on the cross might outdistance the knowledge gained by Apostles in their years of following Christ."

But whatever the full explanation of the thief's repentance at the eleventh hour may be, the thing at which we rejoice today especially, is the fact that he could repent and that he was accepted. "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise"; that is the bleeding Savior's gracious answer to the dying thief's believing prayer. Let this penitent criminal represent the multitudes that have come to know their sins and in like manner pray for mercy.

Here is the answer for one and all: Not a word is said about the man's sins; and it was not because there was no time. Jesus could have taken time or made time if it had been necessary. But that was not His way. In all His life He had not dwelt upon the past sins of those who had come to Him in penitence. The whole past was covered up with the mantle of forgetfulness. "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more," is one of the standing prom-

ises of the Lord God. Let all the earth hear the answer that comes from Calvary. Whatever your sins, however great they may be, however many they may be, however long you may have lived therein and however late the hour of your turning, only repent and believe and you shall hear the words, "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise." Amen.

EASTER SUNDAY

MATTHEW 28: 1-10

In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first *day* of the week, came Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary to see the sepulchre. And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead *men*. And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here; for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you. And they departed quickly from the sepulchre, with fear and great joy, and did run to bring his disciples word. And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him. Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren, that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.

THE resurrection of Christ is an historical fact that requires faith. For one thing we must believe that resurrection in order to be sure of it. The fact of Christ's resurrection is often denied. The evidence that supports it is held by some not to be sufficient. Over against such denial the Christian must believe and he does believe, for he has other evidence than that which is merely historical; he has come to know Christ and "the power of his resurrection."

The resurrection of Christ requires faith also because it is of vast significance for man. If it were only an ordinary historical fact it might matter little whether one believed it or not. But upon that resurrection depends our completed redemption, for "if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins." Upon that resurrection depends our hope of eternal life, for "if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." Upon that resurrection depends our own resurrection, for the order is, "Christ the first fruits; afterwards they that are Christ's

at his coming." The resurrection of Christ requires faith also, because the blessed fruits thereof can be enjoyed only through faith. To deny Christ's resurrection is to deny Christ Himself. To ignore it is to ignore Christ Himself and His redemptive work. In either case one rejects the resurrection of Christ and cannot enjoy the blessed fruits thereof.

Let faith then fill our hearts this morning as we stand around the empty sepulchre and say:

"THE LORD IS RISEN INDEED."

On the basis of Matthew's account of the resurrection we must say in the first place that there is here:

1. *A great manifestation of divine power in behalf of man:* The earthquake that occurred early on the first day of the week was a manifestation of divine power. An earthquake is of course a phenomenon of nature, though to this day a phenomenon that has not been satisfactorily explained; but whatever its explanation, for the Christian it is a manifestation of the awful power of God in the realm of nature and therefore an evidence of His power also in the realm of spirit. This earthquake furthermore was of special significance just because it occurred in conjunction with Christ's resurrection. We may not be able to say fully just what the connection was, but that there was a connection the believer does not doubt; neither does he doubt that God is the Lord both in nature and over the bodies and souls of men.

Again, that an angel descended and rolled away the stone from the door of the sepulchre was a manifestation of divine power. The everyday ministry of angels is already something miraculous, something beyond our senses and understanding. Much more is it a manifestation of divine power and glory when an angel is sent upon a special errand as was this one, not only to roll away the stone that the women might witness to the empty sepulchre, but also orally to deliver the glorious message that the Lord was risen indeed. Again, that the angel's face was like lightning and his raiment white as snow was of special significance. Men

are not accustomed to seeing angels, especially not in such form as this one appeared. Again, that the keepers of the sepulcher did shake with fear and became as dead men was a further manifestation of divine power. These men were Roman soldiers and doubtless they were strong, brave men; but here their courage failed them and they became utterly helpless.

All these things were manifestations of divine power, glory and majesty. But the greatest manifestation, the most stupendous, was the resurrection of Christ itself. Death is overwhelmed by the omnipotence of God, his prey is snatched from his lair and He stands forth as conqueror who declares, "I am he that liveth and was dead, and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen. And I have the keys of hell and of death."

But what shall we say of this manifestation of divine power? What is its purpose, its significance? For one thing, it shows that such a power exists. There is a power that can shake the earth, that can clothe invisible messengers in human form and with heavenly glory and send them upon earth; a power that can strike terror into the stoutest human hearts and that can snatch the prey from the very grip of death. And not only that, but for the believer there is the conviction that this power is none other than the power of God — God the personal Creator of every living thing, the Ruler of all the world and the shaper of the destinies of men.

But there is another fact that is, if possible, even more important. The manifestation of divine power in connection with the resurrection of Christ shows that God uses His power in behalf of men. The earthquake showed that God could use any power in nature to carry into effect His beneficent plans; those terror-stricken Roman soldiers show that God has in derision all human schemes, counsels and raging whereby they would seek to circumvent His power and grace; that heavenly messenger shows that the invisible world of spirits must work together for the rescue of men from the power of death. All these events took place in behalf of the

resurrection of Christ, but the resurrection of Christ was in behalf of men.

Here then is a great truth, a great fact for men to lay hold of. We constantly see about us exhibitions of God's almighty power; we feel it in the earthquake's tremor; we see it in the storm's fury; we witness it in the lightning's flash and in the thunder's roll; we are made aware of it by the power of disease and in a hundred other ways. What fear would seize us if this power were in the hand of a blind fate, or of a wrathful, vengeful God? Whither could we flee for succor? But when we are assured that it is the merciful God who wields all this power and that He wields it in our behalf for our everlasting salvation, then we lift up our heads and take courage; none of these things move us, for God Himself is our refuge. But the enemies of Christ; — let them fear. Ye men that hear the simple story of Christ's resurrection and deny it, ye who guard His sepulcher as though the Christ still lay there in the embrace of death; ye who deny that He lives and rules and saves men — fear ye, for He lives, yes, He lives, holding in His own hand all the power manifested at His resurrection, ready to be wielded to the everlasting destruction of His foes. — In the second place the resurrection of Christ is:

2. *The occasion for man's greatest rejoicing:* In certain respects the women who came early to the sepulcher had the same reason to fear because of the presence of the angels as the keepers. They witnessed the same sights as did those soldiers and being defenseless women they had even greater reason to fear. But to the women the angel said, "Fear not." Why did he thus allay their fear, but leave the guards to cower in their agony of fright? To answer that question is to say why at the second coming of Christ to judgment some will lift up their heads and rejoice, "for their redemption draweth nigh"; while others will say to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand." Those women were there for a different purpose than the men; they were there on an errand of love while the men were executing the mandate of wicked hate;

they were ready to hope and believe while the men represented those who had closed their hearts and ears to every evidence of the Messiahship of Christ. Therefore the angel said to the women, "Fear not," while the men were left stunned and confounded in their blindness.

Nor did the angel speak in vain; neither did the women hear in vain, for their hearts were filled with joy. They also feared; that was natural, for their faith was weak and they were still sinful. But that fear was only transient, only a momentary shock. Love soon cast out fear and faith soon taught them that the heavenly messenger was there to bless, not to curse; to bring good news, not to pronounce condemnation. How like the scene upon Bethlehem's plain when the shepherds were "sore afraid" at the angel and the glory of the Lord, but were instantly pacified with the message, "Fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy."

This company of women found rejoicing because their hope had been centered upon Jesus and because by the angel's word, "He is risen," that hope was revived again. They had neither fully understood the words and teachings of Jesus, nor His works. They, with the rest of the disciples, were waiting for the kingdom of God. But that kingdom as Jesus revealed it in His teachings and represented it in His works and life, and especially in His death, did not coincide with their own ideas and expectations. It was a sad disappointment therefore, yes, a terrible shock, when their Master was crucified. Those hopes that for three years had been growing were suddenly blighted; those expectations of future glory and greatness that had been raised were in a day dashed to the ground. Oh, what sadness, what gloom, what sorrow in that disciple circle!

Yet withal there was some hope left; the bruised reed was not broken, the smoking flax not quenched. That's the great difference between some men and others; some will not believe, others are ready to believe so soon as the light shines in upon them. Such were these women; such were all the disciples; some like John believed at the first evidence; others like Thomas did not believe, until the last proof had

been offered. So soon therefore as these women saw the empty sepulcher and heard the words "He is risen," their hope took wings and bore them up. It was like the bursting forth of the sun after days of cloud and gloom. Not until those sainted women entered the portals of paradise itself did occasion for such rejoicing again present itself.

Here, too, is the source of all our rejoicing. Our hopes are grounded upon Jesus Christ. Nowhere else do we find any comfort. Even over against mere earthly danger Christ is our refuge. As He healed the sick, fed the hungry, and stilled the tempest while here upon earth in the flesh, so is He still the Lord that healeth us. Neither earthquakes nor storms, neither the pestilence that walketh in darkness, nor the destruction that wasteth at noonday, can harm us when Jesus is our friend.

But it is over against sin and death and hell especially that Christ has become our refuge. Our sins cannot condemn us, for He has fully atoned for all our guilt and "there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." We are free from condemnation, not because we have committed no sins, for we have; not because sin is not sin, for sin is exceedingly sinful; not because we have laid our sins aside, for we are still weak and sinful; not because we have merited forgiveness, for we have merited nothing but God's eternal wrath; but we are free alone because the Son has made us free and therefore we are free indeed. Not only are we free from the guilt and condemnation of sin but we are even righteous in the sight of God. Christ fulfilled all righteousness for us and through faith His fulfillment becomes our own. God sees not our sins and unworthiness, but the merits and worthiness of Christ. Christ is our justification before God, not our own works nor holiness of life. Nor is that all. Christ has also given us the Holy Spirit to dwell in our hearts, to keep us in faith and to lead us in the way of holiness. Christ it is then who has made us sons of God and heirs of everlasting life, and therefore do we rejoice.

But all this is so because Christ lives; for "if Christ be not raised your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins." No

redemption has been accomplished, no kingdom of God established here upon earth. All the teachings of Christ, all His works, all His promises of future glory, fall to the ground as untimely fruit. Just that was the fear of the disciples when Jesus was laid in the grave, that there was now an end to all their hopes and expectations; even more, that He whom they adored and worshiped must have been an impostor. Said we not, may the enemies of Christ have spoken, that He is not a prophet, that He is a sinner, that He is in league with Beelzebub? But His glorious resurrection on the third day as He had said, shut the mouth of the accuser and sealed the lips of the blasphemer.

So there is rejoicing today too because Christ lives. The angel's greeting of peace upon Bethlehem's field would be mockery to the world if the angel on Easter had not said, "He is risen"; the gloom of Good Friday would still be a pall upon all the earth if the Sun of Righteousness had not risen on the third day.

That Christ lives certifies the atonement of our sins. If death could have held Him the life He gave would not have been a sufficient sacrifice for sin. But death held Him not, therefore do we know that He is the Lamb that taketh away the sin of the world.

That Christ lives certifies our justification, "for he was delivered for our offenses and was raised again for our justification." We know that His fulfillment of the law and of all righteousness was complete in the sight of God and that in Him we are therefore fully justified before God.

That Christ lives assures us of victory over death. Of His own will Christ laid down His life for us, but of His own will He took it up again. Therefore we say, "Death is swallowed up in victory, O death, where is thy sting, O grave, where is thy victory?"

That Christ lives assures us of our own resurrection, for Christ is the first fruits, but we shall follow Him in glory.

In one word the raising up of Christ by the glory of the Father (Rom. 6:4), assures us that the whole work of redemption through Christ has been accepted at the court of heaven as complete and perfect, so that we have a foundation

sure and immovable upon which to build. For these reasons do we say that the resurrection of Christ is the occasion for the greatest rejoicing among men. — In the third place the resurrection of Christ:

3. *Affords us the opportunity for the greatest service:* When God makes us partakers of some great blessing He expects us to share it with others. “Love thy neighbor as thyself” implies that. To refuse to do so is the essence of selfishness. The greatest good for the disciples at this time was the word that Jesus had risen. Remember, they had left all to follow Him, all their hopes and expectations for the future centered upon Him. But all these their hopes were dashed to the ground when Jesus gave up the ghost. Now, however, they instantly revive, yes, soar higher than ever; there is no limit now to the possibilities of that kingdom which they have chosen. Therefore should they be the messengers to all the world to tell all nations, Jew and gentile, that there lives a Savior able to save even unto the uttermost.

The women early at the sepulcher first learned the glorious news. It came then first of all to be their duty to bear the news to others. Therefore the angel tells them to go quickly: Lose no time, do not keep them in suspense, bring them the light, the cheer, that their hope may revive. Doubtless this was the greatest service that these women at any time were permitted to perform — to tell the despondent disciple circle that their Master lived. What a blessed service! And what preeminence in love and devotion to the Master has woman not gained by being first at the sepulcher and first to bear the message that the Redeemer lives! Need we wonder that they had “great joy” when they rose to bring His disciples word?

But this service we are all called upon to render, of course not under just the same circumstances. There is no company of men cast down because the Savior has been slain and does not live again. There are such as deny His resurrection, but for them Christ is no Savior and hence they have no sorrow. But there are multitudes cast down under the weight of sin. Many know it not and yet their sins are

upon them. They need to be told, their conscience needs to be awakened, their sins need to be pointed out that they may see and feel and cry out as did the Psalmist for God, for the living God, and that they may then be brought to the Redeemer who lives to make intercession for them. Many know their sins and feel them, in a measure at least, but they have not yet found redemption; the peace of God which passeth all understanding has not yet filled their hearts. There has been no Philip to bring them to Jesus, no woman to tell them that the Redeemer lives.

Shall not we go upon this errand — go quickly and lose no time? Is it not our greatest joy that the Savior lives? and if that be our greatest joy will it not be their greatest joy likewise? And if it is our greatest joy and their greatest joy, where is there a greater service that you and I can render? O for more of that spirit of self-sacrifice which we see in the disciples who left all to follow Him, of those women who with their ointment of love were early at the sepulcher; yes, of Christ Himself who tasted death for us, that we might live. O for more of that self-sacrificing love in these days of worldliness and selfishness, in order that all the earth might be full of Easter messengers, bearing to others the welcome news that the Lord is risen indeed. Amen.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

JOHN 21: 15-19

So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, *son* of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, *son* of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon' *son* of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep. Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry *thee* whither thou wouldest not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.

IT is generally held that our text is an account of the reinstatement of Peter as an apostle of Jesus Christ. By his threefold denial of his blessed Master he had fallen from his high state of honor, for he had not only been called to be an apostle, but had also been given the pre-eminence among his fellow-disciples. The sin furthermore, which he had committed against his blessed Master was in itself a most grievous offense. These conditions made it necessary in the estimation of Christ that a special and somewhat formal restoration of Peter should take place. The account in our text is the only one we have of any such action. What Jesus may have previously said or done to Peter relative to this matter, we do not know. All we have on the subject is given us here and therefore we may look upon this transaction as the

RESTORATION OF PETER TO THE APOSTLESHIP.

The risen Christ appears in the scene as the good Shepherd acting in the interest of His flock. In the things recorded here there are two facts which stand out very prominently. Any one reading the account cannot help but notice

them. The one is love to Christ, the other service for Christ. First then:

1. *Love to Christ*: It must be plain to us that Jesus here makes love to Himself the one great condition of restoration. You are My disciple; you shall be My apostle, if you love Me. Let us not lose sight of that fact as we go along. Making love the condition of restoration does not exclude other things that may be required, but it does set forth love as the chief and the preeminent thing. Jesus does this in three distinct questions each one requiring a separate answer, even though the answer be much the same.

First of all, we should notice that Jesus does not address His disciple with his title of honor, namely, Peter; for when Jesus first met him he was known as Simon; but Jesus gave him a new name, namely, Peter, which means a rock; and Simon ever after carried that name as a sort of honorary title. But here Jesus did not use it. He addressed him by his old name, Simon of Jonas. This was meant to remind Peter of his natural state, how through the act of denial he had fallen back into that state and how Jesus must now begin with him again at that point.

Then too it will help us better to understand the motive of Jesus if we consider the fact that the word "love" here has two meanings, a lower and a higher; for in the original Greek two different words are used. The lower kind of love is more of the nature of mere personal attachment, while the higher form is more the fruit of higher knowledge and intelligence which consider the real truth and weigh the things that endure. The lower is more the love of feeling while the higher is more the love of reason and understanding. When Jesus says of God that He so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, He uses the word for the higher form of love.

Accordingly Jesus said to Peter, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?" Lovest thou Me with that higher kind of love that rests on real knowledge and understanding and not on mere feeling and personal attachment? And then too, Dost thou love Me more than these, for thou saidst on that memorable night, "Though all men

shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended"? Dost thou say that now and art thou able to make good thy profession in thy life and by thy works? Peter answers, "Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee." He does not directly declare his love for Jesus, for he now sees that it would be useless to lay claim to such love if he did not have it, for Jesus would at once detect the sham. He leaves it all with Jesus: Yes, Lord, I love Thee, but it is not necessary for me to say so; Thou knowest it of thyself. Neither did Peter assume to say that he loved Jesus with that higher kind of love; he was content to make profession of the lower. Nor did he make bold to say that he loved Jesus more than the other disciples. After his ignominious fall he was not inclined to make comparisons between himself and others. And we may well pause here to ask ourselves the question whether we have ever learned the lesson, not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think. One of the very essential conditions of true love to Christ is humility in our relation toward others.

Jesus now said to Peter the second time, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" I do not ask that thou love Me more than do My other disciples, but dost thou love Me at all? Jesus again used the word expressing the higher kind of love; He pressed Peter once more to consider whether he had really yet attained to that higher standard of love and devotion to his Master, a love that does not rest upon mere sentiment, feeling or personal attachment, but upon the knowledge and understanding of the real truth in the case and upon those things which are permanent and endure forever. But Jesus here mercifully passed by the other point, whether Peter loved Him more than the others. Peter's reply was the same as that to the first question. He feared to say more than was absolutely necessary, lest he might again overreach himself. He once more leaves it all with Jesus, "Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee."

But Jesus did not let the matter rest with the second question. Peter needed to be humbled a little more—to feel still more keenly how weak he had been and into what folly his own over-selfconfidence had led him.

He therefore said the third time, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" Jesus now used the term for the lower kind of love as if to say, If thou art not certain about the higher kind of love, the love that rests on intelligence and reason, dost thou love Me with the lower kind? Peter was grieved at this third question, not grieved at Jesus, we may say, but filled with self-reproach and sorrow at what he himself had done. For this threefold question most forcibly reminded Peter of his threefold denial of the blessed Master. Possibly Peter did not think much of his denial at the first question, but now the matter could not escape him and the oft repeated question stuck in his conscience like a chip of steel in the eye. Moreover, Peter felt grieved because, as it appeared, Jesus meant to question even his lower form of love. But Peter made a good witness, he did not become confused, he held to his old answer, only making it a little stronger, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee."

We see, then, how Jesus made love to himself the condition of Peter's restoration. That condition did not exclude repentance as a thing not necessary, for Peter had repented. Neither did it exclude faith, for Peter believed; otherwise he would not have been there at all. But laying all emphasis here upon love shows that whatever else may be present: a kind of sorrow for sin, a kind of faith, a kind of confession of faith, a profession of godliness, splendid gifts and talents — if love is lacking all is naught; the right relation does not exist, no real reconciliation has taken place. If your child has grievously sinned against you nothing will completely satisfy you without your child's love. Though your child would show you all honor and would most scrupulously obey you in every particular, you could not be satisfied if you felt that your child did not really love you. There must be some such relation between Christ and His disciples, between God and His children, for "as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him."

But this leads us to speak more directly of our reconciliation with God. In the case of Peter it was not simply the question of restoration to the apostleship, but also a question

of restoration to the full favor of Christ. Peter had denied his blessed Master, had done it three times, had done it even with cursing, had done it too under very light provocation. The question now was, Has Peter really repented? Has he come to see and feel his sin? We are nowhere told that Peter of his own accord had gone to Jesus and confessed his shame. That, it appears to us, would have been the proper and the gentlemanly thing to do, without speaking of it as a brotherly requirement. Indeed, we can hardly conceive of how Peter could endure being in the presence of Jesus, if he did not make confession; he certainly could not have felt right. But he may have confessed and we may hope that he did. Yet, however that may be, here he was now assured of full forgiveness and complete restoration to Jesus' favor.

Your restoration to childhood with God does not, of course, primarily depend upon your love to God, but upon the atoning death of Christ; and Christ has now become your own through faith, so that you are justified and have become a child of God through faith and not through your love. Yet true faith worketh by love, so that if there is no love there faith is also wanting. Jesus wants to see this love therefore as evidence of your faith. And He especially insists upon this love as the basis of service for Him. That was Jesus' motive in dealing with Peter as He did. He had a great work for Peter to do, but he could not do it without love. Jesus has a great work for you to do and therefore He insists upon your love. He does not say that you must love Him more than others do, nor does He say that in this life at least, it must always be just the very highest type of love, pure as gold and as high as the heavens, but He wants your love. It will not be enough simply to follow Him, not enough simply to make some sort of a profession, but He wants real love.

But though Jesus does not ask you to love Him more than others do, He does ask you to love Him more than you love anyone else; for "he that loveth father and mother more than me, is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me." It is very plain that the supreme thing here is love; and each one of

us needs to make it a very personal matter. Let each one ask himself these three questions: Do I love Jesus more than myself, so that I am ready to put down my own feelings and will and submit to the voice of Jesus? Do I love Jesus more than I do any friend, so that I am ready to oppose my friend rather than oppose Jesus? Do I love Jesus more than the world, so that I am ready to turn my back upon the world in order to follow Jesus? Then we might add a fourth question, Do I love Jesus more than I fear the devil, so that I shall resist him rather than offend my Savior? — The second thing that is made very prominent in the lesson is:

2. *Service for Christ:* Love is not a mere feeling, sentiment or affection, locked up as it were in the heart. Love is a force. It spells action. It moves men to do things. God's love moved Him to send His Son into the world. Love moved that Son to come and to go even to Calvary and hang upon the cross. Where there is no love things will not be done. When a man must be driven to his work he makes a poor workman. But love gives a man feet and hands and eyes and ears. Love makes a man alert to anything that needs to be done and if nothing seems to present itself love will seek out something to do; she cannot sit idly by. But there is no occasion for love to hunt work in this world. Where there is so much sin and suffering and misery, something to do may be found at every turn of the road. The priest and the Levite may pass by on the other side, but the good Samaritan will see the man fallen among thieves.

Jesus, of course, knew these qualities of love and therefore He first of all insisted upon a profession of love for Him on the part of Peter: If he loves Me he will be ready to enter My service and do whatever I command him. We accordingly see that upon his profession of love for Christ followed the work which he was to do. "Feed my lambs," "Feed my sheep," was the command. Let us first of all note that this was service for Christ. Jesus said, These lambs are *My* lambs and these sheep are *My* sheep. Elsewhere He says, "*My* sheep hear my voice." Love to Christ

and service for Christ go together. If you have great love to a friend you want to do something for that friend. If you love your country you want to do something for your country. If you love your home you want to do something for your home. If you love your church you want to do something for your church. So, too, if you love Christ you will want to do something for Christ.

What now are you doing for Christ? Be honest with yourself, give yourself the facts. For here are conditions which you cannot escape. If you love Christ you will be doing something for Him. On the other hand, if you do nothing for Christ, how can you say that you love Him? If you do nothing for the Church, how can you say that you love the Church? If you do nothing for the spiritual welfare of your neighbor, how can you say that you love him with that higher kind of love? If you do nothing for your own soul, how can you say that you love yourself with that higher love?

Jesus told Peter just what he should do; he is to feed Jesus' flock. "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood." Thus at a later day spoke Saint Paul by the Holy Spirit to the elders at Ephesus. But Jesus particularizes somewhat here. He uses three different terms in describing His flock, lambs, little sheep and sheep. He doubtless did so intentionally. He pointed out that there are different stages in the life and growth of His people; they need care all along, from the cradle to the grave, but this care needs to be modified according to spiritual states and conditions. The child needs different care than the youth and the youth needs different care and treatment than men and women. Paul said to the Corinthians, "I have fed you with milk, and not with meat; for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able." The writer to the Hebrews said, "Ye are dull of hearing. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong

meat. For everyone that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."

Plainly then the duty is laid upon the church to care for all the different needs of the flock. For that reason we have in the ministry of the Church the pulpit from which the strong meat is given and the counsel of God declared. The meat here offered is usually not too strong, but not infrequently by means of big words and fine phrases the food is placed in such high racks that even the most mature members of the flock can get little of it. We have also in the ministry of the Church the catechetical class and the Sunday school and some congregations are fortunate enough to have good parish schools, in all of which there is some form of instruction for all ages and conditions. What we need to emphasize in particular yet is this that the feeding of the lambs is just as necessary as the feeding of the sheep. Indeed it is even more necessary. If you do not feed the lambs there will be no sheep to feed. If the children of the congregations are not cared for, in a very few years there will be no congregations to care for. And if the children are not rightly fed and trained, it will be only a few years until the congregation must suffer from the mischief or through inactivity fall into decay.

The matter of the proper training of children is so important, especially in view of conditions at the present day, that an additional word should be said. We here refer to the spiritual training of the youth. Ordinarily we may think that the place to train children is in the home. There can be no question that a grave responsibility rests upon parents in this matter and that this responsibility is being fearfully shirked. But the point here is this, that Jesus lays this responsibility also upon the Church. Peter is told to feed the lambs; he is told to do so, not as a father of children, for we do not know that he had any, nor as a private member of the Church, but as an apostle or a minister and as representing the Church and doing the work of the Church.

The Church is to see that the children are fed with the pure Word of God and rightly trained and cared for. No matter what duty rests upon the parent, no matter what the parent does or does not do, Jesus still says to the Church, to the congregation, "Feed my lambs." No congregation, therefore, has done its full duty toward its children until the utmost has been done by Sunday school, by the catechetical class, and if at all possible, by parish school, or by any other proper means, to give them a sound and thorough training in the Word of God, in church service and work and in Christian living.

If some one should here say that the requirements made of the Church as regards the training of the children means hard work, much money and perhaps a cold shoulder from the world, then notice in conclusion what Jesus said to Peter, namely, that when he is once grown old he would stretch out his hands and be led whither he would not; that is, he would glorify his Master by being crucified for the name of Jesus. We are told that this was done, but that he was crucified head downward, because he did not deem himself worthy of being crucified in the same position as his Master. Suffering for Christ is a part of our service for Christ. Therefore let nothing be too much for us to do or suffer for the lambs of Jesus' flock. Amen.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

JOHN 14: 1-6

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, *there* ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

WE should naturally expect the lessons of the Church year following immediately upon Easter to be full of hope and cheer. The Savior lives. In that great fact the Church must ever rejoice. Last Sunday's lesson showed how Jesus made provision to have His flock fed. We think of the Shepherd Psalm, "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want." Today's lesson is just as full of comfort. It turns our eyes toward our eternal home where there shall be sweet rest after toil and conflict.

Jesus had spoken to His disciples about going away, about leaving them. This was troubling them, for they did not know just what He meant. Besides, they had a wrong view of His kingdom and thought that He would ever remain with them on this earth. But Jesus sought to comfort them as best He could: "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me." You believe that God loves you and cares for you. Believe also in Me, that I am come from God to give you life and that though I go away I shall not leave you. He also places before them the final reward of their faith. Believing in God and in Christ must lead to something, otherwise it is vain. Jesus represents the object of faith here as

MANSIONS IN HIS FATHER'S HOUSE.

Let this be our subject this morning; and first we shall consider:

1. *What these mansions are:* We shall begin by saying that these mansions are in our Father's house, for although Jesus here says My Father, He has taught us to pray, *Our* Father and therefore we are justified in speaking of *our* Father's house. But why speak of a house with reference to God? We poor mortals need houses to dwell in, but shall we say of "the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity" that He has a house to dwell in? Does He not fill heaven and earth, how then is He to be confined to a house even though it is in heaven? Let us not mar this beautiful picture and rob ourselves of comfort by such carping questions. God indeed fills heaven and earth with His presence and though He is everywhere present yet He is wholly present too at any one place. The Scriptures, moreover, do speak of God's dwelling place and that dwelling place Jesus is here pleased to call house, for He wants to make the matter plain so that we can grasp it. We have our homes here upon earth and God has His home in heaven. Let us beware of spiritualizing or idealizing too much, as though Jesus were speaking here only of a state or condition, and not of a place. It is not safe for us to do that. Before we are aware of it we shall have spiritualized everything real away and nothing tangible will be left for us to hold to. Besides we should not forget the whole combination of ideas: God is our Father and we are His children. Here then is a family, a household of God. But where there is a household, there must be a house, a home, a dwelling *place*, not simply a state or condition. Let us hold fast the idea of place. We are all looking for a blessed state and condition, but we want a place in which to enjoy it. Jesus throws about this whole scene the atmosphere of home; He makes it attractive and dear to us; He wants to make us home-sick for our real home.

In this house Jesus now says are "many mansions." We shall not spend much time on the question, whether these words are to be taken literally, whether there are different apartments in that house, a separate apartment for each occupant or group of persons; or whether it refers to different degrees of glory. We may not be able to say

just how these things are. But of this we are certain that there is a place there for every redeemed person and that the place will be exactly suited to the person. When we build a house we build it to suit us; every room has its purpose and the complete house is meant to afford us full comfort and enjoyment. Surely God has done no less in building for us a home in heaven. Every one of us that gets to heaven — and I hope we shall all get there — will find just what he needs and wants to make him perfectly happy. We say, even everything that he *wants*. In this world we often want things that we should not have and which would only bring us misery instead of happiness. But in heaven our wants will have been purified and we shall desire only that which is holy and pleasing to God. Of this, too, we may be sure that however much we may place in those heavenly mansions, however glorious we may picture them, we can never attain to the reality, for “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.”

Of these facts Jesus then proceeds to assure His disciples: “If it were not so, I would have told you.” I will not leave you under a false impression. If your fellowship one with another were limited to this life; if you could not follow Me to heaven, then I should have told you. Therefore though I go away, do not be troubled; the separation is not final; those mansions are for you. You may not have a dwelling place on earth, even as the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head, but in heaven your home is sure, you shall not be disappointed.

Such seems to have been the thought in Jesus' mind. And what great assurance we have here of the reality of our hopes and expectations! How could we at all doubt His word? For three years Jesus taught and labored among men. His life was sinless, His teaching was with authority, His works were miracles, His deeds mercy; and nowhere in all His teachings is there even an intimation that these things might not be true, that there is no heaven, no eternal life, no paradise, or that sinful man cannot attain to it. And what He taught all through His life He then sealed in death with

His own blood. Verily, "if it were not so I would have told you."

There can therefore be no question about the reality of those mansions. Still it would seem that at that time there was something lacking yet, for He continued, "I go to prepare a place for you." Some preparations seemed to be necessary. On earth salvation was wrought out, but in heaven a further making-ready seemed to be called for, an enlarging possibly for the multitudinous ransomed host that would soon be marching heavenward. We may not know just what Jesus means by these words, but what of it? Let us believe Him for He said at the beginning, "Believe also in me." Indeed we should not want to understand everything that He says here; we should rather wish to be surprised. The language is again borrowed from the home. A friend invites us to visit him. We know about how things will be in his home, we know that he will have everything in perfect order and especially designed to please us. But he will probably rejoice most of all in providing some surprises for us; nor will we fail to appreciate them. So here, let us not want to know everything, let us leave all that to Jesus, for we know that nothing shall be lacking; yes, let us expect some great surprises.

Here let us stop a moment yet and reflect more fully on the home-like language which Jesus employs. Surely it is like some good friend asking us to visit him: You shall have a room in my house all to yourself. You shall be made to feel perfectly at home. Not a thing shall be withheld that can minister to your comfort and pleasure. This language brings heaven near to us; it makes us want to be there, for when we consider who this Jesus is who is speaking here, what He has done for us, what He has suffered for us, then we can easily supply what might seem to be lacking in this picture. We can easily think of it as a most beautiful home, a most delightful place to spend eternity. We say that there is no place like home on earth; certainly there is no place like home in heaven.

This home language is also full of comfort for us. We are willing to leave our homes in the morning and work

hard all day and put up with many inconveniences and hardships, if only we are sure that when evening comes we may return home and rest amid the comforting associations of our family. So here. There is much in this life that makes it hard; there are many hardships to endure. Jesus tells us that each one must take up his cross and follow Him; and again we are told by Paul, who certainly knew, that we must through tribulation enter the kingdom of God. But we are willing to do and bear all this, we are willing to sojourn in a strange land, it may be three-score years and ten, if only we are assured that when evening has come we may go home and rest from all our labors.

But this brings us to the second part of our lesson; and it is just as important as the first part, for what would one gain by dreaming about these beautiful mansions if he should never get there? We need to inquire therefore:

2. *How we get to these mansions:* The very first thing to note here is the fact that Jesus will come again to take His people home: "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again." What grace, what love, what condescension! He is not like your friend who stays at home and coolly waits until you come, stepping at most to the door to open it or to the gate to welcome you. But Jesus, after He has gone and made all preparations, has set the house in order and prepared the feast, comes all the way back to this world and then on angels' wings or chariots of clouds, takes us to His mansions above. But you ask, When does Jesus come? He comes already for every child of God at the hour of his death. The last breath of this mortal body is the signal for the angels to come and bear the soul to the everlasting home: "And it came to pass that Lazarus died and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom." It will take place more fully at the last day when the Lord will come in the clouds of heaven and all the holy angels with Him and when, after our bodies have been raised up, we shall be caught up with Him in the air and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

But Jesus will not only come and take us to His home. He will also remain with us there. "And receive you unto

myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." What would you think of a friend whom you went to visit, if on arriving at his home he would not be there to receive you, or would spend little or no time at all with you? I dare say that you would cut your visit short. You need not fear that Jesus will treat you thus. While here upon earth He prayed His Father that He might grant His disciples to be with Him where He is, that they might behold His glory. This means that in Jesus and with Him we are to realize our highest joy. Saint John tells us that when we see Him we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. How we should like to be like Jesus already in this life! We are to live toward that ideal and work toward it, but we cannot reach it in this world. Not until we shall reach the thresholds of our mansions above shall we behold Jesus in all His glory, and then we shall be as much like Him as immortal man can ever be like his Maker. Here on earth we want to be with our friends; indeed that is our highest joy, to be with those whom we love best. That joy shall find its full realization only in heaven where we shall be reunited not only with our own, but with that Friend who sticketh closer than a brother.

Concerning the way Jesus now says that we know it: "And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know." Jesus had told the disciples that He would go to the Father who had sent Him. He had also told them that He and the Father were one. Therefore if they had seen Him they had seen the Father also. The way to the Father then is none other than the way to the Son; and the way to the Son, as He had abundantly shown them, was to receive His word, to believe on Him as the sent one from God and to keep that word and walk in it. There is no other way to Christ and there is no other way to God. But Thomas, one of the twelve, could not see these things, and possibly the other eleven did not see them much better. Thomas said, "Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?" We should see these things better now than the disciples did then, for the veil was still largely upon their eyes. We now have the full revelation of the way of sal-

vation. Jesus therefore explained the matter more fully: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." We should note carefully what Jesus says here. He says that He Himself is the way. He does not say: I will show you the way, or, I will lead you on the way, but, I *am* the way. So too He says, I am the truth; not, I will teach you the truth, or, I will show you where the truth may be found, but, I *am* the truth. So again He does not say, I will give you the life, or, I will tell you where the life may be found, but, I *am* the life. These are tremendous truths and facts and they need to be urged against all those world-wise philosophers and conceited teachers who have so much to say about truth in and of itself, that we are to do the truth for truth's sake and the right for right's sake; self-set-up saviors they are, who want to make the world better and get men to heaven by inculcating rational truth, without a personal divine Savior, without the Christ of God. Away with all such folly. Such a plan of salvation would save nothing, not even a mouse, much less man made in the image of his Maker. If you were going to Europe you would not inquire as to what route you should take, but you would engage quarters in a ship. That ship would take you across. Jesus is the ship to the haven of heaven; not truth apart from His person, not life apart from His person, for there is no truth and there is no life apart from Jesus' person.

To dwell a little longer on this wonderful saying of Jesus we may add that by declaring that He is the truth He explains why He is the way. When you make Jesus your own through true faith, then you have the truth; you have the truth or full revelation of God's gracious will, the truth of your redemption from sin, the truth of your righteousness before God and your acceptance as a child of God; the truth and the power of a new life within you. There is no truth nor knowledge which is essential to your salvation that you do not find in Jesus. And again when Jesus says, "I am the life," we may take that as following from the other two: He is the way and He is the truth, and therefore He is also the life.

Jesus then completes His statement by saying, "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me." There is no more sweeping declaration in all the Scripture than this. The whole maze of human opinions and plans regarding salvation and the way to heaven, is all swept away. You can go to New York by different routes; some will get you there more speedily than others and with less expense and inconvenience, but they will all get you there in the end if you keep on. Not so here; you must have Christ, the personal crucified Christ, the God-man Christ. Nor has He left it uncertain how you are to get Him, for He declares Himself the truth as well as the way. Neither is it uncertain what He means by truth. He means that Word which He has spoken and which has been written down for us in the four Gospels and further exemplified and explained in the Acts of the Apostles and in their letters. And this Word you are to take just as it reads and not inject into it your own opinions, but accept it and believe it and act on it as a child does the word of its parents. The whole process is simple, but it calls for faith, simple childlike faith.

And now, on the basis of this beautiful lesson let me plead with you for just a moment, especially if there are any here who are not yet on the way to the Father. Do you not at times think about the other world? Are you not interested in those mansions above? or are you concerned only about your habitation in this life? The fact that you are here this morning indicates that you have some thought of the Father's house. Consider well Jesus' promise, I go to prepare a place for you. Reflect upon the fact that Jesus has prepared a place also for *you*. Oh, how much He must be interested in you, how much must He be thinking about you, how disappointed He will be if you do not come!

But consider well, too, how you must get there. You cannot make a way for yourself by your own work or virtue. You cannot even make your own choice, for there is no choice. The only choice you have is between death and life, between heaven and hell. So also there are only two ways, the broad way and the narrow way, the way the devil will take you and the way the Christ will take you. Amen.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

JOHN 12: 20-26

And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast: The same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus. Philip cometh and telleth Andrew: and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus. And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world, shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will *my* Father honor.

THIS text, referring as it does directly to the death of Christ, does not seem rightly to fit the present Sunday which follows so close upon Easter. We should rather speak here of the living Christ, and the more so since we spoke fully of Christ's glorification through His death in connection with the lesson just before Palm Sunday.

There is, however, a missionary thought in this text that we should not overlook. We have here one of the few instances where Jesus dealt with gentiles and we should make use of the occasion to show that Christ came to save all men and that we must do our part in bringing them this blessed message.

But this lesson brings out especially and in strong colors the fact that Christ has become the world's Savior by His death and that therefore in all our missionary work we must take our start at Calvary. Let us this morning then consider

CHRIST GLORIFIED AS THE SAVIOR OF THE WORLD

We shall note in the first place that:

1. *The world longs for a Savior:* "And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast: the same said therefore to Philip which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see

Jesus." Just who these men were and where they came from is not stated. This was not necessary. The important thing is that they were Greeks, gentiles, that they had come from their home and country to Jerusalem to worship, and that they had heard of Jesus and now wanted to see Him. Their presence at the temple was significant and Jesus at once caught the full force of the event. To Him it was a sure token not only of His impending death — for these things occurred only a day or two before His crucifixion — but also of the blessed fruit of that death, that the gentile world would now press into the kingdom of God, that the other sheep which He had which were not of the Jewish fold, would now hear His voice.

It is most significant that up to this time very little had been done for the salvation of the gentile world. The plan of salvation under Moses made little provision for bringing the gentiles in. Prophet after prophet arose in Israel and thundered forth the Word of the Lord from every hill in the holy land, but not one except Jonah, who made an excursion to Nineveh, entered upon the highways and by ways of the gentile world to tell them that there is a God in Israel who saves from sin and death. The prophets foretold the downfall of gentile nations and the doom of their great cities, but they did not go out to seek their deliverance. And Jesus Himself at so late a day said, "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

Yet all along the door was always open; God did not exclude them; they could be received by the rite of circumcision and become heirs with Israel of all the good things promised. Solomon remembered the gentiles in his great prayer at the dedication of the temple, for he said, "Moreover, concerning a stranger that is not of thy people Israel, but cometh out of a far country for thy name's sake: (for they shall hear of thy great name, and of thy strong hand, and of thy stretched out arm;) when he shall come and pray toward this house: hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place, and do according to all that the stranger calleth to thee for; that all the people of the earth may know thy name, to fear thee, as do thy people Israel; and that they may

know that this house, which I have builded, is called by thy name." The prophets too, though they did not go out to preach to the gentiles, did foretell with reference to the Messiah how the gentiles would come to His light and to the brightness of His rising.

When we come to New Testament times we find conditions still much the same. The gentile world was still in darkness and sitting in the valley of the shadow of death. Yet that darkness was being shot through with rays of light. Many Jews were living in gentile countries and they had taken their Holy Scriptures with them. These Scriptures had even been translated into the Greek language. Here at the temple are many proselytes worshipping with the Jews. Jesus Himself had opened the door to a few, for example, the centurion at Capernaum, the woman of Canaan and her daughter. A few years later we read of the conversion of the eunuch from the distant land of Ethiopia, of Cornelius the Roman soldier and then of the great work of Paul, the Apostle to the gentiles.

When we now put all these signs and tokens together we are forced to the conclusion that there was at this time a widespread longing among the gentiles for something better than their own gods and idols; that with their numberless deities they had still not found the true God. Among the many altars that Paul found at Athens was one inscribed to the unknown God, plainly indicating that they had not yet found what they needed. Many among the gentiles were studying the Old Testament Scriptures, they had become acquainted with the promise of a Messiah and they were now saying, "We would see Jesus."

Jesus here at once saw this pressing toward the kingdom of God. Up at Jacob's well, in a semi-gentile land, He had said that "the fields are already white to the harvest." Here now He sees a still wider harvest-field opening up before Him. Just as in the spring when the genial sunshine breaks forth and the warm rains begin to fall, the dormant earth puts forth its buds that will soon develop into blossom and fruit; so here, after ages of barren darkness, the Sun of Righteousness has at last risen and the showers of Gospel

grace have begun to fall and the nations are now beginning to put forth their shoots and a rich fruitage will follow. Doubtless He thought of the words of the prophet: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountains of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow into it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob: and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: For out of Zion shall go forth the law and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." But who is the Savior? That is what these Greeks wanted to know. Here we are told that:

2. *Christ glorified in His death is the world's Savior:* Jesus' reply to the request of these Greeks is hardly what one would have expected. He did not say, Yes, by all means bring them to Me. I shall be very glad to meet them. So one of us doubtless would have spoken. But Jesus moved on a different plane and we have an altogether different answer. It is not even stated that He met these men, though it is assumed that He did, for nowhere do we find Jesus closing the door to any who come to Him with the right purpose. We assume that these men met Jesus, that He revealed Himself to them as He did to His disciples at the beginning, and we prefer to believe, too, that these men accepted Jesus as their Savior, if not at once yet at a later day.

But note what Jesus actually did say, "The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified." These words He then explained further by means of a beautiful and striking parable: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." Overlook not the solemn "Verily, verily." It shows that Jesus is here uttering a most important truth and fact. But what does He mean? There are especially two things that need to be observed. First, that by His death He would show forth His great glory. In a former text we spoke more at length of how the Son Himself was glorified by His death and also how the Father was thereby glorified in the Son. Jesus' greatest glory was

not that He made wine of water or that He hushed the winds and the sea with His voice, or even that He raised the dead. All these miracles had to do with material things. But there is something higher, something more precious, more lasting; it is the soul. To heal the soul is a greater work than to heal the body; to save man from sin and everlasting death is more important than to save him from hunger or a watery grave. But to do this Christ had to die in order to make atonement for sin and bring about reconciliation with God. His death was therefore a greater revelation of God's love and mercy than were His miracles. So also the most glorious thing about the Father is not that He made the world, glorious as the works of His hands are, but that He so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. This death Christ was about to suffer, this offering was about to be made, therefore He said that now the Son of Man should be glorified.

The other thought that Jesus sets forth here is that of the blessed results of His death for sinful man. He Himself shall have glory from that death, others shall have life. His parable brings out the thought most beautifully. If a grain of wheat is not planted it abideth alone; there will be but the one seed, and apart from being a seed it will amount to practically nothing. But if it is planted and dies, that is, is consumed or used up in the process of germination and growth, it will produce many seeds, possibly a hundred fold. So, too, Jesus, if He had not died, would have continued alone; He could have had no real followers like Himself — could have had no seed. Suppose that Jesus would have taught and wrought miracles as He did but would have done nothing more; suppose that after this work He had gone up to heaven in a chariot of fire as Elijah, or suppose that a battalion of angels had descended and carried Him up on their pinions, what would we poor mortals have? Elijah left his mantle to Elisha, but what could Jesus have left us? Only an example would we have, an example of a teacher, of a philanthropist, a measure of inspiration. That's all and nothing more; just what people of today have who look upon Jesus as having been but a man and who attach little importance to His death.

But Jesus died and therefore He abode not alone. By that death He made atonement for our sins, He brought about reconciliation with God, He procured for us forgiveness of sins and righteousness before God; He procured for us also the gift of the Holy Ghost and the power for a new life; in short, He secured for us everlasting salvation and made it possible for us to become children of God. That is His seed. There is much of it on earth and heaven is gradually filling up with it; every place at that great festive board shall be occupied, for the instruction to the servant is to bring them in until the house is filled with guests. "When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand."

Here then is the great basis for all missionary work: Christ made Himself an offering for sin and now men can be saved. These Greeks wanted to see Jesus; they wanted something better than their own philosophers and poets could teach them. There had been some fine teachers among the Greeks; in certain fine arts they are still the teachers of the world; and as to philosophy and natural morals they have few if any equals to this day. But after all they were only men, sinful, depraved, corrupt men. No people so cultured as the ancient Greeks and yet few people so depraved as they. These men were sinful and therefore their seed was sinful. All Greece combined, together with the whole gentile world, cannot show a single man who can stand beside a Moses or an Isaiah or a John the Baptist or a Paul of Tarsus. Life can come only from life, but outside of Christ there is no life and therefore real life can come only from Christ.

We are told of a rationalistic minister who preached beautiful sermons but nothing of Christ. One day he found a slip of paper in his pulpit Bible with the words, "We would see Jesus." He was put to thinking, his heart was touched and he himself found Jesus. He then preached Jesus and afterwards he found another slip of paper in his Bible with the words, "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord." — Christ through His death and resur-

rection has become the Savior for all men. Upon this enduring basis rests:

3. *The Missionary Work of the Church for all the World:* The greatest command that Jesus ever issued was His command to the disciples to go and preach the Gospel to every creature. God's arrangement all along has been to have men do this work of preaching. In Old Testament times He spoke to His people through the Prophets; in the New Testament He spoke through His own Son and through the Apostles. Today yet He speaks by His revealed Word and by His Spirit through ministers of the Gospel and through every believer that is willing to lend Him his tongue. Angels could probably preach better than men, but God wants men to do it. Let us ask no more questions on that point. That's settled; God wants believers to carry the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

But here let us consider that Christ did not send His apostles out until they were prepared. Three years had they to wait for special enduement from on high. Here, too, in striking words Jesus lays the foundation for all acceptable service to Him: "He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world, shall keep it unto life eternal." Here is set forth the rule of self-preservation or of self-salvation. There is a double life about you. Paul was made to realize that fact and it worried him much when he found that he could not do as he would: "For that which I do, I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I." Not every man makes such a candid confession as Paul did, but there you have the true picture of the human heart. There is that about you which says: Live for the world, live for pleasure, make money, chase the bauble of greatness. That is your one life, the life you have by nature. But it is a poor sort of life, it only gets you into trouble, and the greatest trouble will come in the end. The other kind of life says: Look up to God, do His will, believe His Word, accept Christ as your Savior, turn from sin, walk in truth, in righteousness, in holiness; serve the Lord, lay your foundation deep and build for eternity. This is the life you are to seek and lay hold of.

You do not have it by nature, it must be gone after. But it is near you, though only a voice at first, a sting of conscience perhaps, or a whisper of the Spirit through the Word, a desire to see Jesus as with these Greeks. But when it approaches, it must be seized upon. Do not let it pass from you, it may not come near again for many a day, possibly never. Throw away the other life and choose this, for you cannot have both. The shipwrecked miser in the water must let go his bag of gold or else perish with it.

The choice of the higher life means choosing Christ and surrendering one's self to Him; not only because this life is found alone in Christ; but also because we belong to Him and our strength and service belong to Him. This thought He brings out more fully in the words, "If any man serve me, let him follow me." This following of Christ in true humility and faith is the basis of church and missionary work. If we today lament the fact that the work of saving the world is not being prosecuted as it should be here is the first and chief cause, our following of Christ is not what it should be. A workman who has little interest in his master will do as little for him as he possibly can. This is too much the nature of our work as servants of Christ; we are doing just enough to hold our titles. But Jesus' will is that we leave all and follow Him, that we give up all in order that He may be our all.

There are many ways of serving Christ and though it may not all be missionary work in the accepted sense of that term, yet it is service for Christ and work in His kingdom. And no one is passed by in this service; every one who follows Christ is here spoken of as a servant of His. And it matters not, either, how much he may have to do in other things, there will also be opportunity to help in the work of missions. For one thing, you can find time to pray for the work. You have Jesus' express command to "pray the Lord of the harvest that he may send forth laborers into his harvest." You can speak the word of life to others, to your neighbors, friends, possibly members of your own household. You can speak to them about other things, why not about their soul's salvation? You have money to give, if

not a great amount then a smaller. Remember that it takes less than two hundred dollars a year to support a native worker in the India mission field. Perhaps you have a son well qualified and inclined to study for the ministry. Do not discourage him, but give him all the support and encouragement possible. Perhaps you have a daughter who might become a deaconess or a parish school teacher or a worker in the foreign field. You can also say a good word for your church, for her people, for her work; that too will give encouragement and strength. This is but one line of work in the service of Christ; there are many others, but we cannot speak of them here. The Spirit Himself will show us what to do, if we are ready to follow His suggestions. And let us keep an eye too on the reward: And where I am, there shall also my servants be: If any man serve me, him will my Father honor. Amen.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

JOHN 6:60-69

Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard *this*, said, is an hard saying; who can hear it? When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you? and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before? the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, *they* are spirit, and *they* are life. But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were believed not, and who should betray him.

WHEN we follow up Christ's teaching among the people we find that at times His Word was received gladly. Matthew tells us that the common people heard Him gladly; we are told that they pressed upon Him to hear the Word; it is stated that He taught not as the Scribes but as one having authority; and the people said that never man spoke as this man. His teachings upon such occasions were of a popular character like His sermon on the mount or His parables that were spoken to the people in general. They struck a popular chord and the people were ready to say, This is our man!

But Jesus also frequently gave offence by His teaching. His very first talk in Nazareth aroused the ire of the people because He claimed to be the Messiah. Some of His parables too that were directed at the leaders among the Jews gave great offence. At one time they took up stones to cast at Him. Jesus was finally even condemned to death for what He had said, namely, because He claimed to be the Son of God. So we find here also that He gave serious offence, not to the Scribes especially and the Pharisees, but to His followers generally, for many of them from now on no more went after Him. We may say therefore of this discourse from which our text is taken that it was

JESUS' SIFTING OF HIS DISCIPLES

In dwelling on this thought this morning we shall note in the first place:

1. *Why many of Jesus' disciples turned back:* "From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him." The reason they went back was because of certain things which Jesus had said. How like a present-day audience or congregation. Here is a person who no longer goes to church because of something the preacher said. Probably too the thing that was said was the very thing that needed to be said. It was so here in Jesus' case. Because He had on the previous day fed the multitude with a few loaves of bread He quite properly took occasion here, where the people came to Him in great numbers, to speak to them of the bread of heaven, the bread which they needed for their souls even more than they needed bread for their bodies. And the particular utterances at which they took offence were such as these: "I am the bread which came down from heaven"; "the bread that I shall give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world"; "except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you."

The people's objections were these: "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that he saith, I am come down from heaven?" Again, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" and, "This is an hard saying; who can bear it?" But these things were hard sayings because they did not accord with their views and with reason. They were ready for a Messiah, in fact, the people were waiting for a Messiah, but he must be one to suit them. His teachings must be such as they can accept and he must not ask things that are unreasonable. Certainly they have no use for the Messiah, who wants them to eat His flesh and drink His blood. It is not only unreasonable to expect civilized men to eat the flesh of the Savior and to drink His blood, but what would be the benefit of it in the end? How could that make a man better or save him from his sin? There are many of the present day who take just such offence at Jesus' teaching. When the Lord says in the institution of the blessed Sacrament of His body and blood, "Take, eat, this is my body which is given for you", and, "Take, drink ye all of it, this cup is the new

testament in my blood, which is shed for you," they say: This cannot be, Jesus cannot mean what the words say: They must be taken figuratively. Or when Jesus says that a man must be born again of water and the Spirit, they say: This cannot refer to Baptism; or if it does refer to Baptism, the new birth does not take place by Baptism or through Baptism, but only by the Spirit and altogether apart from Baptism. Baptism can only be a sign or symbol of the spiritual working. So, too, these same people and others are ready to deny the miracles of Christ, His resurrection, His divinity: He is not God, only a man, merely "the son of Joseph and Mary whom we know." He therefore did no miracles, not by His own power at least; He did not rise from the dead. So men are ready also to deny the statement, that Christ by His death should have atoned for the world's sins; that is unreasonable and impossible.

I would have you notice here in particular that in these sayings of Jesus at which people are so readily offended there is no expose of their sins. Jesus was not showing these people their sins here, but certain doctrines concerning Himself as the Savior of men. The greatest offence to men is not the preaching of the Law. They can usually stand that and are often even pleased. Some men, such as was the noted evangelist and lecturer Sam Jones, can flay people alive and they are pleased and say that it is all right and they come back the next day to hear him again. But where one preaches the real Gospel, the Gospel of the cross, that God sent His Son into the world to die for men and that the only way of being saved is through faith in Him; that salvation begins with the forgiveness of sins and that it is not attained by our works or virtues, but only and alone as a free gift from God's grace; then people become offended and say, This is an hard saying, who can hear it? That's preaching the cross of Christ, and that's foolishness to the Greek and a stumbling block to the Jew.

Jesus had therefore given no just cause for offence in His teaching: "Doth this offend you? What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?" You take offence because I say that I am the living bread that

cometh down from heaven and that by eating this bread you shall live forever. You do so because you do not know Me. You take Me for a mere man. In that case it would indeed be absurd for Me to make any such claims. But will you still think so when I have once ascended into heaven, when all My work is finished and the full proof is given that I am the Son of God and came down from heaven? Will you then still think My claims absurd and that I cannot give My flesh for the life of the world?

Jesus wanted them to consider that He was not a mere man and that the words that ordinarily apply to men do not always apply to Him, and that much more can be said of Him than of a mere man. And He gave them another key to the meaning of His words when He said, "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing." Flesh of itself, either as a sacrifice or as a food, profits the soul nothing, does not effect forgiveness of sins nor give new life. But add Spirit to this flesh, the divine Spirit, indeed the divine nature of Christ, and you have something altogether different. That flesh, the human nature in Christ, offered through the eternal Spirit, becomes a real sacrifice that takes away sins and is real food for the soul.

Jesus carries the thought still further when He adds, "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." Jesus' words are not mere sounds or symbols representing certain ideas or thoughts. That is the nature of human words and language. But Jesus is the Son of God and His words are therefore the embodiment of divine energy. God said, "Let there be light; and there was light." So Jesus said to the blind: Your eyes be opened; and they were opened. He said to the deaf: Hear; and they heard. He said to the dead: Live; and they lived. He said to the penitent sinner: Thy sins be forgiven; and they were forgiven. When a man now receives Jesus' Word he gets that divine energy. It is food and nourishment for him; it is spiritual medicine for his soul. And when Jesus is pleased to combine that Word of His with His body and His blood as in the blessed Sacrament, or with water in Baptism, what is that to us? Why should we question or doubt?

It is not a man that says these things, but the eternal Son of God, by whom all things were made and who upholds all things by the word of His power.

There was thus no real reason why these people should have been offended at Jesus' words. But Jesus proceeded then to point out just why they were offended: "But there are some of you that believe not." That was the real trouble — unbelief. If they had believed that Jesus came down from heaven, that He was the Son of God; if they had taken up the words of their great prophet Isaiah when he said of the Child that was born and the Son that was given, "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace," they would have experienced no difficulty with Jesus' words upon this or any other occasion. They still would not have been able to comprehend them fully, but they would have believed anyway and would have been willing to wait for further light.

This state of unbelief, furthermore, was of their own making. Jesus indeed said here, that "no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father." This, however, does not mean that the Father had done nothing for these people to bring them to Christ, for such a view would mean that God actually passes some people by and lets them perish in their sins. Such a thought is contrary to the plain teachings of the Scriptures, which declare that God does not will the death of the sinner, but that he may turn from his sins and live. The Father was trying to draw these people through the very words which Jesus was speaking, but they would not be drawn; they would not believe; they did not put their own reason down and make Jesus' words supreme.

Here is always the greatest cause of unbelief, the pride of the human heart that does not want to submit to Jesus' words. If some one invites you to his home, the acceptance of the invitation may mean on your part the giving up of certain things which you had planned; or it may mean changing your opinion of that man in certain things; or there may be some things about the invitation that you do not under-

stand; but whatever it may be, you must simply put all these things aside and go. Just so in the case of Jesus' invitation: It means a great change of life, it means a great change in our thinking; there are some things that we cannot understand; but the whole thing is simply this, that we must get down off of our high horse and humbly accept Jesus' words. Only then can the Father draw us. We have seen why many of Jesus' disciples went back. Let us see in the second place:

2. *Why some of His disciples continued to follow Him:* We find that these did not keep on following Jesus because of some outward compulsion, neither on account of any persuasive language on the part of Jesus, for after the others had gone back Jesus turned to the twelve and said, "Will ye also go away?" According to human methods we would expect a different procedure under such circumstances. Many of His disciples had left Him; and He will do His utmost to retain the few that seem faithful. Perhaps He would somewhat modify His language, or draw the sting possibly; perhaps He will say something very pleasant to these men now, or hold out some special attraction, but no, nothing of the kind. He does not even ask them to stay, does not utter a single encouraging word. He of course does not tell them to go. But He does say: If you want to go back with the rest, go — go now. Do not follow Me if you do not want to, if you think I am not the Messiah, or if you think my words are too hard for you.

The great thought here is that following Christ is always a matter of personal choice. Divine grace labors with men, the Father draws them, the servants of Christ argue with men — reason with them — use all the persuasion at their command. They go out into the highways and by-ways and, as it were, compel them to come in. Yet in the end men must choose to come. Following Christ freely is the only kind of following that He will recognize. Free service is the only service that God will accept. Your coming to church, your contributions for the work of the church, your service in the church, if it is not free, if it is not a willing sacrifice, is nothing before God. We do not con-

demn a religious act because there is possibly some outward constraint connected therewith, for in this weak flesh and in this evil world we do not expect even our religious acts to measure up to the ideal. Yet that is what we should strive after.

But if there was no constraint here and no persuasive language, why did these men follow Jesus? Peter said to Jesus — and he spoke for the company — “Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.” These men followed Jesus because they found in Him words of eternal life. Jesus had before said to the multitude, My words, they are spirit, and they are life. The people could not grasp that and did not believe it. The twelve probably did not grasp it either, but they believed it; and because they believed it they found Jesus’ words to be just what He claimed them to be. You will always find it so. Take Jesus at His word and you will always find that word to be just what it claims to be. Every time Jesus spoke the word of healing the healing was conveyed. There is not an instance on record where it failed. But what He did in the physical world that He does in the spiritual. When He said to the paralytic, “Thy sins be forgiven,” his sins were just as truly forgiven as he was really made whole when He afterward said, “Take up thy bed and walk.”

But Jesus’ words must be accepted in faith. That is what the twelve did and just therein did they have the advantage over the multitude. This faith is all-important in the process of salvation. Notice how often in healing the sick Jesus said, Thy faith hath made thee whole; or, Thy faith hath saved thee. Of course Jesus’ gracious power did the healing and the saving, but on man’s part it was faith that apprehended it and therefore the Bible declares that we are saved by faith, though it is all God’s work and not our own.

We see then that the twelve found in Jesus just what they wanted — just what they felt that they needed. We may assume that they had given much thought to the matter from the very beginning; we may assume, too, that they had looked around elsewhere for such words of life. They

were mostly unlettered fishermen, but nevertheless they had powers of thought and observation. But nowhere had they heard such words as fell from the lips of Jesus. They were like water to the burning tongue, they were sweeter than honey to the mouth. There was a void in their heart and nothing could fill it but these words of life. Have you, friend, found in the words of Jesus what the twelve did? Are you satisfied that His words are words of life, or are you still looking elsewhere for something better or something different? You need to settle this question in your mind, so that you can give yourself wholly to building up yourself in your most holy faith, "for it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace." The twelve settled the question here; indeed they had settled it before already; here they now just made a confession of their faith and fixed purpose. Only one of the twelve proved untrue and that is readily explained by the fact that he had a devil. Only a few weeks ago we celebrated the glorious resurrection of Christ. Let us say anew today: Thou hast words of eternal life and we will follow Thee.

But there is another thought here upon which we must touch before we close. Jesus had said that He came down from heaven; in other words, that He is divine. That very truth the disciples now found in Jesus and that explains too why they believe that His words were eternal life. They said, "We believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." Ah, brother, there is no danger of going back with a confession like that, if it comes from the heart and not merely from the lips. A Savior who is the Christ, promised from the very beginning of the human race, and who is the Son of the living God, or, as it may also be rendered, the holy one of God, why should not His words be life? and why should He not be able to save us from all our ills? Where is the man who will not follow Jesus if he once believes Him to be the Son of God? and following Him, why should one for a moment be uncertain as to the final outcome?

It is well here also to notice just how these men came to be certain of these things. Ordinarily we say that we must

first know and then believe. That is true, for “how can they believe in him of whom they have not heard?” But here we find that these men first believed then they were sure: “We believe and are sure,” say they. Full conviction of the truth of Jesus’ words can come only by believing. We must have *some* knowledge to start with, we must be preached to. But we cannot have *all* knowledge, nor can we have *certain* convictions, until we believe. The many went back because they did not believe, not because they did not know something about Christ. They knew, for example, how He had fed the multitude the day before. The twelve followed because from the very beginning they believed what they learned and then kept on learning more because they believed. Let us follow their example. Amen.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

LUKE 11: 5-13

And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if *he ask* a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall *your* heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?

WITH the present Sunday we enter upon the Pentecost cycle of the church year. The great festival event is the pouring out of the Holy Ghost on Pentecost Sunday. This is preceded by the festival of the Ascension of Christ and followed by that of the blessed Trinity. The leading thought of this season is the work of the Holy Ghost. The season appropriately opens with a lesson on prayer as presented in our today's text, for the Holy Ghost is the Spirit of prayer.

We may begin here by asking, How many of you are praying Christians? What answer do we hear? All of you? Very well. So it must be if you are Christians at all. A Christian who does not pray is no more a Christian than is a man who does not breathe, a living man. A Christian without prayer is like a candle-stick without a light, as a body without life, as a ship without wind to fill the sails. Prayer is the Christian's "vital breath," his "native air."

But when we ask if you are praying Christians we mean, Do you pray much? Are you persistent in your praying?

A man cannot live by taking a breath once in a while. You cannot read by a light that only flickers. A ship cannot sail with but an occasional puff of wind. The best beggars are those who are always begging. The best praying people are those who are always praying. — Our lesson this morning has a few things to say about

PRAYER.

And the very first thing that is suggested is:

1. *The need of persistence in prayer:* Before we speak of this persistence itself let us note the kind of relationship upon which prayer is based. The man of our lesson went to a friend, not an enemy, not a stranger, not an indifferent person, but to a friend. It was an odd time to go even to a friend for some bread; for when the man says, "The door is shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee," he means to say, we are told, that the living room of the day has been converted into a sleeping room for the night and that possibly some bed would have to be moved before the door could be opened. The prospect therefore was not very good, yet, the man being a friend, there was hope. So we go to God in our prayers. He is not an enemy, not a stranger, not indifferent, and we know that there will be no furniture in the way of the door; He will not be asleep, no matter when we come, for "he that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep." That is the relation and the basis upon which we go to God in prayer. This relation of friendship, of love and of deep concern on the part of God, gives us courage and hope; we feel that it is worth trying, and that the Father in heaven can be prevailed upon.

But yet with all this encouragement our prayers need to be persistent. If this man would have given up with the first attempt, he would have got no bread. He even went so far in his calling and knocking that his conduct, as the original text implies, was considered impudent and shameless. So it seemed to the man within. But it was just that shameless

knocking that moved the man to bring the bread. Really, it was largely selfishness on his part. He was being greatly annoyed and the only way to get rid of that annoyance was to get the bread for the man. God, of course, is not moved to give from any such motive. This feature of the parable falls away. What men may do from improper motives under such circumstances God does from the right motive. But by this parable the Lord says to us, Keep on praying. Do not give up with the first attempt. Go at it again. He will hear you in the end. Do as the woman of Canaan did: He probably did not hear me, she may have thought. I will go nearer, I will look Him in the eyes, I will cry into His ear, I will fall down before Him and block His way; I will reason with Him, I will not leave until He grants my request, or else drives me from Him. Or do as Jacob did when he wrestled with the Lord, I will not leave Thee, except Thou bless me. Just that is the point to be brought out in this parable.

But there is something more here that must not be overlooked. We sometimes make a mistake in reading our Bible. We read a passage on some particular subject and think that the whole question is answered in that one passage. We read in Romans, for example, that "a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law," and one might conclude that this passage contains everything that needs to be known about justification. That would be a mistake. This passage does not tell us what faith is, or what justification is and what its blessed fruits are, or how a justified person is to live. It simply tells us that we are justified by faith and not by works. To get a full understanding of what it means to be justified by faith we must study many other passages. So here one might think from this parable that about the only thing in prayer is to keep at it until you get what you want. There are other things connected with prayer that must be observed. For one thing, faith is necessary: "All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer *believing*, ye shall receive." Prayer must be in the name of Jesus: "Whatsoever ye shall ask in *my name* that will I do." There dare be no conscious sin in the heart: "If I regard iniquity in my

heart, the Lord will not hear me." You need to be sure also that what you ask is something that God is willing to give. We put all these elements together and we get acceptable prayer.

With such prayers two things are possible; one is that God may answer at once. Do you know that remarkable promise of the Lord in Isaiah? "And it shall come to pass, that before they call I will answer, and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." Many petitions were made to Jesus upon earth. Can you recall a single proper petition, made in the proper way, that He did not answer at once? The other thing is that the Lord may delay His answer. He does this at times, He seems to close His ears or hide His face for a time. That's the time when He expects you to keep at it. That's the kind of prayer that He exemplifies in this parable. And it is for just such occasions that we need special encouragement. — The second thing about prayer that the lesson brings out especially is:

2. *The certainty of God's answer:* "And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For everyone that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." The certainty of God's answer is really implied in what has already been said. But here Jesus draws the conclusion and states the lesson to be learned. You may say, however, Is this really true? Does every one who asks receive? I have asked already and have not received. We may begin replying by saying that you have received a great many things for which you did not ask. You have received such things of men already, but much more of God. He gave you your being to begin with. He fed and kept you before you ever knew enough to ask Him. He is feeding and clothing millions today who never think of asking Him for so much as a crust of bread. And who asked God for the mighty beds of coal with which you warm your houses? Who asked God for these rivers of oil which we use for a thousand purposes? Who asked God for those supplies of gas with which you cook your meals and light your rooms? Who asked God for nature's mighty storage

battery of electricity which wheels you about the streets, lights your cities and homes and serves a hundred other purposes? These are but a few of the things that God has given you, and for which you did not ask Him. Think of these things first before you complain about a few things for which you ask that God does not give you.

There are some things, however, that God does not give except for the asking. Some of these may be material or temporal blessings. Solomon asked for wisdom, for a wise and understanding heart. God answered His prayer and he became the wisest man of his day. It is plain that he would not have gained such wisdom if he had not asked for it. Blind Bartimaeus asked to have his eyes opened. They would not have been opened if he had not asked. The leper asked to be cleansed. He would not have been cleansed if he had not asked. A hundred others received material blessings in Jesus' day because they asked for them. What ground have you for thinking that Jesus cannot or will not do such things today? James says, "Ye have not, because ye ask not." "Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have and cannot obtain: ye fight, and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not." And the apostle, it is plain, is speaking here of material blessings. But he goes on to tell why they have nothing: "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that you may consume it upon your lusts." The apostle is evidently portraying a deplorable state of affairs and I cannot say just to what extent such conditions obtain among ourselves. But let every one examine himself carefully when his prayer remains unanswered, whether he did not ask amiss, whether sin in some form or other was not mixed up with the petition. Remember the words of the Psalmist, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me."

But the assurance that God will answer prayer is especially true of spiritual blessings. Temporal gifts are not absolutely necessary to our best welfare. The time is coming as we well know, when we all must leave all these earthly good things behind; and whether this takes place a few years sooner or later makes very little difference. But spir-

itual gifts are absolutely necessary to our best welfare both in this life and in that which is to come. Therefore God is always ready to bestow these gifts. He may not give us recovery from some illness, but He will give us the gift of His Spirit for the healing of the soul. Here the only question is our fitness to receive them. These spiritual gifts are precious jewels and God will not cast these holy things before dogs nor hang them in a swine's snout. There are certain things that you will let your child have to play with, but you will not let it handle your costly china. So if we are conscious of a lack of faith, of knowledge, of love, of hope, of assurance of our salvation or of any other spiritual gift of which we feel the need and for which we have asked, let us consider that the fault is not in God; He is ready to give, but we are not in a condition to receive. We have not yet the spiritual capacity. You cannot put two gallons of oil into a one-gallon jug. We cannot have the faith of an Elijah, the zeal of a Stephen or the spiritual power of a Paul until we have grown up to these things. We are indeed to pray for spiritual gifts that we may so grow, but it must be prayer in humility, in faith, with an earnest purpose also to serve the Lord with the gifts. God will have no half-heartedness here: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth it to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith nothing wavering. For he that wavereth, is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind, and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything from the Lord."

On this point of certainty there is a word yet that you may have overlooked, the word everyone: "Everyone that asketh receiveth." What encouragement in that word! We may suppose several hundred people across the street on the campus. There is also a well there and every individual of that company may drink of that well and quench his thirst, and there will still be water a-plenty left. So, too, everyone who asks of Jesus shall receive — water, bread or whatever he needs. And you are not to narrow the word "everyone" down nor in any way weaken it. You are not to say that it is true only generally speaking, but that it must

not be taken literally. No, take the words literally, take Jesus at His word. If you say a thing, you do not want men to doubt your word. Neither does Jesus. He wants you to hold Him right to His promise. All that you can rightfully find in His promise — all that He means and He wants you to hold Him to it. But of course your prayer must include all the implied elements of prayer; it must be in faith, in the name of Jesus, you must want to serve God with the gift, you must be sure that it is something He is willing to give you. — Our text speaks of a third thing about prayer, the very best thing of all. It is this:

3. *The certainty of the best possible answer:* “If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone, or if he ask a fish will he for a fish give him a serpent? or if he shall ask an egg, will he give him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?” Jesus here reasons from the lesser to the greater, from the evil to the good. One has said that we have in these words of our blessed Savior the strongest possible evidence of original sin. The proof is so strong because it is uttered by Jesus Himself and is given indirectly. Jesus is speaking about prayer in this lesson, not about the natural depravity of the human heart. He is not trying to prove that fact. Yet what He says here proves it most conclusively. He says men are evil, including even His disciples; that their hearts and thoughts are evil, that such is their nature. Yet notwithstanding the evil character of their hearts they give good gifts one to another. As friends they do not purposely deceive or harm one another with their giving. On the other hand, God is good; He is always having kindly thoughts toward men, for God is love and that means that everything that He does is good. It cannot possibly be otherwise, just as a sweet fountain cannot give forth bitter water or a good tree bring forth evil fruit. How much more will not our heavenly Father give good gifts unto men? Look at all the goodness that God manifests, already in the realm of nature, but much more in the kingdom of grace. This is all

meant to show you that He will give you only good gifts. But you say: I also see many evil things that God does, things that are evidences of His wrath visited upon the children of men. How am I to know that He will not answer me with a curse instead of a blessing? But no; take His word for it that these judgments are meant for the impenitent, or if they do strike you, they are intended for your good. Of His own He says, "A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee." Hold Him to that promise.

But a word more must be said here as to why some of our prayers are not answered. In temporal things we do not always know what is best for us. We think we are asking for bread, but sometimes it is a stone. God of course does not let us have it any more than you let your little child play with a sharp knife. Or your child is sick and you insist that God must make it well. However, you do not know what awful misfortune might befall that child if it lived. But God knows and so He mercifully takes it away from that evil day. Such things must therefore be left with God. As the leper said, "Lord, if thou *wilt*, thou canst make me clean." Or as Jesus Himself said, "Not my will, but thine be done." And consider, too, how safe we are in leaving this with God. He will not — He cannot, give us anything that would be hurtful. There are only a few things in which you can trust yourself, but you can trust God in everything.

We said that God gives us the very best answer. We are assured of this fact especially by the words: "How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" The Holy Spirit is the greatest possible gift, for in and with Him all spiritual gifts are included. The Holy Spirit calls us by the Gospel, enlightens us with His gifts, sanctifies and keeps us in the one true faith; He forgives us our sins, He strengthens us against all temptations; He keeps us by His power and grace to a blessed end and then will raise us up to everlasting life. Amen.

ASCENSION DAY

LUKE 24: 50-53

And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: And were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen.

JESUS declared while upon earth that His Father had sent Him into the world to do a certain work: "I must work the work of him that sent me while it is day." When that work was finished He said, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." Jesus therefore did not come upon earth as a visitor, or for pleasure, but for work. And furthermore it was not left to Him to find some work, something congenial, but His work was given Him. He had no choice, although it was His choice at the same time, for He said, "I delight to do thy will, O God."

During the festival part of the church year, to the end of which we have almost come, we have learned to know this work of Christ in its broad outlines, who Christ is, what the nature and purpose of His work was and what He did to accomplish it. It is only natural that if Christ came into this world to do a special work, He would again leave the world when that work was finished. And so we find Him doing. We today celebrate His visible departure from the world. We now no longer think of Him as in the flesh, in shame and suffering, but we think of Him now as the great and mighty Lord, ascended far above all heavens that He might fill all things. What shall we now say of

OUR ASCENDED LORD?

We say in the first place that:

1. *His work on earth is completed:* What, to be more specific, was that work which Christ came to do? We cannot

do better than go back to the beginning of Christ's ministry and quote the words which He Himself quoted from the prophet when He told His townsmen in Nazareth who He was and what He was sent to do: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives; and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." These words need to be interpreted in the light of what Jesus Himself said and did. Only in that way do we get their full meaning; and thus interpreted they declare that He came to save the lost human race from sin and everlasting death. They mean that He came to make life more tolerable already in this world, but to make it completely happy and blessed in the world to come.

To accomplish this great end Jesus' work, in the first place, had to be educational. Every work which aims to make men better and lift them to a higher plane must be educational. The overthrow of slavery in our country was the result of education; people came to see that it was not in accordance with righteousness and the spirit of the Gospel that one man should look upon another as chattel. If a man who is given to strong drink is to amend, he must be brought to see the sin and the folly of his way and the advantage as well as the righteousness of a life of soberness. But all this is educational, to come to see sin and folly on the one hand, and on the other to choose the better way. Jesus therefore came as a teacher, "a teacher come from God," as Nicodemus said. He came as a prophet; "I perceive that thou art a prophet," said the Samaritan woman. But a prophet is one who reveals to men the will of God and shows them the way of salvation. Therefore Jesus went about teaching the people. To Pilate He said, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." To the people at large He said, "Blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it."

But Jesus while upon earth also did many miracles. This was also a part of the work which His Father gave Him to do. These mighty works which none other man did were meant to confirm and commend His teachings. If ye will not believe Me, My teaching, My word, then believe Me "for the very works' sake." These works testified that He had not come of Himself, but of God. They showed also the purpose of His coming, that it was not for His own honor but for the good of men; for all His works were deeds of deliverance, an answer to the petition, "Deliver us from evil." They were proof at the same time of His almighty power and His ability to save. When it is therefore said of Jesus that He "went about doing good," we see in this a further educational factor in His work; the people should be led to see and believe that He is indeed the Messiah and the Savior of all the world.

But there is another side to Jesus' work. To save men from sin and death, more is needed than education, even though the Son of God be the teacher. A man may be very highly educated, also on his moral side, and even in a way on his spiritual side, and yet he may be outside the kingdom of God. There are two things which no mere education can do; the one is, put away sin; the other is, give man a new life. Sin, the guilt of sin, must be put away; and for that there must be atonement, for "without the shedding of blood there is no remission." There was no other that could atone for sin except "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world," "who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed." This was the climax of His great work; everything else led up to it. Therefore we do not hear from His lips the words, "It is finished," until upon the cross He was ready to commend His spirit into the hands of His Father. And by this redemptive work He not only put away the guilt of our sins but the very power of sin was broken and destroyed and the gift of new life for man was made possible.

Such was the great work which Christ came to do. The resurrection, of course, belongs to it. The resurrection was

the confirmation of Jesus' work, the great seal of the validity of all that Jesus said and did. That resurrection assured us that every word Jesus spoke is the truth, that every deed He did was a work of God, that every promise He made shall be kept and every hope He holds out shall be realized. This great work is done; nothing further needs to be done for man's redemption. And this is the first great fact we declare this morning concerning our ascended Lord. — The second thing we say of our ascended Lord is that:

2. *He bestowed His blessing upon the Church for all time:* "And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them." This was Jesus' parting blessing and the parting blessing of a friend is always highly esteemed. This blessing was bestowed upon the eleven but it was meant for the entire Church. The eleven were not all the real disciples Jesus had at this time, but they may be taken as the representatives of all His followers. They were to be Christ's apostles, the sent ones, sent forth into all the world in order that by the preaching of the Gospel they might gather together all them that should repent and believe. And even though the apostles and many of the first believers received special gifts, such as the gift of tongues, the gift of healing, or the gift of prophecy, yet these blessings also were given for the good of all the Church. We may not speak with tongues today as the apostles did then, but we are glad that they could do so in a time when such things were necessary; and we know that Jesus will aid us in the learning of tongues today also, and will bless the preaching of His Gospel in every language of the children of men.

This blessing furthermore was bestowed upon the Church for all time. We do well to note this fact in particular. Our grandparents probably enjoyed certain earthly privileges that are denied us, certain conditions that are past and gone. Our good fortune is that we have others in their stead, possibly even better ones. But the spiritual blessing that our ascending Lord bestowed upon His disciples is the same today as it was then, just as valid, just as effective, fraught with just as much peace and joy in the

Holy Ghost. That blessing is a fountain that never dries up, a plant that never withers, a sun that never sets. You find the word "everlasting" used frequently in the Bible. It is a word that should fill us with hope and with gladness. We read of the "everlasting Father," of Jehovah's "everlasting strength," of "everlasting light," of an "everlasting kingdom," of Jehovah's "everlasting arms." Indeed you may take any blessed object of hope and somewhere in the Bible you will find the word everlasting added to it. So the blessing which Christ bestowed upon His Church at the beginning is just as rich today as it was then, and shall have the same riches for our children and children's children.

But just what was the blessing? We need to be definite here. It is not stated just what good thing Jesus here bestowed upon His disciples, but we can readily infer what it must have been. Blessing means well-being, prosperity, success in the things that we need. We ask God to bless our daily bread. That is not a prayer that God should provide us with daily bread. When it is a question of giving, then we use the petition: "Give us this day our daily bread." But after He has given us our daily bread we ask Him to bless it also, so that we may get the greatest possible good from it. So Jesus blessed His disciples here. He had already given them the necessary things, His Word, Baptism, the Lord's Supper, His miracles, His life, His death, His resurrection, the commission to go out and preach the Gospel; and the gift of the Holy Spirit, power from on high, was to be given them shortly. Everything was done, everything given. They were fully equipped with the means of grace and with personal training to work out their own salvation as well as the salvation of others. Now at the end of all He adds that which, so to say, enriches all these factors and makes them efficient and capable of conveying the greatest possible good.

Let us look more particularly here at just one of these great features in the work of the church, namely, the means of grace, that is, the Word and the Sacraments. Those means are just as effective today as they were then. The preaching of the Word still carries conviction and causes

men to cry out as they did on the day of Pentecost, "Men and brethren, what must we do?" Baptism is a "washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost," just as much today as it was when Paul said, "As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." In the Lord's Supper the bread and wine still convey the body and blood of Christ by virtue of Christ's Word. All our preaching and teaching were vain and only so much empty sound if there were no constant living power in the Word itself. Therefore the Word is called a seed, a living seed, that has living power in itself and that will spring up and grow. The proper use of that Word will therefore still accomplish results. At the creation God said of the plants and trees, "Let them produce seed after their kind." They do that to the present day. God's creational blessing has guaranteed unto us that fact. And "as the rain cometh down, and the snow, from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater; so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void; but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereunto I sent it." — The third thing that we want to say here concerning our ascended Lord is that:

3. *Him we owe worship and service:* Jesus has ascended into heaven; He has gone back to the Father who had sent Him. We, however, are still upon earth. What is left for us to do? We may sum it up under two heads: One thing is that we worship Him, "And they worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: and they were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God." The disciples had worshipped Jesus upon former occasions, but probably at no time so spontaneously as here. It was not necessary to tell or even suggest to them to do so here. The scene before them simply forced them to their knees and caused their hearts to burst forth in praise and blessing unto the Lord of glory. If up to this time they still had any doubt about Jesus being the Christ and the Lord, all that doubt was now dispelled. This person can be no other

but the Son of God, that must have been the individual conviction of every one of those eleven hearts. What a powerful light this threw upon all the past, upon all that Jesus had said and done. All along there had been doubts and questionings, even after the resurrection all uncertainty had possibly not disappeared; but now there must have been full conviction of the truth of all that Jesus had taught and that all His works were done of God. After all they should not be disappointed in their hopes and expectations; yes, the reality would be much more than they had even anticipated. Their hearts were therefore full of gladness and they could do nothing else but praise God and bless Him continually.

Should we not have the same experience at the ascension of Christ? His works, His life, His teaching all along showed that He was more than a mere man. His resurrection was proof that He is no less than the Son of God. But God is very considerate of our weakness and He wants to give us all the evidence possible. He heaps proof upon proof until we are compelled to acknowledge Him as Lord of all. And so to His powerful teaching, to His mighty works, to His triumphant resurrection He adds His glorious ascension that we may be absolutely certain that He is the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Our hearts, too, must therefore be filled with praise and we must be ready to fall down before the throne and say, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing."

But the disciples did more than simply worship Him. No more is stated here, but we know that they had other work to do. They returned to Jerusalem according to Jesus' instruction and waited there for the promise of the Father, the gift of the Holy Ghost. Then they proceeded to preach the Gospel, beginning at Jerusalem and working out from that center until the whole world should be brought under the sound of the Word of Life.

We are the successors of the Apostles. Brother, do you sufficiently realize that fact? Christ's blessing is laid upon

us as it was upon them, even though we lack these extraordinary gifts which they possessed. The same work to which they were called, has been given us to do. How are *we* doing that work? If a father gives his son instructions to do a certain work and then leaves him for a season, he expects that son to go about that work with energy and with a will. If he does not, there will be trouble at his return. Christ is coming again. Let us not so live and labor that we need to fear that coming. However, our motive for doing our Master's work should not be fear, but rather love. We are told here that the disciples returned to Jerusalem "with great joy." A joyful service is what the Lord wants. Surely we should not disappoint Him. It is the finest way to honor His great name. Songs of praises are all right; He is pleased with them, and sacrifices of thanksgiving are acceptable. But the greatest honor we can do Him is to do His will and perform the work He gave us to do even as He finished the work that His Father gave Him to do. Amen.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

JOHN 7: 33-39

Then said Jesus unto them, Yet a little while am I with you, and *then* I go unto him that sent me. Ye shall seek me, and shall not find *me*: and where I am, *thither* ye cannot come. Then said the Jews among themselves, Whither will he go, that we shall not find him? will he go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles? What *manner* of saying is this that he said, Ye shall seek me, and shall not find *me*: and where I am, *thither* ye cannot come? In the last day, that great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet *given*; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)

HERE is a man who says, I do not know spiritual things, God, Christ, the way of life; I do not know concerning eternity, heaven, hell; I do not know what faith is nor the work of the Holy Spirit. That man would be yourself apart from what you know of these things in Christ Jesus. Here is another man who says, I cannot believe these spiritual things. I perhaps believe them as facts, that there is a God, a Savior, a way of life, a heaven, a hell, an eternity, but I cannot believe them in such a way as to give me any hope or strength. That man again would be yourself if it were not for the faith you have found in Christ Jesus. Here is a third man who says, I have no pardon, I feel my sins, but I do not have the peace of forgiveness. That man too is yourself except for the pardon which you have in Christ Jesus. Here is still another who says, I have no power for a new life, I cannot resist temptation, I cannot stand up under trials. That man again is yourself except for the power you have in Christ Jesus. What you should see is this that all the spiritual things which you possess you have in Christ Jesus alone and without Him you have nothing. This morning then we shall speak of

CHRIST THE SOURCE OF ALL OUR SPIRITUAL
SUPPLIES.

We find in our text three things, the first is:

1. *A dire threat for all who refuse to come to Christ:* "Then said Jesus unto them, Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto him that sent me. Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am thither ye cannot come." Jesus here speaks of His going to the Father, of withdrawing His visible presence from this world and of going back to the place of glory from which He came. He came into this world to do a work; His Father sent Him for that purpose. That work was the redemption of the world through His life, death and resurrection. That great work was about accomplished and now like the workman whose day's work is done He is about to return to His home in heaven. That withdrawal from this world meant visible separation from the people; and it would be only a little while until that separation would take place: "Yet a little while am I with you," only a few more weeks and you will see Me no more.

When Jesus furthermore says, "Where I am, thither ye cannot come," He has in mind not only a physical impossibility — for no man can by his own will and power ascend into heaven — but Jesus is speaking also of the moral and spiritual impossibility: Ye cannot come because ye do not receive Me, My teaching and My work. Ye believe not that I am He, the Christ of God and the Savior of men. Ye are of this world, your thoughts and your works are of this world, but this world with its works can never have any share in My kingdom.

We do well to consider this fact most seriously. Light and darkness cannot dwell together, neither can they coalesce, for what communion hath light with darkness? What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? Jesus was sent into the world to do a work for men, to cleanse them from their sins, to

give them life and righteousness, to restore them again to the image of their Maker. They must accept that work, allow that cleansing, receive that life, permit that restoration, otherwise Jesus cannot take them back with Him to His Father: "No man cometh unto the Father but by me." Here is a prisoner. There are reasons why he should be pardoned. But he must get the pardon through the governor, a life at home and of liberty must come through the governor. Just so here, there is no other source of pardon than Christ, no other source of life and liberty than Christ; to reject Christ and His work is to reject the offer of pardon and the only way to life and salvation. That is what the Jews did. They rejected Christ their Savior. Many are doing the same today. Some reject Christ with much bitterness. The Jews hated Christ bitterly, for they mocked Him most shamefully and put Him to death most cruelly. Men hate Christ today also because He shows them their sins, their lost state and that of themselves they do nothing good in the sight of God. That is a blow at their pride, at their boasting, at their self-sufficiency and men resent it. Some reject Christ in cold reason; they say, There is no reason, no sense in the things of the Gospel. Man is not so bad as he is made out to be to begin with. And even if he is lost, how can some one else save him? He must save himself, make his atonement for sin. Some reject Christ because of this world. They are tied up with this world as a fly is entangled in a spider's web. But Christ testifies of this world that its works are evil and therefore these people hate Christ. Some reject Christ from sheer indifference. They are pretty well satisfied with themselves and life as it is handed to them from mother nature is good enough. They do not care to be disturbed in their repose. With the sluggard they say, "Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep." Christ would disturb their tranquillity and so they reject Him. But no matter on what ground Christ is rejected the outcome is the same. You cannot go where Christ is, you must then remain in the element of your choice as the lost sheep is left a prey to the beasts of the wood.

But Jesus says of these people also, "Ye shall seek me,

and shall not find me." I have been with you a long time, I have healed your sick, I have taught you, have invited you to better things, have pleaded with you to forsake your evil ways, but ye would not. Now I go away and the time shall come when ye will seek Me for ye will then see your great mistake. Upon another occasion Jesus said to His disciples, "The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it." Such a day was the destruction of Jerusalem. Then the storm of God's wrath burst upon Israel because of their sins, and especially because they had rejected their Savior. Even the faithful then longed for the peaceful presence and the sheltering arm of the blessed Master; much more they who had hitherto rejected Him and who now saw their sin, but who like Esau of old could find no room for repentance.

Oh, it is an awful thing to fall into the hands of almighty God when He once begins to reveal His wrath and His hot displeasure! So long as Jesus was yet upon earth and spoke with His enemies there was hope and time for repentance, but when He once withdrew His presence He said, "Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me." Divine grace and the divine will operate in the same way today. God is doing His utmost to save every sinner. What more could I have done to My vineyard? Yet it hath brought forth wild grapes. A man may go so far in his opposition to the Gospel or even in his indifference to it as to become thoroughly fixed and set in his purpose not to repent. The Spirit will withdraw His gracious influence and though the man afterwards comes to see his mistake, it will be too late, the dawn of the light will then not be a revelation of mercy but of judgment; for know this that although men may close their eyes to the truth of the Gospel in this world, in the world to come their eyes will be opened, even as the rich man lifted up his eyes in hell and saw both his state and the cause of it. It is a pathetic scene when men in this life already, as many a deathbed has shown, come to realize the fearful mistake they have made and then with glazed eye and numb hand begin to grope about for Jesus when He is not to be found.

We should also note here why these people did not come to Christ. It was because they could not understand: "Then said the Jews among themselves, Whither will he go, that we shall not find him? Will he go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles? What manner of saying is this that he said, Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me; and where I am, thither ye cannot come?" All along these people misunderstood Jesus. Why? Was it because Jesus' sayings were so deep and so mysterious? Why could unlettered fishermen understand Him? Why could publicans get the thought? Why could women lay hold on the mysteries? Why could the learned and leaders of the people not understand? The explanation is very simple. These men were worldly minded and Jesus did not suit them. They were proud and would not acknowledge their sins. They were vain and thought that they had all knowledge. When Jesus therefore said: I am sent of God; they said, No, you are from Nazareth, the son of Joseph. When He said, I and the Father are one; they said, No, you are in league with the devil. When Jesus said: I cast out devils with the finger of God; they said: No, you cast out devils through Beelzebub the chief of the devils. The unlettered fishermen on the other hand were ready to confess their sins, ready to believe, ready to accept Jesus' sayings and when they could not yet understand they were willing to wait for further light. There is no difficulty in understanding the sayings of Jesus if men are only willing to learn. But no one can be filled with the truth of God so long as he holds fast to his own conceit. You cannot fill a vessel with pure water until you first pour out the unclean contents. — In the second place we have in our text:

2. *An encouraging invitation to come to Christ:* In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink." The occasion here was the Feast of Tabernacles, one of the three great Jewish feasts, celebrated in memory of Israel's journeying in the wilderness. The feast lasted seven days and on the eighth day was "an holy convocation." On each of the seven days water was drawn in a golden

pitcher from the pool of Siloam and carried in procession to the temple. The ceremony was to remind them of the water they drank from the rock in the wilderness. On the eighth day this ceremony was not observed, for this day commemorated their entrance into "a land of springs of water." Paul tells us that Israel in the wilderness all drank "of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ." Very appropriately therefore Jesus stood on the last day of the feast and cried out that all might hear, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink." He is the fountain of salvation. If the people at the feast wanted to commemorate what God did for their fathers in the wilderness and so show their thankfulness, here now was something better than the rock that Moses smote. That was but a type, here was the living fountain itself.

But here again we see the blindness of the people. They carefully observed this ceremony to honor the rock in the wilderness, but Christ the living Rock stood right among them and they knew Him not. This is human nature. If there is some outward demonstration such as a religious parade men are ready to fall in line. It appeals to the eye and to man's vanity, for it is something that man himself is doing. There appears to have been no divine command to carry water in a golden pitcher and for some other ceremonies observed at this feast. Men had added much to the simple service which God had commanded. So men today observe a hundred other things before they will hear the simple and humble call of the Gospel. In His blessed Word Christ is among the people and they know Him not.

There is another thing in this invitation that we should notice. Christ does not say here that any one may come, or that any one who does come may drink. That, of course, is true and the invitation stands for all time. But here Jesus puts the emphasis on "thirst"; If any man thirst, let him come. If you are not thirsty you will not drink, no matter how much water is offered you. We have just seen that the Jews did not come to Christ at His call; they felt no desire for anything that He had to offer them. Nor has there been any change in human nature since that day. It is not hard to

get men interested in things that they want. If a bargain-counter sale is advertised in the Sunday paper there will be a crowd there on Monday morning. What men need to know first of all is not something about the water of life, but something about their sins. Their conscience needs to be set on fire and a burning thirst created, then there will be some chance of getting them to the fountain of life. The law must be our school-master or servant to bring us unto Christ.

The invitation here is most encouraging. Jesus does not exclude anyone, but He is calling directly to those who are thirsty. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." It is easy to preach to such people; they are all ears and eyes and even their mouth is open to drink in the word of truth, and for that reason Jesus calls them blessed; it is not because they have anything, but it is because they know and feel that they have nothing and can therefore be filled. An empty man at a loaded table is happier than the man who is already full. And especially if a man is filled with his own righteousness will he in the end be of all men the most miserable. Peter struck the right chord when at the draught of fishes he fell down before his Master and said, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord. Likewise the publican who smote upon his breast and cried, God be merciful to me a sinner! That's the heart that is athirst and that's the heart that will be filled.

What is the state of your heart today, friend? This ca'll is also for you and it is just as effective today as when Jesus stood in the sacred precincts of the Temple. If you have already accepted the invitation and drunk of the water you will want more, for that is its nature. It always satisfies but it always leaves a taste for more. Or to look at it from the other side, every day you have new sins to confess and new wants to supply and the more of this water you drink the more will you come to feel your own emptiness. But if you have not yet accepted this invitation, if your parched lips have never yet been cooled by this refreshing drink, then come, come today, come at once. Tomorrow may be

too late. Tomorrow Jesus may say, Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me.

In the third place we have in our text:

3. *A gracious promise for all who do come to Christ:* "He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." The Evangelist himself explains these words as referring to the Holy Ghost who should be given to believers and who should be in them a perennial source of spiritual blessings. The Holy Spirit had not been given yet because Christ had not yet been glorified. The gift of the Holy Ghost was a fruit of the redemptive work of Christ, but that work had not yet been completed. Christ must first die and rise again and ascend into heaven. Then only could the Holy Spirit descend in all His fullness.

Notice now that this outflow of water is intended for the benefit of others. Jesus does not here dwell upon the fact that the person himself will be satisfied; that is understood. But He brings out the fact that the persons whose own thirst has been quenched now becomes a fountain to others. When rain falls from the clouds upon the earth we do not drink that water as we see it gathered in pools upon the ground. Not until it has settled into the bosom of the earth and bursts forth somewhere as a living fountain do we drink it. So in God's plan of salvation the gifts of the Spirit are first shed abroad in the human heart and from there then are made to flow for others. Jesus said of His disciples, Ye are the light of the world; ye are the salt of the earth. Nowhere do we find this better exemplified than in the apostles themselves. After Jesus' ascension and before Pentecost the entire company remained gathered together in that upper room, edifying one another indeed, but doing nothing to edify the world outside. But as soon as the Holy Spirit was given the fountains of life were opened and the stream of salvation began to flow, for at once through their preaching multitudes were converted and gathered into the Church.

The prophetess Anna having seen the child Jesus in the temple, spoke to all them that looked for redemption in

Jerusalem. At the first persecution at Jerusalem the believers were scattered abroad and went everywhere preaching the word. Think of the numberless missionaries who have gone out into all parts of the world to open these fountains of living water. How many a desert place has been made to blossom as the rose! And where is the true believer, though he may not be called to be a missionary nor a minister of the Gospel, who will not in some way, by word of mouth or by kind deeds of the hand, try to be a blessing to others and to bring at least one sinner to Him who alone can save? A light that does not shine is a poor light. A well that does not give forth water is a poor well. And a Christian whose life leads no one nearer to Christ is a poor Christian. What a fearful thing it must be for a man who all along professed church-membership to find on the Day of Judgment that instead of having drawn people to Christ his cold, indifferent or even crooked and inconsistent life drove men away from Him! It must needs be that offenses come, but woe to that man by whom the offense cometh.

We should notice also how abundant the supply is. "Rivers of living water," says Jesus. Is there any vegetation that does not need to drink at some stream of water? So too all our acts and relations in life need streams of divine grace to make them what they ought to be. We can work better, rest better, eat and sleep better and everything else will go better if we are planted as a tree by these rivers of water. And no matter how much we may need, there is always an abundance of it to be had; that is, the Holy Spirit is as a boundless ocean of divine grace, but sad to say the streams do not flow among us from one to another as they should. Oh, what a world this would be if these streams were flowing forth from all of us unto others! From every direction the streams would be flowing in upon us. There would be more love, more cheer, more joy. Our faults would be forgiven, tears would be dried away, burdens would be borne for one another, every one would be loving and helping everybody else. God speed the day! Amen,

PENTECOST

JOHN 14: 15-21

If ye love me keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; *Even* the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also. At that day ye shall know that I *am* in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you. He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

PENTECOST was the second of the three great Jewish festivals. It was celebrated but one day. It was chiefly a thanksgiving festival for the first fruits of the harvest. For the Christian Church Pentecost is a great festival day. It is the last of the great festivals. It is also a festival of thanksgiving for first fruits, not however of the fruits of the land but of the fruits of the Spirit. Jesus had given His disciples the promise of the Holy Ghost and on the day of His ascension had commanded them to remain at Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high. They were not to begin preaching before that day. We thus see that the work of the Church, the work of saving men, could not be done without the Holy Ghost, for we have all learned to confess in our catechism, "I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith."

This morning then we shall speak of

THE GIFT OF THE HOLY GHOST

dwelling, first, upon:

1. *The conditions under which the Holy Ghost is given:* Jesus first declares that we must show our love to Him by keeping His commandments: "If ye love me, keep

my commandments.” Any profession of love for Jesus that does not include the doing of His commandments will not be recognized by Him. What would you think of a child’s profession of love for its parents if it constantly kept disobeying its parents? What would you think of a friend who professed great love for you but never did anything to please you? Do you suppose that Christ will go into ecstasies over your profession of love for Him if you do not the things that please Him? “Ye are my friend,” says He, “if ye do whatsoever I command you.”

Right here you need to apply the touchstone to your life. If you find no pleasure in doing Jesus’ commandments then your profession of love for Him goes for naught. You may in a measure deceive yourself and your neighbor, but you cannot deceive Christ. And by His commandments we are not to think only of legal precepts as not to kill, not to steal and the like. Those things are all included as a matter of course. A person cannot pass for a decent moral man even in the world if he does not at least outwardly observe these things; much less will Jesus recognize such an one as a true disciple of His, no matter what his profession may be. But by commandments here we are to understand Christ’s will and word in general. And the very first thing He wants us to do is to believe on Him. “This is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life.” To hear Jesus’ word gladly, to treasure it up in the heart, to feed on it as bread for the soul, to do and keep it in every day life, that is the thing that pleases Jesus above all else. When Jesus wanted to tell the people who were the really blessed ones he did not point to the rich or the learned, nor to the Pharisee and the priest, not even to His own mother who bare Him, but He said, “Blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it.” All along we find this class of people to have been the best friends of Jesus and most beloved of Him; as, for example, a Mary who sat at His feet and heard His words. Such, too, are willing to love their neighbor and do him good even as they find pleasure in doing their Master’s will.

But you may say, What has this to do with the gift of the Holy Ghost? If love to Christ is a condition of receiving the Holy Ghost, how are we to meet that condition, since we are taught that we cannot even begin to love God without the Holy Ghost? The explanation is not difficult. The Holy Ghost offers you His grace through the Gospel. He even makes you willing to accept that Word and to believe in Christ, if only you do not resist Him. If you turn a deaf ear to His preaching, He can, of course, do nothing for you. You cannot teach a pupil if he closes his ears and eyes to what you do and say. But if you are ready to hear and learn the Holy Spirit will lead you to faith in Christ, and the moment you begin to believe the flame of love will appear. It may be weak at first, you may hardly know it is there, but it is there. When you kindle a fire you feel some warmth with the first little flame. So faith at once begins to warm up the heart with love. And if you now rejoice in faith and reach out for more, pray the Lord to increase your faith and diligently use your Bible that your faith may find nourishment; and if you furthermore find pleasure in the love that has been kindled and exercise that love in doing Jesus' will and in loving your fellowmen — then will the Holy Spirit be shed abroad in your heart in greater measure and there will be an increase of His blessings until the very day of your death. You go to an art store and see a fine painting, you look at the picture and find pleasure in doing so, but the picture is not your own. Then you reach for your purse and pay the price of the painting and take it home with you. Now it is your own. So in a way the Holy Ghost at first showers the blessings of the Gospel about you; you see possibilities in that Gospel, you experience some delight, but it is only a slight first-fruit. When you now seize upon the Gospel and accept Christ, then the Holy Spirit comes home to you and dwells in your heart. The first believers had some gift of the Spirit before the day of Pentecost, but because they had been faithful in Jesus and had loved Him, therefore the Holy Spirit was given them in great measure on that memorable day.

Obedience to Jesus' Word and love to Him are absolutely necessary as a condition for receiving the Holy Ghost. "Whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him," says Jesus. On the day of Pentecost there were many people in Jerusalem; what had taken place with the disciples was also noised abroad; all heard them preach the Gospel too, everyone in his own tongue. But only a few received the Holy Ghost. It was quite a large company indeed, three thousand aside from the disciple company, but only a few compared with the many who were there. The world was untouched by the Spirit. Why was this? Simply because they were not willing to hear and believe. Peter preached to all the people just as he did to those who repented, but they had no ears for the truth. They made a mockery of the whole thing and said: These men are full of new wine. There is no room in such hearts for the Holy Ghost. He cannot get in no matter how much He may want to, for He is not going to break in by sheer force as a thief breaks into a house. When men do not look upon the preaching of the Gospel as the invitation of Christ and as an offer of grace and salvation, when they are not willing to hear and obey it, but on the contrary perhaps even make light of it and scoff at the Christian faith and ridicule believers, then are they left by the Spirit to their own fatal delusion.

But of His disciples Jesus says, "But ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." The very fact that you, my friends, love Jesus' word, that you want to hear and seek to do it, even though it be with much weakness, that fact is evidence that the Spirit is with you and even dwelleth in you. May it be your earnest desire to have Him more fully with you, for He can dwell in your heart only as you make room for Him. And remember well the conditions under which He comes and abides, that ye love Jesus and keep His commandments. And especially you who for the first time make public confession of Christ need to consider well how the Holy Spirit may be kept as your comforter and guide through life. It was the Holy Spirit who has called you by the Gospel and enlightened you with

His gifts. Walk now in that light which has begun to shine in your heart. You have begun to know what Jesus' commandments are; see that you keep them and so show your love for Him. Then will the Spirit keep you by His power unto a blessed end. — In the second place let us look at:

2. *The nature of the Holy Spirit's work:* Jesus calls Him the Comforter, the Father shall give you another Comforter. The word "another" seems to indicate that His work shall be similar to that which Jesus did. We know what Jesus did. He healed the sick, He fed the hungry, He restored friends taken away in death, He especially comforted the penitent sinners by assuring them of the forgiveness of their sins. All along He scattered comfort and hope and cheer and encouragement. Wherever He went His path was fringed with sunshine and people came from all sides to rejoice in His presence. Of course He could not comfort such men as the Scribes and the Pharisees. Jesus was a man of truth and a respecter of no man's person and He was not slow to tell these men what they were and what they had to expect. But whoever was humble and ready to learn from Him found comfort and good cheer.

Such now shall be the work of the Holy Ghost. He shall continue what Jesus began to do. But how is this work done? Jesus was right with the people, lived among them, talked with them, dwelt with them. It is plain how He with His power, with His infinite love and sympathy and compassion could comfort people. But how can the Holy Ghost do this, whom we cannot see, with whom we cannot speak? Such questions are all of the flesh. Did not Jesus say to His disciples, "It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away the comforter will not come unto you"? Here Jesus expressly declared that it is better to have the spiritual presence of the Holy Spirit than the bodily presence of Himself. Let us not forget that it is a spiritual world at which we are aiming, a spiritual life that we are trying to live and that the work therefore must be a spiritual work. The Holy Spirit does His work through the means of grace, the Word and the Sacraments. You confess your sins and ask forgiveness; the Spirit answers you through the Word

that they are forgiven. That's comfort. You have some doubt whether you are fully reconciled to God; the Spirit assures you that if you believe in Christ there is complete reconciliation with God. That's comfort. The cares and burdens of life grow heavy upon you; the Spirit through the Word cheers and strengthens you. That's comfort. You fear that the many and great foes in life may rob you of your faith; the Spirit assures you by the Word that He will keep you by His power unto a blessed end. That's comfort. Thus all along in life, the Spirit is there to comfort you by that Word.

And Jesus calls the Spirit "The Spirit of truth." We do not get the full force of that title when we think that the Spirit only declares the truth unto us, that when we hear the Word preached it is only a declaration of the truth that we hear. Neither is it enough to say that the Holy Spirit never deceives, never preaches false doctrine. These things are important. The Word of truth must be declared, the Spirit must move men to preach. We need to be assured too that what is preached is the truth, for it should stand to reason that no false preaching can get us to heaven. Lies always work out disastrously even in merely civil matters, much more in the eternal things of the soul. But the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth also because He leads us into the truth. "He will guide you into all truth," said Jesus. By His grace we are led to see the truth, to believe it and so to know it. For as a matter of fact we do not rightly know the truth until we believe it and live in it. The unbeliever may know much about the Bible but he does not know the truth. A new food is placed on the market; you see it and hear people talk about it. But you do not rightly know it, especially not the real value of it, until you get it and eat it. So, too, one can come to know the Word of God rightly, to see its real beauty and experience its power, only by believing it and living it. You may know much about a suit of clothes, but get no personal benefit from it until you put it on and wear it. We are to put on Christ, wear Him, use Him, then only do we learn to know Him, just as you learn to know and value a friend by using him. But to all

these things the Holy Ghost brings us by leading us into the truth.

Furthermore, Jesus said of the Spirit that He will "abide with you forever." My bodily presence can be with you only for a while; very shortly I must leave you. Not so the Spirit. His will not be a bodily presence, but He shall abide with you forever. Oh, what comfort in that assurance! We have assured ourselves that the Holy Spirit will do all for us that needs to be done; He will guide us into the truth, He will strengthen us for the labor and trials of life, He will especially comfort us with the forgiveness of sin. But can we depend on Him for all time? How about those dark days that are bound to come? Will He be with us then? How about the valley of the shadow of death? Will He be at our side then also? Here is the promise: He shall *abide* with you. Lay hold on that word "abide." Not for a time only shall He be with you, not only when the sun shines and the heart beats high with hope and joy, but all the time He shall be with you, and especially then when the clouds gather thick; for then we need Him most. — In the third place let us consider:

3. *The fruits of the Spirit's presence:* One fruit of the Spirit's presence is that we shall know and see Christ. This is said over against the unbelieving world: "Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me." The world never saw more of Christ than his external presence. It sees no more of Him today than that He was a man who lived and taught for a while and possibly did some strange things and then suffered death as a martyr to His convictions. Not so the believers who have received the Holy Spirit. To them Jesus is ever present, not indeed to the bodily eye but to the eye of faith. They see Him in the Word and in the Sacrament; they feel His presence, His saving power, His uplift for the duties of life. If you are in trouble, discouraged and at your wits' end as to what to do, it's a great help for some strong friend to step in and cheer you up and give you some good advice. How much more helpful when the mighty Comforter, the Holy

Ghost, stands by your side and with the words of Christ strengthens and cheers you for the trials of life.

Another fruit of the Spirit's presence is that he shall live: "Because I live, ye shall live also." Our life is dependent upon Christ's life. In God "we live, move and have our being." But here is the man Christ Jesus. Does He live? He made it plain to His disciples that He has life in Himself. Therefore death could not hold Him, He arose from the dead. He lives and all who believe in Him live, for through faith they became one with Him. But all this takes place through the Spirit. "I will not leave you comfortless," He says: "I will come to you." It is in the Holy Spirit that He comes to us and abides with us and assures us of our union with Him and of our life in Him.

Another fruit of the Spirit's presence is that we shall know Jesus as one with the Father: "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father." Accepting Christ as the Savior would not suffice if one felt that He was not one with the Father. The Father might not agree to what the Son has done. There might be some conflict and between the two we poor helpless sinners would come to grief. But have no fear. "I and the Father are one." What He wills I will, and what I have done He has sent Me to do. Therefore "let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me." Nor is that all of this union. Not only am I in the Father, but also "ye in me, and I in you." What a binding together there is here by the Holy Spirit. Some learned men tell us that in the holy Trinity it is the Spirit or the third person that binds the Father and the Son together. I do not know how that is, but here we are plainly told that we are in Christ and Christ in us; and if Christ is in the Father then we also are in the Father. And this union furthermore is the fruit of the Spirit who effects these things in us through the Word and the Sacraments.

There is still a further fruit of the Spirit's presence: "He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and manifest myself to him." Jesus speaks here of the special love that God has for those who have received the Holy Spirit. For God already loved men

before ever they were redeemed; how much more does He not love them now after they have been redeemed and that redemption has been accepted through faith. If He loved us while we were yet in our sins, how much more now that our sins have been washed away! And this additional love means further manifestation of Christ; and I “will manifest myself to him.” There is a continuous reciprocal progress or growth here. The more we love Christ the more He will show Himself to us; and the more He shows Himself the more we shall love Him. It is like the growth of the tree; the more the sun shines on it the more it spreads its branches; and the more it spreads its branches the more sunshine it can take in. That is the explanation of spiritual growth. It can take place only in Christ and it takes place by the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit works through the Word and Sacraments. Amen.

TRINITY SUNDAY

MATTHEW 28: 16-20

Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted. And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen.

TODAY we celebrate the festival of the blessed Trinity. It is not a festival in the ordinary sense of that term, for we do not celebrate some great event in the work of redemption such as the outpouring of the Holy Ghost on Pentecost or the resurrection of Christ on Easter. What we celebrate today is a great fact or truth, namely, that in the one God who rules heaven and earth and who has redeemed us from our sins there are three persons, Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

The Church's interest in this great fact and doctrine is not a theoretical one: we are not trying to explain how there can possibly be three persons in the God-head and yet be but one God. That is a mystery and we are willing to leave it be a mystery. Our interest in the doctrine of the Trinity is a practical one. We are interested in knowing how the Father, Son and Holy Ghost have revealed themselves, what part each person played already in the work of creation, but especially in the work of redemption. We want to observe how essential the work of each divine person in the salvation of our souls is so that we may rightly thank and praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost. We are especially interested also in confessing this doctrine because it is being denied by so many who still want to pass as Christians. We shall then this morning consider:

THE REVELATION OF THE BLESSED TRINITY IN
THE WORK OF SALVATION.

In the first place let us look at:

1. *The revelation of the blessed Trinity in the working out of redemption:* There is a redemptive plan just as there was a creative plan. Chapter one of Genesis shows how God created the world in a methodical way, step by step, from the lower to the higher, until man made in the image of God and the crown of all visible creatures was reached. So, too, God devised a plan, man having fallen, to redeem him from sin and death and restore him again to life. But this plan was thought out by God, the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, and not alone by the Son who is the Redeemer. The Son indeed came into the world and wrought out our salvation, but He was not alone in doing this; the Father was with Him and worked through Him. This fact is not brought out expressly in our text, but it is clearly implied. When Jesus says here, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth," He means of course that such power was given Him by some one who had that power to give. There was only One who possessed such power and could give it. And though we need not think here exclusively of the Father, yet the Father had a part in the act. Moreover Jesus says expressly elsewhere, "All things are delivered unto me of my Father." Again He says that "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son." Again He declares that "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved." How plainly does He not speak of the fact that the Father sent Him, that He did not come of Himself? He says expressly, "I can of mine own self do nothing; as I hear I judge; and my judgment is just: because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me." Again He says, "The works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me."

For this reason also, because the Father wrought in and through the Son, the Son is declared to be the revealer of the

Father. John calls Him the "Word," that He was with God from the beginning and is God. He means to say that Christ makes known the Father to us, shows His love and mercy, reveals to us the truth of God by which we are to be set free. A king sends an ambassador to another court to reveal to the ruler there the king's will and purpose. So the Son comes into the world to reveal to us the will and purpose of God with reference to our salvation. Jesus therefore says that no man knoweth the Father, "save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." And again He says that "he that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

These and many other declarations of holy writ show most conclusively that the Father, the first person of the blessed Trinity, was actively engaged in the work of redemption, that the redemption is primarily a revelation of the love and mercy of God just as the creation is a revelation primarily of God's power, wisdom and goodness.

That the Son Himself was engaged in the work of redemption is of course evident. He came into the world, became man, fulfilled the law, took upon Himself our sins, taught and labored among men, died and rose again and ascended into heaven. All these things were done in the body, before the eyes of men; He was born, He lived, He died, He rose again, He ascended into heaven. These were indeed all spiritual deeds or events, but there was a bodily and a visible side to them. For that reason the part in the act of redemption played by the second person of the blessed Trinity is so real to us, so apparent, and we are apt sometimes to think that the Son did it all. But we have already seen that such was not the case. The Son alone became man, not the Father and not the Holy Spirit; but the Father wrought in and through the Son who had now become the God-man.

But we have a trinity to deal with and not merely a duality. We find that the Holy Spirit was also engaged in the work of redemption and that we have in this work therefore a revelation also of the third person of the blessed Trinity. This we know, not only because the three persons of the blessed Trinity are one, a unity, and therefore are

always together and inseparable in their activity, but also because the Holy Spirit is expressly spoken of as cooperating in the redemptive work. When the angel Gabriel was sent to the Virgin to announce the conception and the birth of Jesus Christ he said, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." Therefore the Church confesses of Jesus Christ in her creed that He was "conceived of the Holy Ghost." Again when Jesus was thirty years old and, preparatory to entering upon His public ministry, was baptized, the Holy Spirit at that sacred rite descended upon Him in a bodily shape like a dove and abode upon Him. Immediately after His baptism we are told that Jesus, being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. When He first preached to His own town people in Nazareth Jesus said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor, he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted; to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind; to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." Peter said that God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power; who went about doing good, and healing all who were oppressed of the devil: for God was with him." It is very evident therefore that the Holy Ghost, the third person of the blessed Trinity, was likewise engaged in working out the redemption of man. The work of the Holy Ghost was all along a purely spiritual work just as it is today. For that reason His presence and His part in that work are not so apparent as the work of the Son who appeared in our midst in the form of man.

Thus it should be clear to us from the work of redemption alone that God is triune, that there are Father, Son and Holy Ghost, one God but three persons, and that these three persons wrought together in effecting the redemption of men. It should be clear to us now also that our interest in the doctrine of the blessed Trinity is not a theoretical one,

nor a speculative one; we are not greatly concerned to know how these things are possible, how we can speak of one God and yet of three distinct persons, or just what the relation of these persons is one to another. We freely grant that there is a mystery here which we cannot solve. And we are glad that there is such a mystery. If our little minds could comprehend God and analyze Him then certainly He could not be a great God. How could we worship such a being? We do not even worship a man, and yet we cannot begin to analyze even a man. Now, we are glad that God is so great, so majestic, so infinitely exalted above us that we can see and understand as it were but the fringe of His garment. Therefore it is that we with all the host in heaven and upon earth adore Him and worship Him as God forever and ever.

But we are interested in the doctrine of the Trinity especially because of practical reasons. Nothing can interest us so much as our redemption. We want to know that God wrought it. And if God is triune we want to be assured that all three persons had a part in it and agree to it, nothing less can satisfy us. If you make a contract with a corporation of three men, you want to be assured that all three agree to the contract. We want to know that Father, Son and Holy Ghost say that Jesus dies for us, saved us from our sin, and that through faith in Him we have forgiveness of sins, righteousness and everlasting life. And these things the holy Scriptures plainly teach us. No one can read the four gospels, not to speak at all of the epistles, without seeing these facts. If He does not see them, it is because he closes his eyes and does not want to see and believe. Therefore we can have no patience with any teaching that denies either the divinity of Jesus or the personal existence of the Holy Ghost. There are those, and many of them, who teach that Jesus was only a man and that the Holy Spirit is only an influence and not a person. All such teachings we must denounce as heresy and hold fast to the plain words of the Scriptures. — In the second place we shall consider:

2. *The revelation of the blessed Trinity in the application of redemption:* The redemption of the world

through the work of Christ was not all that needed to be done. That alone does not save men. Men were dead in trespasses and sins after Christ had died just the same as before. The governor may declare a prisoner's pardon, but if nothing more is done the prisoner remains in the cell. His liberty has been procured for him, but he has not yet received it nor accepted it. Some one must bring the governor's announcement to him and open the door of his cell. So, too, salvation has been wrought out for every man, God is prepared to grant full pardon and to bestow complete liberty and everlasting salvation upon each individual of the human race, but this unspeakable gift must be offered to the person and he must accept it. All men have been redeemed, but only those are being saved who hear the word of life and accept it. This is what we mean by the application of redemption. And in this work of bringing salvation to men we find the blessed Trinity engaged just as in the working out of redemption.

First of all we need to consider here Jesus' declaration, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." It strikes us a little strange perhaps to hear this statement just in this connection. Jesus is sending forth the apostles to preach the Gospel, to make disciples of all nations, or in other words, to apply the redemption which God had wrought out. We would rather expect something like this: All men in all the world have been redeemed; go ye therefore and teach all nations; tell them the good news and offer them the great salvation. But God's ways are not our ways. It is clear too in this case why they are not. Suppose Jesus had died for us and redeemed us, but suppose He did not have absolute power over all creatures, what assurance could we have that we would be delivered after all? Suppose a governor pardoned a prisoner, but superior force about the prison gate prevented the governor from applying his pardon. We look upon our redemption as a work of love, of grace, of mercy rather than as a work of power, yet absolute power must lie back of the redemptive act, otherwise the redemption can never be applied. Of this fact Christ here assures the Church for all time to come: Have no fear. Do

not doubt My word. Do not question any promise I make; everything I say shall be accomplished. The reason is: I stand back of it all and in My hand is all power in heaven and in earth.

This statement of Jesus just at this time must have been especially strengthening to His disciples. Since His resurrection there was no longer any doubt in their mind as to the divine character of Jesus Christ. They could therefore believe these words. And when they considered their own small number, their lack of standing in the eyes of men, they may well have thought, Who is sufficient for these things? How can we few weak men hope to evangelize all nations? What power are we going to apply to bring men to the feet of Jesus? But here they are told to have no fear. The work shall be done. They are to go and do what they have been told. He who has all power and all authority will see that results follow. Men, of course, are not to be converted by irresistible omnipotence; they are to be converted by divine grace and that may be resisted. Yet back of the command to preach the Gospel stands the power and authority of God Himself. And this was spoken for our encouragement today also as well as for the encouragement of the disciples. The command to teach all nations is still upon the Church, but behind that command too is all power in heaven and in earth.

In the very authority then and power back of the command to preach the Gospel we have not only the Son but also the Father. In the work of the Church then, in her effort to carry out the command of Christ, we know that the Son and the Father are working together and we on our part are co-workers with them.

But the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the blessed Trinity, is also a co-worker in the application of redemption to the salvation of men. Jesus said to Nicodemus that a man must be "born again of water and the Spirit." He told the eleven to return to Jerusalem and wait there until they be "endued with power from on high," that is, with the power of the Holy Ghost as they actually received Him on the day of Pentecost. Accordingly we confess in our cate-

chism, "I believe that I cannot by my own reason and strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith." Indeed this whole work of leading men to a knowledge of the truth, to repentance and to faith in Christ and keeping them in that grace and sanctifying them through love is altogether a spiritual work, carried on by spiritual means and is especially the work of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter whom Jesus sent to abide with us forever.

Therefore, too, because the blessed Trinity is active in the application of redemption, Baptism is to take place in this name, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. The authority for Baptism is the authority of the triune God. The gifts and power of grace that are imparted through Baptism are gifts and power of the triune God. We are brought by Baptism into blessed communion with the triune God. Baptism therefore is not a command of the Son alone, much less of Jesus only as a man, but it has been instituted by the authority of the entire Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

So, too, when Jesus further says, "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you," we are not to think of this instruction as issuing alone from the Son. That would suffice for us, for we know that the Son does nothing except by the will of the Father. But all these things that we are taught through the Word of God and which we are to keep and do — they are things that God wants us to do, the triune God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Jesus issues the command here in person, but He was sent to do that very thing.

Likewise when He says, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world," let us rejoice and have courage not only because Jesus is with us, but as baptized into Christ and believing in Christ we stand in fellowship with the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Such is our faith concerning the blessed Trinity. Let us hold fast to it in these days of much wavering. Amen.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

MATTHEW 13:31-35

Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field; which indeed is the least of all seeds; but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof. Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened. All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.

TODAY we enter upon the non-festival part of the church year, the long line of Trinity Sundays. During the festival part of the year, we celebrate the great events in the life and work of Jesus Christ by which the world was redeemed and the salvation of man made possible. The things spoken of show that the kingdom of God has come upon earth in the fulness of grace and power to save men. I am come to seek and to save that which was lost was one of the persistent cries of Jesus the Savior.

In the second part of the year it is the Church's purpose to apply the salvation that has been wrought out, to declare and expound more fully the great facts and truths of God's kingdom unto the repentance and salvation of men. "Go ye therefore and make disciples of all nations" was the last command of Christ to His disciples. The foundation has been laid, go now and build up that foundation; or, to use another figure: The seed has been provided, go now and sow the seed in the great world-field. If in the first part of the year we were interested especially in the beginning of the kingdom, in those things that were necessary to establish it, in this the second part we shall be interested especially in the development and growth of that kingdom.

The lesson for today may be taken as giving us the keynote. It sets forth the kingdom of heaven as the great subject for consideration during the long line of after-Trinity Sundays. It starts us off with a comprehensive view of

THE PROGRESS OF GOD'S KINGDOM:

First, Externally; second, Internally.

But before we proceed with this subject a word needs to be said with reference to Jesus' habit of speaking to the people in parables: "All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them." The evangelist calls attention to this fact here to show that these things were done in fulfillment of prophecy, "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which were kept secret from the foundation of the world." By these secret things we are to understand especially the blessed truths of the Gospel. From the beginning of the world no man knew or could know these things except as God revealed them. But God has been pleased to reveal them through Christ. To Him must all men come, if they would have a knowledge of the way of life. He is the light of the world that lighteth every man that cometh into the world. Not until Christ was come could it be fully said, "The kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye and believe the Gospel."

Elsewhere Jesus Himself tells us more particularly just why He spake in parables. For the unbelieving Jesus spake in parables that they might hear and see and yet not understand and believe. It was, of course, not Jesus' purpose to hide the blessed truths from their eyes, but yet, because they did not want to believe and were unwilling to hear and to learn, these things as a matter of fact were hidden to them. The Bible is always a parable and a puzzle to such people; instead of humbly seeking the truth they have a hundred foolish and puzzling questions to ask and are ready to urge objections by the score. But to those who are hum-

ble, ready to learn and willing to receive the truth as it comes to them, the parables are a wonderful means for a fuller understanding and a wider application of divine truth. The two little parables of our lesson today show this: The first, the Parable of the Mustard Seed shows:

1. *The Outward Progress of God's Kingdom:* We might speak here of the character of the mustard seed, of its spicy aromatic flavor, of its pungent taste, of the element of life contained in the little kernel; to these things we could point out corresponding elements and qualities in the kingdom of God and we should find them both interesting and instructive. However, it is quite plain that the point which Jesus wished to emphasize in this parable is the greatness of the full-grown plant compared with the smallness of the seed; such a little seed but such a great plant. So is the kingdom of God; such a little beginning, but in the end such a world-encompassing realm.

This parable purports to set forth a historical fact, a fact too that after almost two thousand years must at some time have taken place, at least in good part, for it is not likely that Jesus meant that some two thousand years should pass before this plant would at all become greatly noticeable. He doubtless meant that the seed was planted then already, that it would shortly spring up and that it would not be long before men could see its growth. Here, then, a historical fact is foretold which has either taken place or it has not taken place; history must show that this saying of Jesus either has or has not been realized. If in looking at the history of the Church we find that the Church has not developed from something small into something great, then we would say that this parable cannot be true; then too our faith in Jesus' sayings generally and in the claims of the Gospel throughout would be greatly shaken. But if the history of the Church shows that there has been such growth and development as is here predicted, then we say that this parable is true and it should go towards leading men to accept all the claims of the Gospel as fully trustworthy. If you would say to a man who happens to know nothing of electricity: I have a way of lighting my house without

the use of pine knot, tallow candle or lamp, but he would seem incredulous, and you would then take him into the house, turn the switch and fill the house with light, that should convince him. So here, we take this little parable of Jesus and throw upon it the light of history and ask men to consider what the kingdom of God has done, how it has grown from a little seed into the mightiest and most far-reaching power in the world.

What now is the lesson of history on this point? Away back at the dawn of time there was planted a seed, a word-seed. The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head. For centuries the seed lay dormant; at times, when the wickedness of the world had grown great and faith had all but disappeared from the earth, it was well-nigh forgotten that the seed had ever been planted. Only now and then there were indications that the divine purposes to do something for a lost world was still in existence. But at length, after thousands of years, the seed sprang up, a tiny shoot from the stem of Jesse; a helpless child, of poor parents, among strangers and without friends, laid in the hard bed of a manger. True, there were divine manifestations at the birth of the child, omens of great things to come; there was the vision of the angels to the shepherds, the message of peace and good will to the world, the wonderful star for the magi. But as yet there was only a weak and helpless child to look to, a child that had to be carried to Egypt for protection from the deadly purpose of cruel Herod.

Thirty years that tiny shoot grew in the garden of unlikely Nazareth, unknown and forgotten of men; but the sunshine of divine favor and the dew of heavenly grace were upon it. Then there came to Jesus of Nazareth the call to enter upon His great work. Ever ready to do His Father's will He promptly followed the call. He went forth, a single individual and, so far as human means were concerned, unprepared for the work. He sent no heralds before Himself to advertise His coming except John the Baptist whom heaven itself had commissioned to prepare the way. Jesus went about quietly teaching and preaching and doing miracles. There was soon a stir among the people

and ere long the whole nation was moved. But there were also enemies, and after three years of labor He was delivered into their hands and was put to death as an evil-doer. The tender plant had apparently been broken and crushed. But the ways of God are not the ways of men. What seemed to be death to the movement was just the real beginning of growth and development.

Jesus' followers were not many, one hundred and twenty in Jerusalem, some five hundred in Galilee, only twelve were specially prepared to go forth and continue their Master's work; and these twelve men were not great and likely men in the eyes of men, but very ordinary persons, fishermen and unlettered. But what of their work? They went everywhere preaching the Word. Province after province capitulated until the whole Roman empire paid tribute to the lowly Nazarene. Nor did the work stop there; interrupted at times, opposed by the craft of Satan and the hatred of men, driven back for a time, the soldiers of the cross have nevertheless gone on up to the present. Yes, we can say that at the present time the Church has taken on new life and we have the assurance that she will not cease her onward march until, according to divine prediction, the kingdoms of the world have become the kingdom of the Lord and of His Christ. There is here a wider fulfillment of the Psalmist's words: "Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt: thou hast cast out the heathen and planted it; thou preparedst room before it, and didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land."

What is true of the kingdom of God as a whole is also true of separate parts and of different phases of that kingdom. Abraham was called as one individual to a strange land, without an heir, to become the founder of a great nation, the father of all believers, in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed; Moses was born an outlawed child, was for forty years an exile from his adopted country, but he became the mighty deliverer of his people, the great lawgiver of Israel and of the whole world; Luther was but a miner's son, with no great ambition, but in God's hand he became the chosen instrument to restore again to a dark-

ened age the full light of the Gospel, and so great was his work that all Protestant nations today arise and call him blessed. Even Rome, though she bitterly opposed the movement, is reaping the benefit of that awakening.

The truth of the parable is exemplified especially too in various phases of modern Inner Mission work. On November, first, 1883, John Henry Wiechern opened his school and asylum for neglected boys in Horn, a suburb of Hamburg. It was an old thatched cottage in which he started. Three ragged boys knocked at its door for admission on the day of the opening, but that small beginning of the Rauhe Haus has grown into stately buildings and a network of benevolent institutions. Earlier already, in 1695, August Hermann Francke opened his orphanage of one room in Halle. He had only seven guilders to start with, but that little seed has developed into great institutions whose influence has reached out to other countries; and what is especially remarkable, never did Francke ask a man for money, but God he asked often. Theodore Fliedner began his deaconess work with "one table, some broken chairs, a few worn knives and two-pronged forks, seven sheets and four cases of severe illness." He bought a home without money, but with plenty of faith. That seed has grown until all Christian nations have their deaconess institutions and mother-houses.

But there is no need of going farther; everywhere in the kingdom of God it is a repetition of the mustard seed grown into a tree. These things should fill us with hope and assurance for the future. We should also learn not to despise small beginnings; but we should feel ourselves called upon to lay hold of the work, for the plant needs cultivation. We should also rejoice in the protection offered by the tree, for the birds come and lodge in the branches thereof: "It shall bring forth boughs, and bear fruit, and be a goodly cedar, and under it shall dwell all fowls of every wing; in the shadow of the branches thereof shall they dwell." "Christ's kingdom shall attract multitudes by the shelter and protection which it offers; shelter as it has often proved to be from worldly oppression, shelter from the great power of the devil. Itself a tree of life whose leaves are for

medicine and whose fruit for food, all who need the healing of their soul's hurts, all who long for the satisfying of their soul's hunger, shall betake themselves to it." — But we have another parable to consider, the parable of the leaven. It shows:

2. *The Progress of God's Kingdom Inwardly*: When we say that the parable of the leaven shows the inward growth of God's kingdom we mean the moral and spiritual changes and effects that are brought about in the heart by the Gospel. Everywhere the kingdom of God is represented as a thing of life, of action, as effecting results or producing great changes in the hearts and minds and thoughts of men. The flour, after the leaven has worked, is altogether a different thing from what it was before. So the heart of man, after the kingdom of God or the Gospel has done its work, is an altogether different heart; the person is a new creature in Christ: "Old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new."

But note here some of the conditions that are necessary in order to make these changes possible. The leaven is put in flour, not in a heap of uncrushed grain, leaven could do nothing there. So the heart or soul must be humbled and broken on account of sin; the leaven of the Gospel will not mix with a proud impenitent heart. Then again the entire heart must be exposed to the Gospel influence just as the leaven must reach every particle of the meal; there dare be no reservation of purposes, ways and habits which are known to be wrong. You will get a very imperfect loaf of bread, if you do not give your whole heart to the Lord. Then, too, the leaven must be hid in the meal for the purpose of having its power communicated to the meal. Of Mary it is said that she laid up in her heart the sayings concerning her Child. So must you lay up in your heart the Word of truth and then — and this is especially necessary — you must let it work and not interfere by interposing doubts and objections and puzzling questions; you must be passive and submissive to the influence of the Spirit as the meal is to the leaven.

The changes of which we speak here are inward changes

and results, but nevertheless they are capable of being seen. Here again as in the first parable, history will show whether the leaven has been working or not, whether this saying of Jesus has been realized or not. What do we find in the history of the Church? We find a great change wrought, for example, in the Jews. They had been God's chosen people, but they lacked something very essential. That essential thing was the Gospel leaven. The change was strikingly exemplified in Saul. He was an enemy of Christ, a persecutor of Jesus' followers, a denier of the Gospel. But when in God's way the leaven was placed in his heart a mighty change took place; he now confessed Christ, defended His disciples and preached the Gospel. So great was the change wrought that he gave himself a whole offering upon the altar of service to Christ and became the greatest of all the apostles, the exemplar of missionaries for all time to come, and at the end joyfully gave his life for the faith which he once was the foremost in denying.

But the change wrought is more conspicuously exemplified in the heathen world. From the days of the apostles up to the present a mighty change has been taking place among pagan nations. Attempts have been made to explain the change by the influence of philosophy or that of human culture and natural development. But these attempts have always failed and always will fail. The only adequate explanation is the leaven of the Gospel. Where that Gospel has gone the people have laid aside their idols; the path of the missionary is always marked by the ruin of broken temples and idols. They laid aside their superstition; already in Ephesus they gathered together their books on the black arts and burned them before all men, the price being fifty thousand pieces of silver, "so mightily grew the Word of God and prevailed." Barbarism is forgotten and disclaimed. There are islands and countries where you would have gone at the risk of your life as well as your valuables, yes, where you might have been served for a meal at their inhuman feasts. Now you may go there and sojourn as among your own friends. We see also the change in personal rights and privileges. Slavery has disappeared or is disappearing and

that, not primarily by outward force or statute, but by the leavening principle of the Gospel, that all men are equal before God. The leaven is working also with reference to war. The time may never come when war will cease entirely, but sentiment against war is growing and the time is coming when no Christian nation will go to war unless for self-defense and after all other means for adjustment have failed. We see it too in the status of woman. From being the property or the plaything of her husband, she has come to stand by his side, his equal in all things except where God Himself has made a difference and has set the man as head in the house. We might speak of still other manifestations of the power of this leaven, but let this suffice. Much of course still remains to be done, but the work is going on and eventually the whole lump will be leavened and what cannot be leavened will be purged out and cast away.

However, although the above are all moral changes, yet they are of a more outward nature. There are other changes of the soul, not only moral but also spiritual; these are the ones that constitute the very foundation of the great change that is observed. You should recognize that change in yourself. You fear God, you love God, you trust in God, not, it is true, "above all things" as we should, but there is fear, love and trust there. Again you do not live only for the things of this world, but for heavenly things. You look forward to salvation from sin and death and all evil, and that not by your own works or merits, but in Christ who has saved you. Again because of this love of God to you, you feel that you want to love your fellowman, not simply as a man, but as a brother redeemed by the blood of Christ. These things are still imperfect, but there has been a great change; that change is the kingdom of God within you. The leaven has worked and it will continue to work until you have been completely restored to the image of your Maker. Amen.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

MATTHEW 9: 9-13

And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose and followed him. And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners? But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

LAST Sunday we were given the keynote for the after-Trinity Sundays. That keynote is the kingdom of heaven. Christ, by His coming into this world, by His life, death and resurrection, established among men the kingdom of heaven. The Church now wants to learn more fully what that kingdom is, how it comes to us, how we must receive it and how we must live after we are once within it. Last Sunday we were told in a general way how that kingdom grows and developes both outwardly and inwardly; it is as a mustard seed growing into a tree with spreading branches: it is also as a leaven spending its purifying and sweetening influence into every part of the human heart and of our social fabric.

With the lesson today we begin to study special marks and features of the kingdom. If we should think of that kingdom as a great palace we could say that last Sunday we had a general view of the structure from without, while today we shall enter within and explore one of the many treasure apartments. "In my Father's house are many mansions." We can apply that statement to the kingdom of God here upon earth. There are many apartments of truth that are for us veritable storehouses of "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost."

The special feature of the kingdom of heaven that is shown us today is a most desirable one. The kingdom of

heaven is here in the world, but this world is a world of sinners. In what relation do the two stand to each other? Do they belong together, are they intended for each other? If so, how are they brought together? They do not seem to belong together, they do not seem to fit, for the one is holy and the other is unholy and what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness?" But nevertheless the glorious fact is here revealed that the two do belong together and that there is a way of bringing them together.

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN FOR SINNERS.

That is our subject this morning. We have here, first, the revelation of God's mercy; secondly, the requirements of the new life; thirdly, the confusion of human reason.

1. *The Revelation of God's Mercy:* Jesus was in Capernaum where He healed the man sick of palsy and said to him, "Son be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee." He passed forth from that place and came to "the receipt of custom," the place where toll was collected. Here He found a man by the name of Matthew who was also called Levi. Matthew was the publican or toll-collector of that place.

These publicans were a despised and hated set among the Jews. There were two reasons, one because they were in the employ of the Roman government, under which the Jews chafed. The Jews wanted to be a free and independent people and therefore hated their civil masters and, as they regarded them, their oppressors. The other reason for despising the publicans was the fact that as a class they were unjust and extortioners who exacted more than was due them. For these reasons publicans are frequently grouped together with the lowest class of people, commonly called "sinners," as in today's lesson. To this man, despised by the people generally and classed by the better circles of society with social outcasts, Jesus said, "Follow me," become one of My disciples, one of My companions, enter into My society, into the kingdom which I have come to establish. What did that invitation therefore mean? What does it imply as to the relation between the kingdom of God and

men like this publican? It means that the kingdom of God is intended for just such men; that whatever advantages, opportunities or blessings it has to offer, just such men are to have them, use them and enjoy them. If there is forgiveness of sin there, these men are to have forgiveness of sin; if righteousness is there they are to have righteousness; if that kingdom has the power of a new life to offer, these men are to have that power; if that kingdom can offer peace and joy and eternal life, these men are to have these things. What else did Jesus mean — what else could He mean, when He said to Matthew, "Follow me"?

We are made still more certain that the kingdom of heaven is for sinners when we consider a further circumstance in the lesson. Matthew made a feast to Jesus and His disciples and invited many "publicans" and "sinners." What did Jesus do? Did He hold aloof, did He say to His disciples: That's no place for us, they do not belong to our set and I do not want men of that class as My companions and in My kingdom: we would lose caste in the eyes of the people and My kingdom would suffer reproach? No, He and His select society of twelve went and sat down with publicans and sinners and ate with them. And when we further consider that among the people of the East and even among ourselves eating together is an act that indicates friendship and intimacy the truth is brought home still more strongly, that the kingdom of heaven is for sinners.

But what now does this fact show especially with reference to God? It shows His mercy, it is a revelation, yes, the very fullest revelation of God's mercy. It is a great revelation of God's love and mercy to be told that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son." What pain and anguish do not you as fathers and mothers undergo when your son is made to suffer greatly? How willingly would you not take his place and bear it all. But here we find God not sparing His own Son, but freely giving Him up to cruel suffering and death that men might be saved. Nor was that all: for whom does He make the sacrifice? He makes the sacrifice for publicans and sinners and for all the rest of us who are no better. Even the cold, proud

Pharisee is included. A great preacher used this illustration: "I take a dozen beggar boys out of the street, and they say, 'I do not know why you should like me; I am unlovely, and there is nothing attractive about me.' That is so. And I take you that you may become lovely. 'But I am filthy and ragged.' Yes, you are; and I take you that you may be washed and clothed. 'But I am stupid and ignorant.' So you are; and I take you to educate you. 'But I am full of all manner of wickedness.' I know that: and it is because you are wicked that I am determined, with God's help, to rescue you from the devil. I take you, because you are such an unmitigated urchin, to give you a better chance in the world." So Christ does not call us into that kingdom because we are worthy, or holy and good, but because in His great love He does not want to see us lost, does not want to see us go on forever living unclean and unhappy lives. That is divine mercy. If we were whole, what honor would there be to the physician for healing us? If we were righteous, what glory would there be to the Lord for calling us to repentance?

Louis the XII of France, we are told, had many enemies when he became king. He made a list of these men and placed a cross in front of each name. When his enemies heard it they promptly fled. But the king said, "Fear not, my friends. The reason I placed a cross before the name of each one of you is that I may be constantly reminded of the cross of Christ and the word which He spoke upon the cross, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!'" Though we have been enemies of the Savior, He Himself would mark our names and hearts with a cross which signifies forgiveness.

That is one of the most glorious things about the kingdom of heaven, that sinners may enter in, yes, that it was expressly prepared for sinners. "For I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Jesus' treatment of Matthew and his associates shows this most beautifully. Here these social outcasts could say: Why, this man is willing to associate with us, to eat and drink with us. Surely we need not hesitate to go to Him and if He is come to do anything at all for men or to give them anything, we may

make bold to ask Him for it. We need not quail and tremble on account of our sins, they can form no barrier between us. That, we repeat, is one of the glories of the kingdom of heaven, that sinners may come in and be saved.

2. *The requirement of a new life:* That Jesus received sinners is not all the truth. That declaration might be greatly misunderstood and is misunderstood by some people. Some seem to take it as an excuse for further sinning: Sin cannot be so bad; Jesus Himself associated with sinners, we may go right on sinning and yet come short of no promise of the kingdom.

No, nothing could be farther from the mind of Jesus. Remember, Jesus saves us from our sins, not in our sins. He did not and could not save the Pharisee just because the Pharisee did not repent; but continued in his sins. Not so Matthew. Matthew says very little about himself here, what his purposes, his feelings and thoughts were. But that very fact already speaks in his favor. We see in him no boaster, no proud mind. We find him humble, saying nothing about his resolve except that he followed Jesus. He does not even tell us that it was he who prepared the feast spoken of here. Luke and Mark tell us that fact. And yet there is enough given to show that Matthew from this day began a new life. For one thing, he was prompt to follow Jesus. Probably he had seen Jesus before and heard Him; possibly Jesus had even had previous conversations with him. But whether he had or not, here the call comes to him definitely and he accepts it at once. No hesitation on his part, no debating the question; "he conferred not with flesh and blood." He did not say as another, Lord, let me first go and bury my father; or as still another, let me first return home and say good-bye to my friends. It is true, he prepared a sort of farewell feast for friends, but the chief object was not to say farewell to them, but to bring them to Jesus. This very feast was a further indication of the change of life that had come over him. He wanted his fellow sinners to see and hear the Master, the friend of publicans and sinners, that they also might find in Him their Savior. That's a mark of the new life.

The great change that came over the man is indicated especially by the fact that he "left all" and followed Jesus. We shall not stop here to inquire how Matthew adjusted matters at his office with his civil masters; that concerns us little here. That a man who was about to follow Jesus and live the life that is right in the sight of God attended to these things we may take for granted. But we should see in this act of leaving all for Jesus the supreme test of true discipleship. What did this step of Matthew mean? It meant for one thing that he was done with the business of being a publican, that he had enough of an occupation wherein injustice and dishonor probably played an important part. From now on he wanted to be an upright and honest man. But the change meant much more! He did not leave a dishonorable civil calling for one that was honorable, but he abandoned secular interests of life completely that he might give himself entirely to the service of his Master and Savior. That is additional strong evidence of a changed life, that one loses interest in the things of this world and finds his greatest joy in the pursuit of things eternal. Little is said here or elsewhere of Matthew's peace and joy at finding his Savior, but it must have been great; it must have been similar to that of another publican who on being found of Jesus said, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold," and of whom Jesus could say, "This day is salvation come to this house." And that this change which came over Matthew was a permanent and thorough one, is shown by the fact that he continued a faithful follower of Jesus to the last and was so deeply interested in Him and His work and in the kingdom of heaven that he has left us the Gospel according to Saint Matthew, the longest and most complete account of Jesus' life and work.

We see then that the kingdom of heaven is for sinners, but for sinners who mend their ways. The kingdom of heaven is not a pleasure garden wherein sinners can have a good time as sinners but experience no pangs of conscience, no fear of death and no dread of appearing before the judg-

ment seat of a holy and just God. The kingdom of heaven is here to get men out of their sins, to turn men from their wicked ways into the paths of truth and righteousness. Jesus begins the great work by forgiving the person's sin. To the woman taken in adultery Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn thee," but He added, "Go and sin no more." That pardon, so great a gift of love and grace, must move the heart to thankfulness and to a strong desire to be with Jesus. Matthew followed Jesus and, what is very important, continued with Him. A life with Jesus means a new life. You can not continue with Jesus in heart and think lightly of sin. You will want to become like your Master "who did not sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." Holiness belongs to the kingdom of heaven. It is a part of its very nature; the kingdom of heaven begins with righteousness, and then follow "peace and joy in the Holy Ghost."

3. *Confusion of human reason:* When the great prophet Isaiah chose names for the Child that was to be born and the Son that was to be given he began by saying that "His name shall be called Wonderful." This wondrousness, however, does not pertain so much to the name itself as to the person of Jesus Christ: He is the wonderful God-Man in one person. But because of His wondrous person the name Wonderful pertains especially to His works and His way of doing things. He did not do things as other men did or as men thought the things ought to be done. And He did things so differently because He had different notions of what things are and ought to be than men have. He chose His future heralds from among the common and unlettered people instead of going to the schools and to the lawyers and doctors. So here He eats and drinks with publicans and sinners and even chooses one of their members to be His chief biographer.

It is therefore nothing unusual to find the Pharisees surprised and taking offense at what Jesus did upon this occasion. "Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?" said they to Jesus' disciples. That is not the way we do, and we are the religious leaders of the people. Does your Master not know that by eating and drinking with these

men He will move the people to look upon Him as one of their kind and no better than they are? Does He not know that by so doing He will lose His influence for good among the better class of people, that they will no longer respect Him and look up to Him as a leader and teacher? This is of course a very charitable construction to put upon the remark of the Pharisees. Their purpose was not, as the above interpretation implies, to correct a fault in Jesus and so help Him to improve His method, but to bring reproach upon Him and to discredit Him especially in the eyes of His disciples. Yes, now you see what kind of a man your Master is. We suspected it this long time. Now you see for yourselves that He is no better than these outcasts of society, otherwise He would not be found in their company. Will you still follow Him? Will you still own a man who consorts with publicans and sinners as your leader and teacher? Such was the criticism of human reason and of work-righteousness which two things always go hand in hand. But all their criticism is utterly routed and put to confusion by what Jesus says and by the facts that underlie the case.

There are three things here which these Pharisees could not see and which human reason can not see. The first is this that God can be merciful to sinners like these assembled in Matthew's home and forgive them and receive them unto Himself. These men stumbled at the doctrine of forgiveness of sin alone through the mercy of God. It can not be, says reason. It cannot be, says the work-righteous person. That cannot be the way to heaven; God will not and cannot forgive a man's sins unless he in some way deserves it by his own virtues and works. You may take the Bible, my friends, and whenever you find mere human reason speaking on the point of self-righteousness declaring itself, there you find the notion cropping out that there can be no free and unmerited forgiveness. On that basis Saul before his conversion persecuted Christ and kicked against the pricks, the very truth of life. Or you may study all the pagan religions in the world and everywhere you will find salvation, if salvation is at all spoken of, as the fruit, not of unmerited forgiveness on the part of their gods, but

of one's own personal works and virtues. Only he who already is righteous, and that by his own efforts, can have any claim upon the kingdom of heaven, was the contention of these Pharisees. But Jesus refuted and confounded them by declaring, "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick."

This leads us to the second thing which these Pharisees could not see and to which unaided human reason is blind; namely, that God can take such a sinner and by His grace and Spirit not only forgive him but actually cleanse him from sin, purge out the old leaven, make of him an entirely new creature, giving him a new heart wherein dwelleth righteousness. Reason says, A man must renew himself, a man must change his own heart, it cannot be done by another. If a man will not be good of himself he never will be good. But Jesus again confounds the Pharisees when He says, There is a physician; I am that physician; "I am the Lord that healeth thee." The sinner is of course not dealt with like a lump of clay; he has his part to play in the process; but when it is all done it must be said, Washed in the blood of the Lamb and made clean and purified by the Spirit of our God.

The third thing which the Pharisees and reason cannot see is this that the essential thing in any service or worship of God is not the material offering that is brought, nor the outward work, nor the form of worship, but the disposition of the heart; that is, that the man be filled with love to God and love to his fellowmen and manifest that love in thoughts and words and deeds of mercy. "I will have mercy and not sacrifice," said Jesus to the confusion of the Pharisees. Men are constantly looking at the works of others. What are they doing? is the great question. But before God, works go for nothing if the right kind of a heart is not in the work — a heart filled with love to God and with mercy and compassion towards its fellowmen. Nor will any amount of formal worship supply what a pitiless heart lacks. May God therefore keep us from the fatal blindness of the Pharisees' perverted reason. Amen.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

LUKE 15: 11-32

And he said, A certain man had two sons; and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my fathers have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe and put it on him; and put a ring on his finger, and shoes on his feet; and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry. Now his elder son was in the field; and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant; and he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father has killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. And he was angry and did not go in: therefore came his father out, and intreated him. And he answered and said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time, thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid that I might make merry with my friends. But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.

OF all the parables of our Savior that of the prodigal is doubtless the pearl. It has been called the Gospel in the Gospel. It is a sermon in itself. There is moreover so much contained in it that one can in a short discourse only touch upon its varied contents; or, what is

perhaps better, dwell only on a few leading thoughts. The mere reading of the parable should in itself make a powerful impression on the hearers. An eminent man of God in England said, "If I had anything to say, I would buy up all the seats in all the theaters of the land for a certain evening and then invite all who would want to come. And when all the seats were filled then I would have the curtain raised and everywhere I would have some real good reader read the story of the Prodigal Son. Then I would have the curtain fall again and every one go quietly home." Another eminent divine said, that in this one parable are enough texts to keep a man preaching for fifty years and then, after he had crossed over, he would find that he had only opened the outer door of the subject.

In our lesson last Sunday we dwelt especially on the fact that the kingdom of heaven is intended for sinners; Christ came to heal the sick, to call sinners to repentance, to seek and to save that which was lost. Today we go a step further and learn more particularly

HOW SINNERS GET INTO THE KINGDOM.

The way into the kingdom requires three steps or stages and each one is absolutely necessary: First, Knowledge of sin; second, Confession of sin; third, Faith in God's mercy.

1. *Knowledge of sin:* In speaking of the necessity of the knowledge of sin we need to dwell first of all for a moment upon the fact of sin in this world. That fact is not recognized by all as it should be. Men are ready to say that there is something wrong with human nature, that there is some fault and weakness even in the best of men and that among men generally there is much that needs moral correction, but there is by no means that keen sense of the enormity of sin, of its heinous character and of the dire results that there should be. Many seem to look upon sin as only a sort of misfortune that has befallen man, or as a part of evil that has its designed place in man's proper development, an evil with which he must contend but which he can overcome, subdue or eradicate, and that he will be the better for the conflict; that this life will be the richer

for the experience; and that if there is a life to come it is up to man himself to secure it by gaining the mastery over any evil that may be in or about him.

There is some truth in what these men hold. Sin is a misfortune, an evil. Man may be richer in the end for his experience with sin and sin cannot of itself deprive a man of the hoped-for blessings of another world. But sin is more than a mere misfortune, more than an evil that man may overcome. These men fail to see the enormity of sin, fail to measure up properly the fearful moral evil that is extant throughout the world, do not see the utter depravity and corruption of the human heart, do not see sin as a most grievous and heinous offense against a personal and holy God, do not consider the dire results of sin already in this life and see no danger in it at all for the life to come; neither do they see that man left to himself is helpless over against the evil, that as a heap of sand is swept away by the tide so sin sweeps into the ocean of destruction every man who seeks by his own strength alone to withstand it. Sin is therefore not the serious thing for these people that it should be and one has well said that "he that has slight thoughts of sin never had great thoughts of God." "Sin! Sin!" cries out Thomas Guthrie, "thou art that horrible thing, that abominable thing which God hates. And what wonder? Thou hast insulted His holy majesty; thou hast bereaved Him of beloved children; thou hast crucified the Son of His infinite love; thou hast vexed His gracious spirit; thou hast defied His power; thou hast despised His grace and in the body and mind of Jesus as if that were a common thing, thou hast trodden under foot His matchless mercy. Surely, brethren, the wonder of wonders is that sin is not that abominable thing which we also hate."

It is plain that this young man when he left his father's house had no proper conception of sin. His father, as subsequent events show, was a most reasonable, kind, generous and merciful father. Surely a little reflection should have told the son that there could be no such a place in all the world for him as his own father's house. But being in the power of sin he chafed under the most wholesome restraint

of a kindly father's hand. He would have his own way, do as he pleased, be his own master, do his own choosing. For was he not old enough? Did he not know as much or more than his father? Was he not capable of taking care of himself? And as to all those years of loving care and arduous labor bestowed upon him by his gracious parents from his infancy — that was not considered, he owed them nothing, he felt no demand upon his own heart and no love in return for these years of hard work, sleepless nights and loving anxiety.

Oh, striking picture this of the sinner's departure from God! We can not stop here even to begin to enumerate all the blessings which we have enjoyed at God's hand from childhood up. Sit down for an hour and reflect and try to count them and you will have to say with the Psalmist, "They are more than can be numbered." Yet what does the sinner do but turn his back upon God with all His wisdom and goodness, His love and mercy and choose his own way and decide to be a god unto himself. Yes, that is "not only the beginning of sin, but the very essence thereof, for the essence of all wickedness is a forsaking of God."

Or we have here a picture of a child who has been baptized, instructed in the Word of God, trained up in the Christian faith and confirmed in the church of his fathers, but who then grows impatient of the Church's wholesome restraint and wants to be free to follow the impulse of his own evil heart. He turns his back upon the Church, he goes into the far country of the world, away from all restraint of God's Word, of wholesome instruction and to parental admonition. Let every one take warning at the seductiveness of sin, and the young especially in the critical period of their lives.

It took some time for this young man to come to the knowledge of the nature of sin in general and of his own fearful mission in particular. However, we may well suppose that after leaving his father's house his downward course was rapid. A fortune is easily spent; so too this young man's substance, his virtues, good thoughts, good habits, good purposes and volitions which he had acquired

at home, were soon wasted in "riotous living" and ere many moons had passed he found himself in fearful want.

The mighty famine that naturally arises in such a country was soon upon him, but this famine was a blessing in disguise, an act of divine mercy, for it was the means of bringing the man to his senses.

Jesus here makes the young man utter a remarkable word; he is made to declare that "he came to himself"; that is, he came to his senses, he found himself, he came to realize where he was, what his condition was and what he had done. Up to this time he was living under false pretenses, we might say. The life he was living, the things he was doing did not belong to him, were not intended for him; or rather, he was not made and intended for them. He was away from home, in a strange land under strange conditions. Every time you commit sin, you do a strange thing, something that is not for you because you were not made for it. But now the young man "came to himself," he began to realize what he had done. That's the knowledge of sin and the deeper one's knowledge and the keener one's sense of sin is, the better it will be. This knowledge and sense of sin furthermore is absolutely necessary; it is a bitter moment when it comes, but come it must, if the lost child is ever to return to his father's house.

Friend, have you ever experienced that moment? Whether it came upon you suddenly or gradually makes little difference, but has it come? Have you come to know yourself, your lost condition on account of sin? If you have not, you have not taken the first conscious step yet toward the kingdom of heaven, even though you claim membership in the Church. You could think yourself at the most as being in the vestibule, but in reality you are still outside the kingdom. Seek a full knowledge of your heart, therefore, that you may know your sin and then you will be ready for the second step toward your father's house, namely:

2. *The confession of sin:* In this confession of the Prodigal there are three things: First, the confession of his miserable condition: "How many hired servants of my father have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!"

He had pictured to himself in that foreign country a continuous feast of good things. There were many things he longed for which he deemed necessary to a life of happiness but which he could not secure in his father's house. Just that is the seductiveness of sin, always holding out promises of good things to come, that is the bait with which Satan catches his victim. So Eve and Adam were caught already in Eden, so David was caught and Solomon, so you have been caught times without number. Have you come to realize what this young man felt and confessed when he said, "I perish with hunger"? Do you feel the emptiness of all these gratifications of the flesh; that they are only husks, suitable for swine but never intended for human beings who have been made in the image of God? And by these things we have in mind not only gross sins of the flesh, but all manner of worldliness that forgets God and looks only at things terrestrial. Ambition for wealth, for power, for honor may not look bad and may move within legitimate lines so far as outward morals are concerned, but in the end it is bound to leave the soul in want, perishing with hunger.

The second thing in the young man's confession is that he had sinned: "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee." His misery put him to thinking and he came to the conclusion that it was his sin that brought on his trouble. He reasoned correctly but, oh, how slow men are to recognize this great fact. They make all manner of explanations to show that their sins have nothing to do with their troubles; they ascribe them to chance, to fate, to someone else's fault or even to Providence, but not that they themselves are the cause of their undoing.

But this youth saw something else in his sin, he saw in it a personal and most grievous offense against heaven and before his father. He felt that his sin was against heaven. The expression which he used embraces not only God, but also the blessed angels whose abode heaven is; he had sinned against the holy place where God and the holy angels dwell, whence cometh every blessing; so great, so heinous had his sin become. The fact too that he mentions heaven first and

the father as second person concerned shows that he had the right view of sin. All sin is against God, no matter against whom or what else it may primarily be directed. "Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight," was David's confession. This very thing is the mark of the right understanding of sin and a mark too of the right confession. As long as you apologize only to your neighbor for any wrong done against him, you have not yet made confession of your sin, you are not on your way back home, you are not in the way of peace. You must be ready to meet with God and to deal with Him; that is the court of last appeal. Many a man of the world apologizes to his neighbor for any wrong done him and he is considered a gentleman for doing so; but not until he has apologized to God for the same sin is he a gentleman and a Christian in the sight of the Most High. That mark alone will show you where a great many people stand. They are considerate of their neighbor, but they simply ignore God.

The third thing in this young man's confession is his humility: "I am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants." A proud heart will not confess. You all know that from your own experience as well as from the observation of others. If you try to cover up your sins, if you seek to justify a wrong course, if you contend that the other person has to apologize and not yourself, then know that pride is your master and that you have not yet been schooled into humility. Up to this time this young man was not ready for a confession; he was all along under the sway of the spirit which said, I am my own master, I know what I am doing. But now the school of adversity has brought him to his knees; the spirit of self has been expelled. The famine, the hunger and the husks did it. Now he is ready to say, I am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. This is the confession, naked and humble, that brings one near again to the Father's house: "God be merciful to me a sinner." This is the only approach to the throne of grace where universal pardon is vouchsafed, this the preparation for the great festivities. This leads us to con-

sider the third step of the sinner's way into the kingdom of heaven, namely:

3. *Faith in God's mercy:* When in the first part of our discourse we spoke of the necessity of a knowledge of sin, we first pointed out the necessity of recognizing the fact of sin in general, so here where we speak of faith in God's mercy we need first of all to emphasize the fact that God is merciful. If God is not merciful, then we cannot speak of faith in that mercy. Such a faith would be a delusion. But faith in God's mercy is no delusion, that mercy really exists and moreover is offered to every one who will accept it.

God's mercy is shown abundantly and most beautifully by what the father in the parable did. Exegetes have found seventeen separate instances of the father's mercy in his treatment of his son. We can here notice only a few: Consider that the father already saw the son and recognized him when he was yet a great way off; he had doubtless been waiting and looking for him. Consider that when he saw him in his sorry plight he had compassion on him and ran to meet him; his love and compassion hurried him along. Consider that, though the son was in rags and reduced to a skeleton, yet the father fell on his neck and kissed him; only love and pity will do that. Consider that though the son made confession of his sin, yet the father did not upbraid him for a single thing. How great the mercy that can close its eyes to multiplied insults and wrongs? Consider that the father called for the best raiment for his disobedient beggar son; and finally that he ordered the fatted calf to be killed and preparation to be made for a time of merry-making.

Now I ask you to transfer these acts to your heavenly Father. You are that disobedient, run-away, beggar son; you are returning to your heavenly Father. He sees you while still a great way off, is anxiously waiting for you. He runs to meet you, He throws His arms around you, He kisses you. You now begin to tell Him of your sins, but He says, No, no, My son; go no further; I have forgiven all, those things shall never again be mentioned. And while you tremble for joy and hardly know what to make of it, He

casts about you the white robe of righteousness and seals you as His own with the gifts of the Holy Spirit; and as you begin to admire those things you hear already the preparations for the everlasting merry-making in the blessed mansions above. Consider these things aright and will any one yet say that God is not merciful?

Now it was this mercy in which the young man believed. This is not expressly stated, but it is clearly implied. The very fact that he resolved to go back to his father implies such faith. A man will not turn toward God if he knows beforehand that there is nothing to expect but punishment for his sins; to return home only to be cast out is not an alluring outlook. His hope for mercy also appears in this that he uses the term father, even my father. While he was still at home he had probably addressed him as the "old man," for there he recognized neither relations of right nor of mercy between his father and himself. Now he acknowledged both, but it is especially mercy that he hopes to find and therefore he says, Father, my father. So our Lord has taught us to pray, "Our Father who art in heaven."

Such too is the faith which we must have in God. Short of that faith no one can get into the kingdom of heaven. That is the final great purpose of preaching Christ and Him crucified. We want men to see how merciful God is that they may believe and be saved.

Just one word in conclusion about the elder brother. He was not glad when his younger brother returned; he did not join in the festivities, he even upbraided his father for being partial toward the younger son who had devoured his living with harlots. He represents the self-righteous, proud, impenitent churchman who has observed outward religious ordinances, but whose heart remains untouched by the grace and mercy of God. He knows of no mercy for others and he does not rejoice with angels when the lost sheep has been found. Beware of the mistakes of the younger son, for not every prodigal finds repentance, and beware likewise of the self-righteousness of the elder son, which leaves the heart cold and untouched by the saving mercy of God. Amen.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

MATTHEW 5:13-16

Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

IN the story of the Prodigal we were told, last Sunday, how the sinner gets into the kingdom of heaven. He must come to know his sins; he must make confession of his sins, he must believe in the mercy of God. These things are necessary and wherever in the Bible you find the manner of a man's salvation spoken of, there you find these things expressed or implied. When the men on the day of Pentecost said to Peter, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" and when the jailor at Philippi said to Paul, "What must I do to be saved?" and they were told to repent, to be baptized, to believe on Christ, a sense of sin, confession of sin and faith in God's mercy are just as certainly intended as in the parable of the Prodigal.

But we can not leave the sinner after he has once entered the kingdom any more than we can leave the fruit tree to itself after having planted it. He not only needs looking after but he is there for a purpose. He is not there as a mere additional member in the kingdom, nor as a statue, without life and action, neither is he there as a mere ornament, only to be looked at. On the contrary, he is there to do something, to act; he is there as a living organism, in vital relation to things about him. Our lesson today shows us some of the things which the sinner who is safe in the kingdom of heaven has to do. It points out some one of the new relations into which he has entered, namely, his relation to the world. This morning accordingly we shall talk about

THE BELIEVER'S RELATION TO THE WORLD.

Under this head are three things which we shall dwell upon; first, What the believer is to the world; secondly, How he accomplishes his purpose with reference to the world; thirdly, What dangers he is exposed to in the world.

1. *What the believer is to the world:* Jesus said to His disciples, "Ye are the salt of the earth"; "Ye are the light of the world." Something is here presupposed with reference to the world. We do not salt that which needs no salt; we do not light a candle in the middle of the day. Neither salt nor light would add anything under such conditions. When Jesus therefore speaks of salting the earth it is plain that the earth needs the salt. By earth and world here we are to understand the human family, together with all the institutions and activities which have arisen out of it and all the relations in which men stand to one another. All these things need salt and they need light.

For one thing, the world needs salt to give it the right taste; that is, the things of this world do not taste right to him whose taste is still uncorrupted. You perhaps say that these things taste good; there is much pleasure in the possession of the good things of this world — money, honor, power, influence and the like. Yes, but is this not the taste of the flesh? And does not Saint John tell us that "the world passeth away and the lust thereof?" And do you not hunger for something better, something higher? Why are you here today in the house of God? Why are you not out in your fields, in your shops, in your offices, in your classrooms? It is because you have acquired a taste for other and better things and you want to gratify that taste and improve and develop it.

But salt does not only season things, it also preserves them and that is doubtless the chief thought that our Savior here wanted to convey; the world needs salt to preserve what is good and immortal in it. We speak of the world here in so far as it has been corrupted by sin, and in so far as it is evil and doomed to destruction and no amount of salt can save it. When fruit is once rotten it is past preserving. But here are

things in the world that are to be saved out of it. Man himself, though corrupted by sin, is capable of being saved; the various institutions among men as the family, the school, government, commerce, art; all the activities and relations of men to one another; all man's thoughts, emotions, impulses, plans and purposes, all these are to be purified and lifted to a higher plane and man himself is to be saved for everlasting life; and salt is the divinely appointed means by which these things are to be accomplished.

In like manner the world also needs light. Salt is to preserve and purify the powers of the world so that they become vigorous in the service of right and in the interest of the kingdom of God. Light is to correct the understanding and the knowledge of the world. You probably have a friend or a neighbor who has grown up outside of the Church, without instruction in God's Word; he has knowledge only of the things of this world. A little conversation with him about heavenly things shows you at once how dark it is about his soul. When you speak to him of earthly things he understands you and can converse with you; but when you speak to him of heavenly things his mind is a blank, he understands nothing of what you say and you must do all the talking. Your talk to him is like the chirping of a bird to an ape. The man is a sample of what the world is; the world is utter darkness; the world lieth in darkness as it lieth in wickedness.

Now you are to provide these things which the world needs. "Ye are the salt of the earth." You are to be seasoning unto men — give things of life a better taste — make life worth living. The only way in which that can be done is to bring the heavenly and unseen world into direct relation with this present, material and natural world and life. You are to show men that there is more here to live for than to eat and drink, to get wealth, to gain honor, or even to enjoy the arts and the sciences; that God has ordained that men should love righteousness, truth and mercy, that men should practice these things toward one another; that there is a God whom they are to serve and obey; that they have souls to save; that there is an eternal life and a reward for

righteousness. By getting men to do these things and to live for these things life gets to be of greater worth to them, of infinite worth in fact; the world is seasoned, things acquire their right taste.

So too you are to be a preserving power unto men. Let me speak here only of their eternal salvation, for that is the chief thing and indeed includes all else. You have a neighbor who is bodily sick, sick even unto death. We may suppose that you are able in some way to bring about his recovery. Will you now leave him suffer there and die, to be torn away from friends and wife and children? Will you not leave your own work and interest and rescue him from the grave? All about you are men who are spiritually sick unto death. Jesus says that you can save at least some of them, that by your life and example, by your influence, your teaching, your conversation, by your deeds of kindness and love, and by your testimony against all unrighteousness and infidelity, you can rescue some soul from the power of sin and death and transplant it into the kingdom of righteousness and life. That is what it means to be salt unto the earth, and that salt you are.

So also "ye are the light of the world." Here is a man engaged in a certain business, but his methods are wrong and you see that failure stares him in the face. What should you do? If you love him as you love yourself — and you should love him thus — you will tell him of his wrong business methods, and how to correct them and thus save his business. This world is made up of men lost and dying in their sins, but you know how to save them. You have the light. You know what they must do to be saved. You are to give them that light, let your light shine. Through you they are to learn to know Jesus Christ as their Savior, for there is no other way of salvation.

Oh, what a plain, what an evident truth this is, that ye are the salt of the earth, the light of the world! Through you these things must be done. Just that point in particular, I want you to see. Jesus does not say here nor elsewhere that there are other ways and means of salting the earth and of lighting the world than through you. That is the

awful and solemn thing about these words. There is no other way for the world to get this salt and light except through believers; sinners saved are to be the means of saving sinners unsaved. That's the divine arrangement.

2. *How the believer accomplishes his purpose with reference to the world:* Here let us notice first of all that Jesus does not say, I am the light of the world. That is, of course, true and Jesus says it elsewhere. There is no other light of life for this world than that which comes from Christ. Again He does not say here, My Word is the light of the world or the salt of the earth, though that is also true, for "thy word is a lamp unto me feet and a light unto my path," and "the entrance of thy words giveth light." There is no other way of getting light and the power for a new life save through the Word of God. Neither does He say here that the Church is the salt of the earth and the light of the world, though that could also be said. Only a few Sundays ago we learned in the parables of the mustard seed and of the leaven what a power the kingdom of heaven or the Church is. Especially does Jesus not say that some organizations in connection with the Church, some institution or office such as the office of the ministry, or ministers as a distinct order, or all these together are the light of the world.

Just what does He here say? He says very expressly, Ye are the salt of the earth, ye are the light of the world; that is, you believers are in person these things; not of course by virtue of anything that you are of yourselves, nor by virtue of anything that you have made of yourselves, neither by virtue of anything that you have done. In so far you were of the world and yourselves needed the salt and the light. But you have become salt and light by virtue of Christ who dwelleth in you with all His wisdom, grace, righteousness and love. In winter plants and trees are dormant and inactive, but so soon as the warm energizing rays of the sun fall upon them in the spring they awake to life and activity. So were you dead in trespasses and sin, but Christ has begotten you unto a new life and it is this new life now that makes you salt and life unto others. The degree of your saltness and light for others will depend

upon the richness of your own personality and life; that is what men will take notice of in particular. Here is a farmer, there is not a thing about farming that he does not know. But his own farm does not show it. Here you are, a believer, you may have full knowledge of the way of life, you may be skillful in presenting the Word to others, but that is not enough. The book of divine revelation which most people study most carefully — the only book which some read and the book which we all observe very closely, is the book of your life. If that book does not read right many will stumble and fall; but if that life of yours is full of salt and light, full of grace, truth, righteousness and mercy and if you so live and so speak that men may see that all these graces and powers come from Christ, and can be had only in Him, then will you be salt and light unto men, then will they see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

But we need to go further and be still more definite in pointing out how believers are to be salt and light to others. It should be plain that we need always to keep in mind something like the following particulars: You are salt and light unto others through the use of the Word. The Word of God, including the Sacraments, is the means of grace; there is no other way of begetting the new life in men and of saving them than through that Word. Some preachers lecture from their pulpits on poetry, literature, history and the like, but there is no true light there. You are to be as a city set on a hill; it cannot help but be seen from all the surrounding country. You are to be a light set on a candlestick. Everywhere and at all times the Word of grace and truth as the light of life is to shine through you and from you. Your conversation is to be well seasoned with salt: "Let your speech be always with grace seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man." Oh, if our every conversation with others would always leave a grain of saving salt in the soul of another, what a blessed influence would go out from our lives! It is said of Professor Tholuck of Halle that he was accustomed to take a daily walk accompanied by one or two students; he was not

in the habit of saying much, but no student ever accompanied him without having a grain of salt cast into his heart that often proved helpful for his entire life. And we need not be professors to do this, for all have such opportunities.

Another way in which you become salt to others is through the proper support of the work of the Church. The saving salt is to be conveyed to the world through the Church; through it the light is to shine. But what is the Church? It is not an institution or organization apart from the persons who constitute it. The only Church the Bible knows of is the company of believers, the communion of saints. Believers therefore are the Church and wherever believers are there the Church is. You now as believers and as the Church have a work to do and that work is primarily this, that you are to preach the Gospel. Therefore you are to support the work of the Church in your own local congregation and the various institutions of the general body to which your congregation belongs. Some of you do very little for the Church at large, for the institutions of synod, or even for your own congregation. To that extent, too, you are neither light nor salt to those about you.

Again, you are to be salt to others through correction and reproof. One of the wholesome things that can befall us is to have some one in all kindness and frankness tell us our faults and show us our sins. It often hurts just as salt on the raw wound smarts. But if we accept the reproof in humility the result will be most wholesome. As believers we need to show men their faults, we need to reprove their evil ways, we should point out the wrongs and the sins in the things about us, the things men do, the things they go after and which they hold to. If we do not, we are as salt that has lost its savor; we are upon the walls of Zion as dumb dogs, not doing so much even as to bark.

Furthermore, you are to be salt to others through works of love and mercy. Jesus went about doing good and, though it was by His word and His grace that He saved men, yet His works of love and mercy were powerful testimony that He was indeed the Savior of the world and that whoever came to Him would not be cast out. So your works

of love and mercy will be evidence of the reality of the faith and the life which you profess, and men will believe the word which you bring; they will see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

Finally, you cannot expect to be salt to others unless your whole life and work be in grace and truth and righteousness. Your life does one of two things with reference to your profession before the world as a believer: it either confirms that profession or else it gives it the lie. If men see that your life is virtually a denial of that which you profess to be, then they turn away from you in disgust; there is no salting and shining in such a life, but the very opposite; the name of God is blasphemed through what you do. But if your daily walk accords with the Word which you teach and hold, then you are doing just what Jesus did, you are confirming your message with a holy life.

3. *What dangers the believer is exposed to:* There are of course many dangers to which the believer is exposed in this evil world, but here we shall speak only of those dangers that are peculiar to him as the salt of the earth and the light of the world, the dangers to which Jesus here calls our attention.

First, He warns us that if "the salt have lost its savor, wherewith shall it be salted?" We need not consider the question whether natural salt ever does lose its savor. What concerns us here is this fact, that believers may and that some do fall from grace and so lose the power and savor of the new life. There are a number of things that may work together to bring about this result. One sure way of losing seasoning power of grace is by not exercising it. If you do not use your eyes your power of vision and observation will become impaired. The servant who had received but one pound and did not make use of it was deprived of that pound and it was given to him who had ten. "He that hath, to him shall be given, but he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have." How many of you can repeat the Catechism that you learned in your youth, or tell what it contains? You have forgotten it simply because you did not keep on using it. And there is a double

loss here; if you spend ten dollars foolishly some one else gets the use of it, but here you are both deprived of the precious knowledge and no one else gains it.

Again, you will lose your saltness if you despise the divine gifts of grace. We here mean not an outright despisal, for it is clear that the Lord will then forthwith take them from us. But you despise the gifts of grace when you think more of other things, when you prefer the things of the world to the things of God as is often done by people who call themselves Christians. These gifts of divine grace are precious pearls and God will not long permit swine to carry them about in their snouts. Jesus said to the Laodiceans who were indifferent, neither cold nor hot, "I will spew thee out of my mouth."

Again, you will lose your saltness if you do not constantly keep salting yourselves with the Word of grace. If you neglect the means of grace, the house of God, the reading of the Bible, meditation and prayer you are bound to lose the power of the new life. You need but look about you and you will find plenty of examples of such as have in this way lost their savor and have become worthless.

Of this savorless salt Jesus says that it is "good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men." It is worthless in two respects; worthless to the world, for it is no more capable of salting the world, it even becomes a cause of offense. It has been well said that a saltless and powerless sort of Christianity makes more unbelievers than all the infidel books that have ever been written. Secondly, such persons also become worthless to themselves and are cast out. Even the world cannot endure them. If you exhibit a vigorous Christianity, then the world will at least hate you; if you however exhibit a savorless Christianity, the world will only despise you.

The second danger to which we are exposed is this, that we are apt to put our light under a bushel. You do so when you have opportunity to speak forth the Word of truth, to confess your faith, to point out the way of life, to show men their sin, but fail to do so. You hide your light when you neglect those ordinances of the Church the use of

which show others that these things are precious to you and are to you a fountain of grace and life. You place your light under a bushel when your life in general is known better by its sins than by its deeds of righteousness. "Let your light so shine that men may see your good works." The admonition here is not against due modesty or the desire not to parade one's doings, but against a life that is barren of good works. Much of the praise that came to Jesus came because of His works; and He even told the people that if they could not believe His words for their own sake they should believe them for His works' sake. By your works men will see the truth and reality of your profession and the truth and reality of the Gospel message. Their eyes will be opened, their hearts touched and they will be brought to the foot of the cross where alone salvation can be found. May God grant us all this grace. Amen.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

LUKE 9: 18-26

And it came to pass, as he was alone praying, his disciples were with him; and he asked them, saying, Whom say the people that I am? They answering said, John the Baptist; but some say, Elias; and others say, that one of the old prophets is risen again. He said unto them, But whom say ye that I am? Peter answering said, The Christ of God. And he straitly charged them, and commanded them to tell no man that thing; saying, The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day. And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever shall save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake the same shall save it. For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away. For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's and of the holy angels.

ST. PAUL tells us that "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." To speak of the renewing of man is only another way of describing the process of man's salvation; he is saved when he is renewed. Marvel not that I say unto thee, Ye must be born again. Flesh and blood cannot enter the kingdom of heaven; there must be a change. This mortality must put on immortality; and this corruption must put on incorruption.

This newness furthermore implies a great change, a change in everything about man. All his thoughts, desires, impulses, purposes, all his words and actions must be changed; even his material body must undergo a change before he can enter fully into the kingdom of glory. This great change in man implies also a change in his relation to the things about him. We learned last Sunday what the believer's relation to the world is, that he is salt and light to the world. Today we shall dwell more especially upon

THE BELIEVER'S RELATION TO CHRIST.

We shall see that the believer must know Jesus as the Christ of God; that he must follow Jesus, forsaking all else; and that he must confess Him before men.

1. *The believer must know Jesus as the Christ of God:* Who is Christ? With reference to this question we may divide the human family into three classes: first, there are those who do not concern themselves at all about Christ. They do not ask who He is and if you ask them what they think of Christ they have no answer. They are like Pilate with truth; he was unconcerned about it and had nothing more to say than the slighting question, "What is truth?" These people live only to eat and drink, to laugh and grow fat, or it may be to gratify their ambition for power, glory and honor. Their vision does not reach beyond the horizon of this world; for them there is nothing beyond, or if there is we know nothing about it and it is folly to concern ourselves about it. And when we speak of this class of people we do not have in mind the pagan world, for they are often more religious in their way than civilized nations. We have in mind the people of enlightened and Christian countries who live without God in the world.

The second class are those who have an opinion about Christ but a wrong one. They say that He is John the Baptist or Elias or that one of the old prophets is risen again. Such were some of the opinions of the Jews in Christ's own day. But note these two things: The one is that these people do show some interest in Christ; they think about Him; they hold some opinion concerning Him. That seems to show that they are not utterly divorced from religion like the first class; they are willing to talk about these things, they feel that they have souls to save and that they ought to be saving them. They therefore know something about God's promises concerning the Savior and feel that they should take some stand with reference to that one who now claims to be that Savior. There are plenty of such people at the present day. They want to be classed with religious people; they want to pass for Christians.

But notice now the other thing about these people; they see nothing more in Christ than a man; He is a John the Baptist, and Elias, or a great prophet. He is a great teacher, the purest and most perfect example for us to follow, the a master mind, a wonderful benefactor, a mighty reformer, ideal man, but in the end only a man and therefore not a savior in the true sense of that word.

The third class among men are those who not only have religious aims and take a definite stand with reference to Christ, but who also take the correct stand and who acknowledge Christ and believe Him to be what He really is, the Christ of God, that is, the anointed and sent One of God, who was sent into the world to be the world's Savior. This class of people is here represented by the disciples for whom Peter spake when he declared in answer to Jesus' question, Thou art the Christ of God. The disciples at this time did not yet fully understand Christ and His work, but note well these facts that they recognize Him as sent of God, as the very Son of God, that in Him all the promises of God relative to the salvation of men were to be realized, and therefore they were willing to sit at His feet and learn of Him, ready to take their own will and minds captive and bring all into submission to Christ.

That is the nature of true faith in Christ, as also of true knowledge of Him. You are supposed to have a better knowledge of Christ than His disciples did at this time; but the requirements of true faith in Him are the same today as they were then. You must acknowledge Him as sent of God, as the Son of God, as God Himself; that in Him all the gracious promises of God for your salvation are to be realized and that therefore you are to place yourself under Him, accept His Word, submit yourself to His will and lean entirely upon Him as your only hope and stay for time and eternity.

The correct knowledge of Jesus as the Christ of God furthermore requires especially this also, that we acknowledge the absolute necessity of Christ's suffering and death. Just here is the crucial round in the ladder of faith. It is not difficult to see in Jesus a great prophet, a great benefactor,

a mighty reformer, the ideal man. With few exceptions all men who think about Christ at all acknowledge these things. But that it was necessary for Him to hang upon the tree and that it is alone through His shed blood that forgiveness of sin, life and salvation are possible, that is the rock of offence at which the multitudes stumble.

Jesus also brings that fact out here, for He at once declares, "The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes and be slain, and be raised again the third day." You declare Me to be the Christ of God, but do you understand what that implies, that I must suffer the most shameful death at the hands of My own people and must again be raised to life, before I can actually become your Savior? I charge you all therefore to tell no man that I am the Christ, until all these things have been fulfilled, that men may then receive Me not only as a great prophet or king, but as the crucified Savior of the world.

Just this fact is necessary to a saving faith and each one of you does well to ask himself the question, Is that my view of Christ? No matter how much you may find in Christ or how highly you may esteem Him, if He is not for you that crucified One through whose blood alone there is remission of sin, then you still do not know Jesus as the Christ of God. You have not yet received Him as God sent Him and as He has revealed Himself in the Gospel. You cannot give the Gospel an honest reading and a fair interpretation without coming to that conclusion. We lay much stress upon this fact just because it is the most offensive doctrine of the Gospel; men seek to evade it; it was a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Greeks. It is the same today. Much, very much, is made of the man Jesus; everybody is holding Him up as the perfect man, the example whom we are to follow, the inspirer of higher and purer motives and impulses; but the blood of Jesus shed upon the cross for a dying world, of which John says that it cleanses us from sin — that finds scant recognition at the hands of these Jesus-worshippers. What do you therefore think of Him? Is He for you the crucified Redeemer,

whose blood sprinkled upon your hearts will deliver you from the awful death angel's stroke? And has this matter become a thing not only of your understanding but of your heart, so that you are now ready to leave all and follow Him? That brings us to our second part, namely:

2. *The believer must follow Jesus, forsaking all else:* "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." We say that the believer *must* follow Jesus, but the necessity does not lie primarily in the following, but in Christ; that is if you want to be saved then you must follow *Jesus*. But Jesus does not compel you. He says, "If any man will." Jesus gives you the choice. He places the two ways before you. But He also offers you grace and strength to choose the way after Him, for without that grace no one could follow Jesus. If one has now by the grace of God made up his mind to find salvation, then there is no other way than to follow Jesus. Suppose you follow Moses and seek salvation in the Law, where will you end? When you have done your very utmost to keep the Law you have still failed and there is nothing else in prospect but this, that the soul that sinneth it shall die.

Suppose you follow the philosophers, the men who have applied their intellect to the various problems of life and of death, of the present and of the hereafter, where will you end? In the first place there are hundreds of these philosophers and no two of them speak alike on any one great subject. Which one will you follow? Which one has a brief that he is right and all the rest are wrong? Or what assurance have you that any one of them is right in the most vital thing? In the second place, if you do follow one or more of them, they get you nowhere; at the end of their way you still find yourself in darkness, in doubt and uncertainty; you still do not know whether there is a God or not, a heaven or a hell or even a hereafter; you are not sure even whether you are yourself or somebody else, a man or a monkey come to age; you still find yourself in sin, in fear, in despair. Here then is the necessity — if you want salvation you must follow *Jesus*.

But we must also make a necessity of the following. You must *follow* Jesus. Just that too is what Jesus wants to bring out in particular. You look upon Him as the Christ, the Savior; but you cannot be saved at a distance from Him, not even at arm's length, there must be actual contact, there must be a direct and vital union; I in you and you in Me, as He says elsewhere. Just this is what makes a self-denial necessary and also the cross. If the twelve had remained at their fishing their accepting Jesus as the Christ would have entailed upon them little trouble and suffering. But they had to leave all and follow Him, they had to identify themselves with Him and His cause; and this it was that exposed them to the jeers and the criticism of their enemies; this compelled them to go up to Jerusalem with Jesus and carry their own crosses even as Jesus bore His. You cannot take yourself and the world with you, if you would be with Jesus. You must say to yourself, I know not myself just as Peter denying Christ said, I know not the man. You dare not be your own friend, dare not heed what you advise, what you wish, dare not choose what you consider your happiness and best fortune, for all these things of the natural man are opposed to Christ. You dare not even esteem that which is best about you, your own virtue and righteousness; you must reject even these fair things for Christ; for all your righteousnesses are as filthy rags. These things dare not stand between you and Christ. But like Paul, you must count them all as loss, or even as dung, that you may win Christ.

So, too, you must cut loose from the world, and that will entail upon you another cross. For your daily cross does not consist in the troubles and afflictions which come upon you as followers of Christ. The Apostles and many others suffered persecution and martyrdom; that was their heaviest cross. If you follow closely in the footsteps of Jesus there will be a cross for you; it may not be as heavy as many have borne, but there will be a cross. Take it up and cheerfully bear it after Him.

To encourage you now to deny yourself and to take up your cross Jesus says that "whosoever will save his life shall

lose it." Your natural reason says that your life consists in yourself and the things you have about you; these you must take care of and save and in so doing you will save your life. But Jesus says that in so doing you will lose your life — your real everlasting life. Nor is the case different if you should succeed in gaining the whole world so that you might declare yourself monarch of all you survey. You would still lose yourself, your real self, you would be a castaway, rejected of God your Maker and driven forever from all communion with the blessed angels and the saints made perfect.

Do you want to make a choice like that? Do you want to take any such risks? Will you barter away the riches of the eternal world for the transient pleasures of this short life? The gratification of the flesh may give momentary pleasure, but what is that compared with the disease, the pain and the suffering in both body and mind for time and for eternity which such indulgence entails? And the exchange which Jesus here demands is the more reasonable when we consider that to deny oneself and the world really means keeping the best in both yourself and in the world and discarding only that which is hurtful; it's breaking off the thorn, but keeping the rose; gathering the honey, but leaving the poison; extracting the sweet juices from the apple, but discarding the woody pulp. All that is good, all that is helpful, all that is worth while, both in yourself and in the world, you may keep and use, for only that is worth while which can be placed in the service of Christ. Our text indicates a third relation in which the believer stands to Christ, and which we dare not overlook. It is implied in the following of Christ, but it is so important that we need to look at it standing alone. It is this:

3. *The believer must confess Christ before men:* "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory and in his Father's and of the holy angels." You notice, Jesus puts the matter negatively here: He speaks not of those who confess Him, but of those who deny Him and are ashamed of Him. Jesus probably did so because

that is the strongest way of putting the matter in this connection. To be ashamed of Jesus is about the greatest sin one can commit against Christ; and at the same time Jesus here points to the greatest misfortune that can befall one, namely, that Christ on the day of His glory should be ashamed of us.

But what does it mean to be ashamed of Christ and of His words? A man is ashamed of a thing when he knows that by acknowledging and accepting it he becomes the laughing stock of others, and therefore he refuses to have anything to do with it. Jesus requires that you acknowledge your sinfulness, your lost condition, that you cannot save yourself; He requires you to acknowledge Him as the Christ of God, the very Son of God, and that He through His death and resurrection has become your Savior: He wants you to cast yourself entirely upon Him, that He alone can save you. When you do that the world laughs at you. If now because of that derision you draw back from following Jesus; if you fear the world more than you fear the wrath of God, or if you think more of the esteem of the world than you do of the love and esteem of Jesus, then you are ashamed of Jesus.

And to be ashamed of His words means much the same thing. Where the Word of Christ is under discussion, whether it be the doctrine of creation — that God created all things; or concerning the fall of man into sin, the simple story as related in Genesis; or the doctrine of the total depravity of man, his helpless condition; or the reality of sin; or the reality of a personal devil; or if it concerns Jesus directly, that He the Son of God was born of the Virgin Mary, that He arose from the dead, that by His death and resurrection He secured salvation; or that a man now is saved through grace alone by faith; that the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation: all these things Jesus taught and to them He confessed Himself; and if you now, because of the displeasure or derision of men, refuse to acknowledge them, to defend them and act as though you cared nothing for them — then you are ashamed of Jesus' words.

But we should note also that Jesus here wants to *encourage* us to stand by Him and confess Him. He emphasizes the fact that the Son of man must suffer many things. That speaks of humiliation, of shame and of mockery. But that is not all; the Son of man shall again ascend to glory and the world itself shall witness that glory. This will take place when He comes again, for then He will come in His own glory and in that of His Father and of the holy angels. The world will then not only see the glory of the Son of man but will also be compelled to acknowledge it. And we may go further. The world will then also be ready to confess Christ as the glorious Son of God. But it will be too late; the day of grace will have passed and passed forever. Christ will then not come to save, but to judge; on the one hand to consign the unbelieving to the realm of Satan and his angels; on the other to receive His own into the blessed kingdom of His Father. Oh, then, friend, if Jesus will be ashamed of you! Therefore confess Him, take up your cross and follow Him through all. The end will be glorious. Amen.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

MATTHEW 21: 28-32

But what think ye? A *certain* man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work today in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not; but afterward he repented and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I *go* sir; and went not. Whether of them twain did the will of *his* father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not; but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen *it*, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.

YOU are in the kingdom of God; you came in through repentance and faith. A new world it is into which you have entered. You are of course still living in the same world into which you were born; natural conditions are the same, and the things you are expected to do are much the same. But yet for you there is a newness about all these things. You yourself have become a new creature. Old things have passed away and new ones have taken their places. Life has another meaning. It means much more than it did before. It has a greater reach: your interests are no longer confined to this present time and order of things, but they reach out into eternity and to an invisible world. Your relations to the world and to men about you are different; as you have become worth more to yourself so you are to be worth more to them. Jesus says that you are the salt of the earth and the light of the world.

But whence this great change? Who has wrought it? There can be but one answer. Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ of God. He has redeemed you with His blood and regenerated you with His Spirit. Therefore you are to know Him as the anointed One, the very Son of God, sent into the world to save sinners. You are to follow Him faithfully, bearing your cross after Him. Him and His words you are

to confess before men that He again may confess you before His Father and the holy angels. Such is your relation to Jesus as the lesson for last Sunday presented it. Today we shall consider more particularly the believer's relation to the Father. We shall do so under the subject of

OBEDIENCE TO THE FATHER.

There are three kinds of obedience to which we shall call attention on the basis of our text: Disobedience; supposed obedience; true obedience.

1. *Disobedience:* A certain man who had two sons said unto one of them, "Son, go work today in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not." This certain man of our text represents God, our Father in heaven, and the son who said, I will not work, represents God's disobedient children here upon earth. There are two kinds of these people. The one kind is that represented by publicans and harlots. Jesus speaks of these further on in the lesson and the connection seems to indicate that the disobedient son represents that class of people in particular. Among the Jews they appear to have been regarded as the lowest class of society. They made no profession whatever of observing the religious ordinances of their nation. God was not in their mind that they should fear Him or give heed to His Word or reverence priest or prophet whom God sent to correct His people and make known unto them His will. They walked altogether in their own ways and their ways often were low down among things wicked and unclean.

There are such people at the present. By what names they are known matters not, but there are three vices in whose grip most of these people find themselves held. The one vice is dishonesty in business. The publicans of Christ's time were extortioners, exacting more from the people than was their due. One of the crying evils of the present commercial and financial world is dishonesty, injustice, extortion. There is a great cry for a "square deal." The laboring man especially is calling loud for his rights though on the other hand labor itself, wherever possible, is forcing up its wages, regardless of how much others may have to suffer in con-

sequence. This latter fact is proof that one common sin infects us all and that the common laborer of today might, if the opportunity were given, be the extortionate millionaire of tomorrow. The men, furthermore, whose hands are stained by this vice are not as a rule social outcasts; more generally they stand high in society; but the vice is upon them nevertheless. They say to God, I will not; I will not do what love and fairness and honesty require. I will walk in mine own ways.

Another great vice of the present day is the "social evil." One phase of it has come to be known as the "white slave trade." It is the vice represented especially by the sinners of the lesson. Whether the evil is any greater now than in past years is not so easy to say. It has always existed in the world and is one of the most obvious proofs of the deep and universal depravity of the human heart. Of all the sins and vices it is perhaps the most exacting in its toll of disease and death and calls down upon the doer swift retribution for body and mind, for time and eternity. These people like the first class also say to God, I will not; I will not observe the laws of chastity and purity. I will walk in mine own ways, unclean and filthy though they be.

The third great vice is that of intemperance, drunkenness. It is not expressly mentioned in our lesson, but the vice existed then already. Jesus speaks of the wicked servant who believed that his lord delayed his coming and who began "to eat and drink with the drunken," and the apostles in their letters warn against drunkenness as one of the great and common sins of the time. Of the prevalence of the sin at the present nothing needs to be said; it is apparent to all. These people also say to the Lord, I will not do Thy will; I will not observe the law of temperance, but will walk in mine own way.

There are many other sins and vices, their number is in fact countless, some gross, others more refined; but they all constitute willful disobedience to God. Every one is a declaration: I will not do the Lord's will.

But we may also take this first son as standing for another class of people who are disobedient to the will of

the Lord. They are in some respects a more respectable class than the first. They are not known as harlots, nor as drunkards, nor as thieves, yet they are about as far as these from the Lord's vineyard. I mean people of respectable life and character, but who have no interest in the Lord's work. They make no profession of religion, stand in no connection with the Church, do nothing to disseminate the teachings of God's Word and have no interest in things religious, spiritual and heavenly. They live simply for this world and in doing so do not ask what the will of the Lord is.

Whatever good these people may do in the world — for they are not without some good traits — they are in no proper sense doing the Lord's will and working in His vineyard. For we shall come to see that work in the Lord's vineyard means something very definite, something altogether different from anything these people may be thinking of; and unless it can be said of a person that he is doing that very thing, we must declare him a child of disobedience and in the end must class him with publicans and sinners.

2. *Supposed Obedience:* The certain man of our text said to his second son, "Son, go work today in my vineyard. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not." It is well to note that the father approached the second son practically at the same time and in the same manner as he did the first. He made no difference; in each case it was a simple, direct command of the father. Neither one could say to his father: You approached me under different circumstances or under conditions not so favorable. The will of God comes to each man in such a manner that there can be no excuse for his disobedience. It may not come to all in just the same way. Paul was called in a different manner than was Peter. Some, too, are called at the first hour of the morning, some possibly not till the eleventh, but in each case it is a plain, direct call to work in the Lord's vineyard.

According to Jesus' own explanation this son represented the scribes and Pharisees. We speak of their obedience as a supposed obedience. They said: "We go," and believed,

too, that they really did go; that they were doing the will of the Lord just as Saul who was of the straightest type of Pharisees thought that he was doing God service when he persecuted the Church of Christ.

The Pharisees were a most religious sect so far as pretense and appearance were concerned. Their life for the greater part was taken up with the discussion of religious subjects and the observance of religious ordinances. It was not too much trouble for them always to wash their hands before eating and to see that every pot and vessel was ceremoniously cleansed before using. They were not ashamed to wear a distinctive dress to make prominent their religion nor did they shun standing in the market place and upon street corners to say their prayers. It was not too much for them to tithe all their income, even garden herbs, which the Law did not require. So, too, they were ready to fast twice a week, oftener than Moses had stipulated. They were scrupulous in observing the Sabbath regulations; never would the pleasantness of the way allure them beyond the allowed distance of a Sabbath day's journey. So scrupulous were they in these things that they even argued the point, we are told, whether it was lawful to eat an egg that was laid on the Sabbath day; and many were their conflicts with Jesus on the Sabbath question.

But of this second son the text says that he "went not." These Pharisees went not to the vineyard; with all their religious activity they after all did not do the Lord's will. We shall see farther on just why. Here we want to dwell especially on this fact, that the observance of mere religious forms, however correct they may be, is not enough. There was not a thing wrong in what these Pharisees did so far as the form is concerned. The Law required certain ceremonial washings; it required observance of the Sabbath day; it required fasting. If in some of these things they were willing to do even more than the Law required, that could not be charged against them as sin. We see, therefore, that real religion, true godliness, actual working in the Lord's vineyard is something more than compliance with certain forms and outward requirements.

Are we today in danger of deceiving ourselves as did the Pharisees? For one thing, religion is just the same today as it was in Christ's time. It makes the same requirements, no matter how some other things may have changed. If religion was then primarily a thing of the heart, it is primarily a thing of the heart today. If the mere observance of religious forms did not satisfy God then, neither can that satisfy God today. Furthermore, human nature is just the same today as it was then. If at that time the deceitful heart deluded men into believing that they were serving God, simply by holding fast to certain doctrinal views and by observing certain religious forms, men today are likely to fall into the same delusion.

We, too, have a doctrinal standard. We have a creed. The Church requires us to hold and confess certain doctrines: there is the inspiration of the Bible, the total depravity of the whole human race, the inability of man to save himself by his own strength or with the help of the Law, the divinity of Christ, the atoning power of His blood, justification and salvation alone by grace through faith and still other fundamental doctrines. We also are required to observe certain religious ordinances. We are expected to make a confession of Christ before men, to stand in connection with the Church, to attend the services of God's house, to make use of the Lord's Supper, to support the work of the congregation, to contribute towards the work of missions and the various benevolences. According to our text it is possible to hold the doctrines of the Church to be true, and to observe the outward ordinances, and yet not in reality be doing the will of the Lord. It is possible that the Lord may say of us as He said of Israel of old, "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me." It is possible that the final Judge may speak to us as He shall declare to those who only say, Lord, Lord! "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity"; or as Jesus said to the Pharisees, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted

the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith.”

3. *True obedience*: “Whether of them twain did the will of his Father?” asked Jesus of the Pharisees, and “they say unto him, The first,” because he afterwards repented and went into the vineyard and worked.

We need to consider here first of all Jesus’ declaration unto the Jews “that the publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.” That was one of the heaviest blows which the religious egotism of the Pharisee class suffered at the hands of Jesus. They, the flower of the nation, religiously speaking, are bluntly told that they are not at all getting into the kingdom of God, but that the social outcasts with whom they would not so much as brush garments were actually being received into the kingdom of heaven. This is one of the remarkable surprises in the sayings of Jesus; and it is as significant as it is remarkable. It is significant for us. It does not seem unreasonable that a man whose religion consists only in holding intellectually certain formulated doctrines and in observing certain outward ordinances is at heart really irreligious and therefore not a member of Christ’s body; but that the openly wicked and gross sinners should be nearer the kingdom of heaven and more susceptible to divine grace, that fact shatters our ideas of things reasonable and expedient.

Yet so it is; Jesus here so declares; and if we should take the time here to look into the matter more fully, we should doubtless discover why it is so. As a rule it is easier to train a child who has had no training at all than one who has had a wrong training. The potter can more easily make a graceful vessel out of a fresh lump of clay than out of clay that has already been used and has become hardened in the process. It behooves us to take warning. Do not suppose, because your religion presents a respectable exterior, both as to acceptance of doctrines and the observance of ordinances, that you therefore necessarily belong to the elect. On the great day of accounting you may see sinners whom you despised, but did not pity, passing before you through

the golden gate, while you stand on the outside knocking in vain.

But what does it mean to work in the Lord's vineyard? What is real religion? What sort of character gets into the kingdom of heaven? Jesus answers the question here: "For John came in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and harlots believed him; and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterwards, that ye might believe him." Here we meet with another surprise. The Lord says, Son, go work in My vineyard, and immediately we think of going after the lost, visiting the sick, helping the poor, doing something for the betterment of the slums; and there are plenty of people who seem to think that when they have done these things they are ready to be carried like Lazarus into Abraham's bosom. Such are as far from the kingdom of heaven as those that build only on the correctness of their doctrines and the finish and length of their prayers. These words of course need to be done; that is part of the work in the vineyard. But that is not the place of beginning; a man must be in the vineyard before he can do the work of the vineyard; and before he can pluck fruit he must have a tree that is ready to bear.

Jesus tells us how first of all we must get into the vineyard and what the very beginning of the work is. The thing He praises in the publicans and harlots is that they repented at the preaching of the Baptist and believed in him; the thing He condemns in the Pharisees is that they did not repent and did not believe. Can anything be plainer? When the Word of God is spoken to you and your sins are pointed out, and when God's wrath is threatened, and the ax is laid to the root and that if there is no betterment the tree will be cut down and cast into the fire; then you should believe this as a declaration of truth and of fact, and you should be filled with fear and anxiety and should ask with the publicans, What shall we do? When then upon your contrition you are told that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, that there is forgiveness through His shed blood, that such forgiveness becomes your own through faith in Him and that He will give you His Spirit to renew your

heart and mind, then you are to believe such promises and grace and rejoice in the divine pardon. That is the way into the kingdom of heaven and there is where you begin working in the vineyard of the Lord.

Do you imagine that you can get in without acknowledging your sins and without turning from them and without believing in Jesus as your divine Savior? The Pharisees tried it, but with all their respectability they were classed lower than publicans and harlots. A publican like Matthew who left all to follow the call of Jesus; or like that other publican who climbed into a tree to see Jesus and then repented of his wrongdoing; a woman who was a sinner but who in anointing Jesus mingled her tears of repentance with the odorous ointment of love; or the thief upon the cross, acknowledging his crime, but looking to Jesus for deliverance — these will enter the vineyard and begin the work, but unless you do likewise, you shall stand without, left to the cold comfort of your own respectability.

After you have then repented in deep humility and have turned to the grace and mercy of God as revealed in Christ Jesus; after you have laid fast hold upon the cross and hear the Spirit of God crying in your heart, Abba, Father; after the love of God has been thus shed abroad in your heart and you feel its warm energy coursing through your being, then will you be ready to take up fully and rightly the work of the vineyard, then will you be ready to spend and be spent in doing your Master's will; and it will not be a burden: it will be your joyous service; the yoke will be easy and the burden light. Amen.

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

MARK 4: 26-29

And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground. And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear; after that, the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because he harvest is come.

IN the lessons of the past few Sundays the believer was presented to us more particularly in his relation to the world about him, to Jesus his Savior and to God his heavenly Father. We have then, so to say, located the believer; we have seen that he is in the kingdom of heaven, what his environment is, and in a measure what he has to do. He is to be salt and light to the world; he is to leave all and follow Jesus; he is to obey the will of the heavenly Father and work in His vineyard.

In our today's lesson there is presented to us a new aspect of the believer. He is of course still in the kingdom of heaven; or we can turn it about and say that the kingdom of heaven is in him. We are therefore still dealing with the kingdom of heaven, for that is the great theme of these Trinity Sunday lessons. In the parable of the mustard seed we saw that the kingdom of God is above all a thing of life; for Jesus said, I am come that they might have life. Therefore the believer must be something living; there must be activity there, growth and development. Today then, on the basis of our text, we shall look at

THE HIDDEN GROWTH OF THE BELIEVER.

We shall notice the mysterious beginning of that growth; its hidden process; its self-sufficiency; and its gradual development. First of all:

1. *The mysterious beginning of the believer's life:*
"So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into

the ground." With these words Jesus declares how the kingdom of God originates in the human heart; it has its beginning in the seed, and that seed, as Jesus tells us in the parable of the sower, is the Word of God. That seed contains within itself a life potency, otherwise it could not be the cause of life. Life can come only from life. Wise men of the world have tried to demonstrate that life may originate spontaneously, of its own accord, without antecedent life. But all such attempts have come to grief. If they should succeed in proving their point, it would overthrow the teachings of the Bible concerning creation and the foundation of our religion. For if life does not necessarily proceed from life, but may spring up of its own accord, then we could no longer hold that this world was necessarily created by God, but that it may have come into existence of its own accord. But we have no fear that any such proof will ever be produced: Life comes only from life.

In the seed then there is a life potency. To us the thing is a mystery. If you take a grain of wheat and examine it under the microscope, you can see nothing that looks like life; there is no action there; there are no processes at work. All you see is a particle of organized matter. Yet when you put that seed into the warm moist earth, within a few days action sets in, processes develop, the seed germinates and grows; life has been developed. There are some things of an outward character in connection with the origin and process of that seed-life that we may observe and explain, but the inmost nature thereof and the thing itself no one knows. No scientist can tell you what life itself is. It is a mystery.

So the Word of God is the seed. It has within itself the potency of the new life. Jesus Himself said of His words that, "they are spirit, and they are life." He says again of this Word, that when it falls upon the ground it produces a harvest, some an hundred fold, some sixty, some thirty. St. Peter says that we are "born again, not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever." And St. Paul tells us that the Gospel is "the power of God unto salvation to every one that

believeth.” When we here speak of the Word of God we do not mean simply the printed Word, nor simply the Word as it is heard. That is only the body in which the real Word is clothed. The real Word is the truth which the seen or heard Word conveys to our souls. That is the soul and the life of the Word of God and that is what begets life in the human soul.

When now the truth of God’s Word lodges in the heart, for example, the truth that man is sinful and is subject to God’s wrath, then there is action, processes develop, the man begins to think. And if these thoughts are of the right kind they will begin to act upon his will. Very soon the man will find himself asking some serious questions; and a little later he will find himself doing things that he never did before. When Peter on the day of Pentecost told the men of Israel their sins, their consciences were awakened and they began to ask, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” And when they were further told that they must repent and believe and be baptized, they did some more thinking and their wills were set to acting. They repented and were baptized to the number of three thousand; and thus the kingdom of God was begotten in their hearts.

But here observe this one thing especially and take it home with you: This life of the kingdom of God has no other source than the Word of God. When God created the world He ordained that every plant and seed and animal should produce after its kind. If you want wheat you must sow wheat; if you want apples you must plant apples. The same is true of the spiritual world. You cannot take the word of Shakespeare or Browning or Emerson and expect to produce the plant which we call the kingdom of God. You will find some good things in those writings; they may produce certain kinds of conviction, put you to thinking along certain lines, act upon your will in a certain way, change your life in certain respects, even make it better in a way; but that kind of word will never produce the kingdom of God in you. It is not the right kind of seed. It does not convey the right kind of truth. You do not come to know rightly your sinfulness and the wrath of God. You are not led to see

God's grace and mercy in Jesus Christ. You do not discover that you have forgiveness of sins and a new life through faith in Christ. To get these results you must have the Word of God. That is the only kind of seed that springs up into everlasting life. Therefore the great work of the Church is to teach and preach the Word of God. — Secondly, let us notice:

2. *The hidden processes of the believer's life:* "And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how." Not only is there mystery about the seed itself, but there is also mystery about the life which it produces. There are some things about the springing up of a seed and the growth of the plant which can be observed and in a measure explained. Men who have studied the subject have some interesting and wonderful things to relate concerning the growth and habits of plants. But what the inmost nature of those life processes is and what that thing which we call life really is, they do not know and cannot tell. Not only the farmer who concerns himself very little about these questions, but the learned scientist who has given the subject years of thought must say: It groweth up and I know not how.

So, too, there are mysteries about the birth and growth of a soul in the kingdom of God. When Jesus explained to Nicodemus the necessity and character of the new birth, there was one thing that Nicodemus should have known; he should have known that a man must be born again if he would enter the kingdom of heaven. Just how it was to take place and the nature of the process, those things Nicodemus could not be expected to know. With reference to that Jesus says, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." When you hear the Word of God with effect, that is, when you take it to heart, or as the Apostle puts it, mix faith with it, then you find that the Word is exerting a constant influence upon your life, directing, changing, molding, sweetening it. Year by year you learn to hate sin more. You are constantly being drawn nearer to God by His love

and mercy. Your assurance of salvation in Jesus Christ grows stronger as time passes. You see more and more clearly the vanity of all earthly things and, like a traveler nearing his long journey's end you lift your eye ever more and more upward toward the everlasting habitation. But if some one should ask you to explain these changes, you would say, The plant groweth and I know not how. One thing I know, the life is there and it is making progress, but how I cannot say.

This fact that the seed grows secretly, that the processes of growth elude our mental grasp, but that the growth is nevertheless there, requires faith on our part. I do not believe a thing that I see, for that is a matter of knowledge and of sight, not of faith. Faith begins where sight stops. When we can no longer see then we must begin to believe. If I see a strong team of horses hitched to a wagon, I do not say, I believe they can pull the load; but I say, I know they can pull that load; it can all be figured out with pencil and paper. But when I see a man who has been born into the world, who has all his lifetime lived in sin without any thought of God and without doing God's will, without any thought of his salvation; if now I see one come to him with Bible in hand and he begins to show the unconverted sinner both Law and Gospel, I cannot see or figure out by any natural method that the simple story of the cross is able to convert that old crook and make of him a new creature. And yet that is the very thing the Gospel will do for the man if he accepts it. It will bring him into the kingdom of heaven. But these things require faith; there is no other means of knowing that the Word of God is the "power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."

This faith in God's Word we must maintain by all means. We saw above that the Word of God is the only seed that can produce the divine life in man. But if we no longer believe that then we shall no longer sow the seed. If a farmer knows that a certain seed will not produce what he wants, he will not sow it. There are not a few people who have lost their faith in God's Word, and they have gone to sowing other seed, human wisdom, science, philosophy

and the like. Others there are who are sowing a mixed seed; they add their own ideas to the Word of God. As long as the essentials of the Word of God predominate there is hope; if the farmer's seed is predominantly wheat he may reap some wheat. But the Lord forbade Israel plowing with an ox and an ass together. He did not want them to wear garments of wool and linen mixed. He told them not to sow their vineyards with diverse seeds, lest the fruit thereof "be defiled." The only right thing to do is to sow only good seed. Even the devil will get in his tares, and how much more if we sow mixed seed to begin with? Therefore as preachers and teachers, as fathers and mothers, let it be our great concern to sow the Word of God. Lose not faith in that Word as the only power to save the soul from sin and death. — Let us next look at:

3. *The self-sufficiency of the believer's life:* "For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself." There is a certain self-sufficiency about the earth in this matter; she produces fruit of herself without any addition, thought or concern on the part of the planter. After he has sown his wheat he sleeps and rises night and day, he takes his usual rest and goes about other work and gives no further thought to the seed which he has sown. He knows that it will take care of itself, that he can do nothing further. The grain of wheat is made for the soil and the soil for the grain and he can do nothing more than to bring the two together. They are sufficient of themselves to work out the problem. Anything that he might do will only interfere with nature. When a lad has planted a seed he will in a few days dig about it and see what progress it has made, but in so doing only injures the tender sprout. The man, however, has learned to leave it alone and let it take care of itself.

So, too, is the kingdom of God so far as this particular phase of it is concerned. This new life which we call the kingdom of heaven in a man is sufficient unto itself. We cannot force a more rapid growth. There are ways of forcing some natural plants to make them mature more rapidly, but Jesus does not compare the kingdom of heaven with that kind of a plant. A child is a child and it is

ridiculous to try to force it into the ways and habits of a man. This is true also in matters of religion. There is a religion of the child and there is a religion of the man. "When I was a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things." I fear that some children have been driven *from* religion because their parents tried to drive them *into* religion.

We can add nothing to this life to improve or perfect it. It needs no additions; it itself is all that is required, all that the soul needs for its complete happiness. The life will perfect itself. We would only mar it or completely destroy it if we tampered with it. We can do nothing and add nothing, for it needs nothing.

The very fact that this life is sufficient of itself should be a source of assurance and comfort to us. The responsibility all rests with God. It is His life, His kingdom, altogether of His own making. Therefore it must be good, and just what we need to make us blessed for this life and for all eternity. What sort of a life and fitness should we have if these things depended in part upon our making? What sort of society do you suppose we should find in heaven, if we arrived there at all, with life and character of our own making? Do you suppose it would be congenial to us? And if congenial to us, would it be congenial to the blessed angels and would it be pleasing to God? But when we arrive in that blessed abode clothed upon with the glorious life which God Himself hath made, then shall we be glorious indeed and the measure of perfection will be full. There will be differences even there just as there are differences among the countless grains of wheat gathered from the harvest field, but all are genuine and perfect grains of wheat. So shall we be perfect in glory, each one as God deems best.

But there is another side to this matter which we must speak of. It is not brought out expressly in the text, but it is plainly implied. We must emphasize the fact that the Word of God is sufficient of itself, without any addition on our part, to produce and perfect this life; but that must not be taken to mean that there is nothing at all for us to do.

In the parable of the sower Jesus makes it plain that thorns and thistles are apt to choke the seed and that we need to keep them rooted out. Paul speaks not only of planting but also of watering when the Word has been planted. The same apostle says that we are to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. It would be more than ridiculous to assume that since we can add nothing to the life itself there is nothing at all for us to do; that all we need to do is to hie ourselves away to some quiet retreat and there let the Lord work; or even that we can live after the flesh and that the self-sufficient Word will nevertheless do its perfect work. The farmer will have no harvest to reap, if he does nothing at all but sow. What he does will not make the wheat, it is true. God must give the increase; but if he does nothing there will be no increase from above.

It would be just as ridiculous to assume that because we ourselves do something for this new life, salvation is due in part to the merit of our own work. Of merits we cannot speak at all, for not only is the life itself a gift of God, but also whatever we do in reference to it is likewise a gift of God. For it is God who "worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure." This is true even in natural things. You work to get your daily bread, yet when it is all summed up you must say that God gives you your daily bread. So it is in this matter of salvation. There is much to do. Only last Sunday we were told to go and work in the Lord's vineyard. But when all has been said we must declare: It is all a work of divine grace; I have deserved nothing, God has given it all. — Lastly let us look at:

4. *The gradual development of the believer's life:* "First the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." That is nature's way. The seed does not open up directly into a full-grown and ripened ear of corn without any intervening processes. That would not be growth. It would not be life. It would be something else, something mechanical. The same law holds in the spiritual world, for here too we are not dealing with something mechanical, but with life and hence with growth, with gradual development. There is one thing about the believer that is instantaneously

completed and perfected, namely, his justification. So soon as the man believes in Christ, so soon his sins are forgiven, he is justified. God looks upon him at once as free from sin. It is not a process, having a few sins forgiven today, a few more tomorrow and a few more the next day until all have been forgiven, but all are forgiven at once — all or none. You may pay a debt a few dollars at a time, but you cannot get justification on the installment plan. Justification is something which God does with reference to the man, not something which takes place in him. The life of the believer, however, is in the man, it is what is going on in his soul. That means growth, gradual development. He increases in knowledge, in faith, in love, in hope, in good works, in everything, that goes to make up the fullgrown man, "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

What Jesus now says here would seem to indicate that there are three stages in this growth, the blade, the ear, then the full corn in the ear. In a plant the stages are easily discernible, but they are not so easily discernible in the believer. In general, however, we can speak of the period of childhood in faith. The apostle so speaks of the Corinthians when he says that they are yet children, who must still be fed with milk and who cannot bear strong meat. It is at this stage too that the blade of wheat looks very much like some other plants, or even like tares. Not a very striking difference is discoverable at this stage between the Christian child and many children of the world. Their ways of living, doing and thinking are very much alike. Nor should we be surprised at this. The Christian child is but a child yet in faith as in other things and we must not expect too much of it. The distressing thing, however, is that too many of us are willing to carry this childhood stage of faith all along through life and yet at the end expect to have a full ripe ear of corn. When Paul reminded the Corinthians of the fact that they were still children, even "babes" as he called them, he at the same time rebuked them. He told them that they should have passed that stage, that they should have become men. The ear of corn should have stood out and been apparent to all even though

it were not yet ripe. You who are no longer children in years and whose conversion is not just of yesterday — you should exhibit in your life the real fruit and work of faith. Men should be able to see that you belong to the kingdom of God, that you walk according to the Spirit and that there is a striking difference between you and the men of the world.

The third or last stage is that of full ripeness and of the harvest time. “But when the fruit is brought forth immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.” We naturally think here of a person who has been permitted to grow old as a Christian, who has had many years in which to develop and ripen, and who in the end is gathered in as a shock of corn in his season. But it is not always so; sometimes the Lord puts in the sickle and gathers in the little child; sometimes it is the young man or the young woman who falls before the keen blade; sometimes it is an older person whose conversion dates only from yesterday, as the thief upon the cross. But in any case we are to assume that in the eyes of God the grain was ripe, the fruit was brought forth, and harvest time had come. Amen.

EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

MATTHEW 12: 46-50

While he yet talked to the people, behold *his* mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him. Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee. But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother, and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.

JESUS was teaching the multitude. A woman, moved to admiration of His teaching, lifted up her voice and said, "Blessed is the womb that bare thee and the paps which thou hast sucked." Jesus' reply was, "Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it." On this same occasion a man from among the auditors interrupted Him saying, "Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee." Jesus had shown such great zeal and enthusiasm in His work that some believed Him to be beside Himself. His relatives also, it appears, had some such feeling and were here making efforts to get to Him and take Him home. He was in danger of neglecting Himself, for elsewhere it is stated that He did not have time "so much as to eat." Jesus Himself also quotes the words of the Psalmist, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." Probably, too, His relatives feared for Jesus on account of His enemies, for mutterings and threats were beginning to be heard and they had at this time already declared of Him that He was in league with Beelzebub and had a devil.

We have here a peculiar juncture of incidents. The woman had just pronounced Jesus' mother blessed because she bore Him. Now that mother comes into His presence and calls for recognition. What will Jesus do, ignore the woman's saying, or show that it is true by honoring His mother? He does neither; He let's the woman's benediction

it were not yet ripe. You who are no longer children in years and whose conversion is not just of yesterday — you should exhibit in your life the real fruit and work of faith. Men should be able to see that you belong to the kingdom of God, that you walk according to the Spirit and that there is a striking difference between you and the men of the world.

The third or last stage is that of full ripeness and of the harvest time. “But when the fruit is brought forth immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.” We naturally think here of a person who has been permitted to grow old as a Christian, who has had many years in which to develop and ripen, and who in the end is gathered in as a shock of corn in his season. But it is not always so; sometimes the Lord puts in the sickle and gathers in the little child; sometimes it is the young man or the young woman who falls before the keen blade; sometimes it is an older person whose conversion dates only from yesterday, as the thief upon the cross. But in any case we are to assume that in the eyes of God the grain was ripe, the fruit was brought forth, and harvest time had come. Amen.

EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

MATTHEW 12: 46-50

While he yet talked to the people, behold *his* mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him. Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee. But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother, and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.

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We have here a peculiar juncture of incidents. The woman had just pronounced Jesus' mother blessed because she bore Him. Now that mother comes into His presence and calls for recognition. What will Jesus do, ignore the woman's saying, or show that it is true by honoring His mother? He does neither; He let's the woman's benediction

stand, but on the other hand He bestows no special honor upon His mother and brethren. He lets the blessedness of close relation to Him stand, but the new thing which He does is to put that blessedness upon a different basis than that of ties of blood. This then brings us to the great thought of our lesson this morning,

THE TRUE BROTHERHOOD OF JESUS.

We shall notice first, that brotherhood with Jesus is not based upon natural kinship; secondly, that brotherhood with Jesus is based upon doing the Father's will.

1. *Brotherhood with Jesus is not based upon natural kinship:* The woman who pronounced the mother of Jesus blessed because she bore Him seemed to think so. Jesus' mother and brethren also seemed to entertain some such thought, or at least that they had certain rights and privileges beyond others and that they might step in here and interrupt Jesus in His work or even command Him. They themselves could not get to Jesus because of the crowd, but through another person they forced themselves upon His attention. Their motive was doubtless good; what they did was in Jesus' interest as they understood it. But their knowledge was at fault, as human knowledge so often is. They failed to consider that there are higher relations than those of blood and kinship and that there are times when the lower must give way to the higher. Their view and their action therefore needed correction; and they needed correction here at once, in the presence of the multitude, in order that no false estimate go out, neither of Himself nor of His mother.

Jesus therefore proceeded at once to make the correction. He recognized no special rights and privileges on the part of His mother and brethren. The natural relation in which they stood to Him had no force in the sphere in which He now stood and acted. Had such been the case, He could never have been to others what He was to the members of His own family. Neither could Jesus then ever be to the gentile world what He is to His own people, the Jews.

The force of natural kinship had to be ignored in order that He might become alike the Savior of all and the Brother of all and stand in the same relation to all. That woman's voice tended to Mariolatry, and also to attaching undue honor to certain relationships. Jesus' words on the other hand elevate Him to a position all alone, and place all the rest of mankind on the same level with reference to Him, with the same privileges and possibilities.

The truth that is here set forth is of very practical bearing today also. It is plain that Mary as the mother of Jesus should be called blessed. The announcing angel already said to her, "Hail, thou art highly favored, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women." But people have put more in the angel's benediction than he intended. The Romish church has enthroned Mary, if not as a goddess yet as sustaining for all time a peculiar relation to Jesus in heaven, making her an intercessor, a sort of intermediary between Jesus and believers. Men are to pray to Jesus through her; that will make their prayers more effective than praying to Jesus direct. That we call Mariolatry, also idolatry. All along we find Jesus correcting any impression like this that might go out. He did it at the marriage of Cana where He said to His mother, "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" He did it also upon the cross when commending His mother to the disciple John. He addressed her not as "mother," but as "woman."

The truth here set forth is important in another respect. We of course stand in no such relation to Jesus as did His mother and brethren, but there are similar relations which may lead to similar false notions. Unbelieving persons may have parents or children, or brothers and sisters, or a husband or a wife, or even influential friends who are members of the church and who belong to Christ; and they may think that because of these believing friends they themselves have some real claim upon the kingdom of heaven. They may hope to get into heaven by clinging to the skirts of their believing friends. There is an advantage in having such relatives. Paul says that the "unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by

the husband.” Such a person is of course not made a child of God by virtue of being the spouse of a believer, but he has certain advantages and privileges through which he may be brought to repentance and faith, privileges and advantages that another person may not enjoy at all. Such natural relationship will of itself, however, save no man. Thank the Lord if you as parents or children, as husbands and wives have believing and pious children, parents or marital partners through life, but know that for all that you will be lost if you do not repent for yourself and have your own personal faith in Christ.

We may even go a step farther. If natural kinship with Jesus and with Jesus’ followers will not avail, neither will kinship with any other person, object, or institution of this world. You may stand related by kinship or by social or by business connections to very prominent people, but that does not bring you any nearer to God’s kingdom. The sons of Eli were not only the sons of the judge of Israel and of the high priest, but were themselves priests and ministers in the tabernacle, yet they perished in their unbelief and wickedness. You may stand in close connection with wealth, with learning, with culture, with moral movements and reforms, but that will not bring you into this brotherhood with Jesus. You may stand associated with all sorts of institutions, educational, social, benevolent, but that will elicit no “blessed” for you from the lips of the Savior. In short, you do not get any nearer to the kingdom of heaven by getting nearer to the things of this world, even the best of them. You may have all these things and yet be outside the kingdom of God. A cockle seed is none the better for lying in a bin of wheat. “My kingdom is not of this world.”

Much is made today of the fatherhood of God and of the brotherhood of man. This is a beautiful phrase and there is much truth in it; but it by no means says everything that needs to be said. God is the Father of all in so far as He has created all, and feeds and keeps all; and in doing these things God certainly manifests His goodness and love as a father does toward his children. But if a man finds no other connection with God than this creational one, then the

fatherhood of God is limited to this world and time and the day is coming when God will say to all such, Depart from Me. So, too, all men are brothers by virtue of being of the same flesh and blood, but this again is a kinship that holds only for this life; the day is coming when brother will be separated from brother. "Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill, one shall be taken, and the other left." These creational and natural ties with one another and with God do not place you within the brotherhood of Jesus. Many were gathered about Jesus upon the occasion of our lesson and He looked out upon the multitude with the question, "Who is my mother? and who are my brethren?" And then He stretched forth His hand toward His disciples and said, "Behold, my mother and my brethren!" — This brings us to the second part, namely:

2. *Brotherhood with Jesus is based upon doing the Father's will:* "For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother and sister and mother"; that is, these are the people who stand nearest Me, these are they who stand with Me in My kingdom; all others are excluded. These earthly ties of kinship are not carried over into the kingdom of heaven, for there they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like the blessed angels. But these earthly ties can well be used to set forth the nearness of the ties that bind together in the kingdom of heaven, both with one another and with Jesus Himself. The closeness of a mother's relation to her children should impress us with the closeness of our relation to Jesus and to one another in the spiritual world.

But why are these people nearest to Jesus? Or to put it more exactly, why does Jesus claim relationship with these people and only with these? Doubtless there were all sorts of people in that gathering. Some of them were a very good sort of people, upright, honest, helpful, congenial and the like. No doubt there were poor people there who had a hard way of getting along and stood in need of sympathy. Possibly there were some there who were troubled with sickness or other afflictions and who were worthy objects of

pity and sympathy. Doubtless there were widows there who were going through life mourning in their lonely paths. Our hearts go out to such people and we feel very much like saying to Jesus, Take them in. O Lord, own them as Thy brothers and sisters and comfort them. Yet we see here that Jesus does not claim people as His brothers and sisters on any such basis, but alone because they have done His Father's will.

But again we may ask, Why are these people nearest Jesus? Is it simply because they had been with Jesus as His disciples and He with them? Is it simply because He chose them and preferred to be with them rather than alone and at home? It was of course important that He had chosen them. Our entire salvation, we say, depends upon this that God chooses us, for if He did not choose to save us we could not be saved. It is plain, too, that Jesus' being with the disciples was important. If Jesus did not come to us and continue with us, none of us could be saved. These are all things that God does. But the lesson brings out another side. It shows what the response on our part must be. On the last day men will come to Jesus and say, "We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets," but He will say, "I tell you, I know not whence ye are, depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity." These people will think that because they had stood in some near external relation to Jesus, because He had walked their streets or eaten at their board, therefore they have a claim upon His kingdom. No, I know you not. I was among you, I taught in your schools and preached in your churches, but ye did not receive My Word; ye did not repent and believe Me. I offered you My salvation, but ye would have none of it. Therefore depart from Me; I cannot confess you now since you denied Me then. The will of My heavenly Father ye have not done, therefore I cannot honor you as His children.

But just what is meant by doing the will of the Father in heaven? Does it simply mean that one live a virtuous life? Some people seem to think so. Why should not a man who is upright and honest, a fine neighbor and a good

citizen — why should such a man not have a claim upon the kingdom of God? Is it not God's will that a man should so be and so live? Most assuredly, but that is by no means all that God requires. Attending an apple show a month ago I noticed a plate of nice apples. There lay at the plate a card giving the name and a description of the apple. The description was not bad, the apple in fact having some very good qualities, but after all was said there was added the fatal word "useless." The apple looked nice — nice enough to eat, it had some very good qualities, but it lacked that essential thing that makes an apple a useful apple. These moral men may look very nice, they may pass muster in any human court of honor, they have some good qualities, God Himself may commend them for some things just as Jesus commended the unjust steward for his business sagacity, but they lack that essential thing that makes a man a real man in the sight of God.

It should furthermore be very plain that it is not left to a man's own choice as to what he is to do in order to become eligible to the brotherhood of Jesus. The will of the heavenly Father is something very definite; He has made it very plain just what He wants us to do and He has left nothing essential to our own judgment and choice. If you give your boy definite instructions as to what he is to do, you expect him to do just that thing. Nothing short of that can merit your commendation. He might think something else better, might think in a well-meaning spirit to improve upon your instructions, but you would have to say, No, my son; that is not what I asked you to do. Go and do as I said or else suffer my displeasure. Right here is one of the hardest lessons for men to learn. Because they have some reason and intelligence, men think that they should be left to mark out their own path and to determine for themselves what is fit and proper, both here upon earth and for heaven above. They are like the child that has seen a few years and walked a few steps and no longer wants to be led by mother's hand. But to all these Jesus says, He that doeth the will of My Father in heaven — He is My brother.

To do the will of God means more than being virtuous. It begins at another place, it begins back of all virtue. The very first thing is to accept Jesus as your Savior. You cannot at all hope to do the will of God if you do not begin at that point. The rich young ruler who came to Jesus thought that he was doing God's will. Of the commandments he said, "These have I kept from my youth up." What a fine young man he was. Jesus Himself loved him. He was not far from the kingdom of heaven. But he was not in the kingdom and ten feet outside is as bad as a mile outside. Nor could he get into the kingdom until he had parted with his money and followed Jesus. The essential thing was to follow Jesus; leaving his wealth was only a condition that was necessary in order that he might be free to follow Jesus. Jesus would not have him with all that gold hanging upon his soul. Whether it is money or the pleasures of life or the honor of the world, or whether it is some low-down vice, makes very little difference in the end; you are not in the kingdom and you must forsake these things and follow Jesus before you can be said to be doing the Father's will. For "this is the will of him that sent me, that every one that seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life."

Jesus came to establish a brotherhood, to make us children of God and joint heirs with Himself. It stands to reason then that we cannot hope to enter that brotherhood without accepting Jesus. And it should be plain furthermore that we must accept Him as He is. It is not for us to construct a Christ and Savior according to our fancy as a man builds a house to suit his own ideas and then lives in it. The builder in this case is God and we are to live in the house He has erected. Jesus is our Savior through His shed blood. In Him we have forgiveness through faith; in Him we become righteous before God, not through any merit of our own but alone through Christ's atoning death. To believe on Christ, then; that is the Father's will and thereby we become brothers of Jesus and children of the Most High.

But doing the Father's will means more than just to accept Christ, it means to hold on to Christ, to follow Him

through life. It means to live unto God. Note well that we say unto *God*, not unto virtue. Living unto God embraces all virtues, but it calls for a higher motive. A thing is virtuous only as it is in harmony with God's will. God's will makes it a virtue. Only what God wills is right and good and it is right and good only because He wills it. It is very nice to be virtuous for virtue's sake, to be truthful for truth's sake, but the only adequate motive with God is to do these things for God's sake. Everything that is good and right comes from God and all honor and glory must go back to Him.

And now, friend, how is your case? Are you included in this reach of Jesus' arms, "Behold my mother, and my brethren?" Are you sure that you have accepted the will of your heavenly Father as it has been pointed out, that you have in reality accepted Christ as your Savior and are following Him through life? Or are you possibly only standing in some external relation to Him in that you come to church occasionally, or even belong to church, but are only outwardly joined to the body of Christ?

Think of the many upon this occasion whom Jesus could not recognize as His brothers! Think of the many who belong to that class today! Look well to your heart and see where you stand. It is Jesus who speaks and lays down the conditions of salvation. He whose words are unchangeable even as Himself, who is the same yesterday, today, and for ever. Amen.

NINTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

MATTHEW 13: 44-46

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls; who, when he has found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.

PEOPLE are much concerned about finding treasure. It is human nature to wish to possess things. This especially is a seeking age. Jesus said, "Seek and ye shall find." Verily, there is no lack of seeking among men. We are told that we are making nervous wrecks of ourselves. We are always on a tension, the bow is always bent. And what is it all for? To find some treasure, of whatever sort it may be. Men still seem to think that a man's life consisteth in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. If only we were all seeking the right treasure, what a happy world this would be! Heaven upon earth, indeed, and in spite of the natural sinfulness of the human heart. But — oh that fatal word, but! but men are not all seeking the right treasure. For one thing many do not know what the right treasure is. Then again if they did know they might not care for it. And for a third thing if they did care for it they could not find it. We must therefore look to God to show us what this treasure is and where and how to find it. We have opportunity to learn some of these things today by considering

THE KINGDOM OF GOD AS A HIDDEN TREASURE.

In the first place:

1. *In what sense is the kingdom of God a hidden treasure?* "The kingdom of God is like unto treasure hid in a field." Heavenly or spiritual things are frequently spoken of as treasures, but the peculiarity here is that the whole kingdom of God is represented as a treasure. Just

what the treasure was that this man found in the field does not matter. We are told that in the East on account of the frequent wars and changes of dynasties men of wealth often buried a part of their treasures in the form of coin or jewels. This fact probably affords the best explanation of this man's fortune; either by working in the field or through some other circumstance he came upon this buried treasure.

In the second parable a pearl is taken as the object for comparison. A pearl is also a treasure, far more valuable than gold. But the important thing in both parables at this point is the fact that a great treasure was found and that this treasure represents the kingdom of God.

The true believer, the man converted from the error of his ways, knows that the kingdom of God is the greatest of all treasures, indeed the only treasure that is fully deserving of that name. Such a man knows also the value of earthly treasures. Good health and a sound mind are great blessings. A large fund of knowledge and ripe experience, practical wisdom and good judgment are valuable assets. Friends, kind neighbors, good government and even a good supply of money are things to be thankful for. The child of God appreciates these blessings and is thankful for them. He knows also how to use them. He knows that God is His master, that he holds these things only in trust, that he must render an account to God and that he must therefore use them to the glory of God and for the good of his fellowmen. Yet these things are all perishable. Even knowledge, the apostle tells us, "shall vanish away." Therefore we look for a still greater treasure.

The kingdom of God adds immensely to the value of earthly treasures. A diamond in the rough is not a thing of beauty and of no great value. You cannot eat it and you would not want to wear it. It's beauty and value are brought out in the cutting and polishing. All these earthly treasures as related alone to this life are of no particular value. If you have nothing more you die with them and are lost. They are all stones in the rough. They cannot be put in the wall just as they come from the quarry. They must be

cut and fitted into their places in the wall. It is the kingdom of God that enables us to give these earthly treasures the right finish and to put them to the right use. If you have knowledge you will serve God with it and help your fellow-man. Your money will not be hoarded up, but it will be used to bring cheer to others and if possible to lead men to Jesus Christ.

But when we speak of the kingdom of God as a treasure we think of the treasures themselves which that kingdom offers us. Here we find the really great things in a man's life. There is knowledge of the true God, of His will and purpose. What a great thing that is; to know God as the creator of heaven and earth and the keeper of the same; to know what His great purpose was in creating these things, to see how He is overruling all things to His own glory and to our everlasting good; all this is something great, something to be proud of, something to rejoice in. Then again to know Christ as the Son of God and the mighty and everlasting Savior of the world, that He died for our sins and was raised again for our justification, that in Him we have forgiveness of sins, righteousness and everlasting life; this again is a great treasure, for "this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." Moreover to be in possession of the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of truth and the Spirit of life, the Comforter who is to abide with us forever; whose presence comforts us in our moments of sadness, strengthens us for our days of labor, emboldens us for our seasons of conflict, keeps us by His power in this evil world and brings us through all the darkness to the light that shall never go out, that is something great. But we cannot speak here of all the things that the kingdom of God offers us, nor can we dwell here upon the inexhaustible supply of these treasures. We read of a woman who had been pinched by poverty and want so long that on coming to the shore of the ocean she broke out in the exclamation, "Thank God that there is at least one thing of which there is enough for everybody." So in the kingdom of God. It has treasures enough for everybody.

But the kingdom of God is compared not only to a treasure, but to a hid treasure, a treasure "hid in the field." Likewise the pearl of the second parable, though it is not said that it is hid, yet the merchant did not know just where to find it. Indeed he did not start out looking for just this particular pearl but for "goodly pearls," and in seeking he found this "one pearl of great price."

For the natural man the kingdom of God is a hidden treasure. Here is a man who has not yet come out into the light of the Word of God, has not yet stood under the blessed influence of the Gospel; does he know God to be a gracious God, full of mercy and compassion, and that Jesus Christ is the divine Savior who has redeemed men from sin and death, and that through hearing and obeying His Word and believing in Him any man may inherit everlasting life? What did we know of the power of electricity and of its many possible applications thirty years ago? They were all hidden away in nature until God gave certain men wisdom of mind to discover these things. So the mysteries of the kingdom of God were hidden from the foundations of the world. Paul says of the kingdom of God that it was "hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest unto his saints." When Christ stood upon the hills of Galilee and cried, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of God is at hand," then the full revelation of the mystery began.

And even now, though Christ has come and wrought out salvation and though the Gospel has been preached these many centuries, yet the things of that kingdom are still hidden to all whose hearts have not been opened by the Lord to see and know the things of God. They are like a man walking about in a field with treasures buried all about, but he does not see them. For "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." For three years Jesus preached to the people of His day, telling them about the treasures of the kingdom of God, where and how they were to be found, but few, very few found them. Men are ready to work and dig and sweat if they are told that here or there some

treasure of gold or silver may lie hidden. Even the zero weather of a Klondike climate will have no terrors if there is some probability of finding gold. But when the treasures of the Gospel are brought to their very doors many will not do so much as open their eyes to see what it is that is being offered them.

And if you ask here what we are to understand by the field, or where the place is where this great treasure lies hidden, our answer is, the Scriptures. In that Bible of yours, lying perhaps on the center-table, possibly undisturbed and covered with dust, you will find the goodly treasure and the pearl of great price. You doubtless have heard the story of the mother who at her death-bed told her children to look in the Bible for the treasure she was leaving them. They looked and found a good sized bank-note, but they also found something much better, they found everlasting life. "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me." — In the second place:

2. *How must the kingdom of God be sought?* It is a rule in nature and also in the kingdom of grace that treasures must be sought; and the more valuable they are the more difficult it is to find and get them. It is much harder to find gold than coal and harder still to find diamonds than gold. Yet it seems that the man of the first parable found his treasure without looking for it. He was simply working in the field, it appears, and unexpectedly came upon this treasure. Sometimes men find the kingdom of God in that way, as if by accident. A man happens into a church and hears the Word of God and it strikes home; his eyes are opened, his conscience is aroused, he feels his sin, he turns to Christ for pardon and he finds life and salvation. God is so gracious that sometimes He allows Himself to be found even by such as do not seek Him. "I was found of them that ask not after me," says the Lord by the mouth of Isaiah. But even in the case of such people we do not know what is the thought of their heart, there may be an inward longing and an inward seeking which do not at all appear on the surface. What worker in the Church has not dealt with

persons who seemed to be very unlikely persons to work on but yet proved to be quite receptive to the truth? At all events no one should take this accidental finding of the Lord as an encouragement for indifference in seeking Him. We should reason the other way. If the Lord may sometimes be found even by people who do not seek Him, how much more will He be found when we do seek Him.

This leads us to speak of the man in the second parable. This man was actually seeking treasures. Yet even in his case there was something indefinite. He was seeking "goodly pearls," that is, numbers of pearls, not especially the "one pearl of great price." We may here think of persons who are seeking the better things of this life, such as knowledge, love of art, virtues, the practice of benevolence. These are all goodly pearls though by no means the real pearl of great price. Or we may suppose persons who are thinking about spiritual things, but who so far have been using nothing but their senses and their reason, are still unacquainted with the power of God's Word and with the gift of the Holy Spirit. The fact is that in all seeking there is more or less uncertainty. If you have lost a piece of jewelry you do not know just where to look for it. If you knew just where it was you would not say that it was lost. So in seeking the kingdom of God, a man does not know just where it is, or how he must search for it, or what means to use. If he knew all these things in advance it could hardly be said that the kingdom had to be found. He would know just where and how to get it. Therefore there is in both these parables some indefiniteness about the seeking. What is plain, especially in the case of the second, is that these men were working or looking for something, and that this something was not the lower things in life but the higher; they were seeking goodly pearls. If a man really seeks higher things God will help him to find those higher things even if he does not at the beginning seek them at the right place. We are told that the church-father Justin Martyr first sought God among the philosophers. Not finding Him there he withdrew to the solitude of the sea. An aged disciple met him there and sent him to the Prophets. Here God was revealed

to him. Of the great evangelical preacher and founder of the Hermannsburg missionary work, Louis Harms, it is said that he first sought Christ in the sciences and in his own proud heart, but he actually found Him one night in the seventeenth chapter of Saint John. Yet in reality there cannot be much excuse at the present day for men not knowing where to find Christ. The civilized world is full of Bibles. You can find one in almost every home. Churches are found in every village and city and along the highways of the country. These agencies together with the press and other voices are crying out day and night, "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me."

But simply to find the treasure is not enough, it must also be purchased. These men attended to that at once. But what is especially significant is the fact that they sold all that they had and gave it for the treasure. They certainly must have esteemed that treasure as of the greatest possible value.

How shall we apply this in the procuring of the kingdom of God? Does it mean that you need only to lay aside your sins and evil habits and present yourself to the Lord as a nice civil man? That would be a great price for such a costly pearl, would it not? Suppose you had a valuable stone for sale and a man would offer you some old rubbish lying in his back yard, what would you think of his offer? Just so little will God accept the filthy rags of your righteousness in exchange for His kingdom. If you can lay aside your sins and uncleanness the Lord will be pleased, it is at least so much gain. But do you think that you deserve the kingdom of God simply because you have cast some of your accumulated filth out of your house? In other words, do not think that you have become fit for the kingdom of God simply because you are not sinning quite as much as you did before.

What then are you to give for the pearl of great price? You are to give yourself, your whole self. You cannot explain these parables in any other way. God wants your heart: "My son, give me thy heart." He wants your mind,

He wants your will, He wants your body, He wants your possessions, He wants your whole self. Above all He wants your faith in Jesus Christ as your Savior and that you commit yourself entirely to Him. Do not worry about your sins, God will take care of those. He does not want them and for that reason He will purge them away. He will pardon you. He will wash you in the redeeming blood of Christ, and He will give you His Spirit to dwell in your heart and to put new life and strength in you. That is the pearl of great price, these things that He gives you. That is the kingdom of God in all its fulness. It makes you happy in this world and it will be your everlasting glory in the world to come.

But you must sell all you have to get it. You dare not make reservations. You dare not say, I shall cling to this earthly treasure or that pleasant vice, I shall reserve a little place in my heart for pride and vanity, or a little nook for covetousness, or a corner for sinful pleasure. No, a full surrender is required. Only then can you be sure of the pearl of great price. May God help us all to make the exchange. Amen.

TENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

MATTHEW 23: 34-39

Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and *some* of them ye shall kill and crucify; and *some* of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute *them* from city to city: That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, *thou* that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under *her* wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed *is* he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

THERE have always been those who would not heed the merciful voice of God. Their number begins with Cain, indeed with Adam himself, and runs down through the period of the antediluvians, through Jewish history, down to the present and will continue until the Judge of all the earth appears and ends the affairs of the world. On the other hand God in His mercy has ever sounded forth sharp warnings against the fatal and certain results of disobedience. This warning is given, not in word only, but also in mighty examples. You hear that warning in the flood of waters sweeping away the old world. You hear it in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. You hear it in the many judgments upon Israel, God's chosen people. You hear that warning in every stroke of the pick as men uncover the ancient cities of the East, overthrown and buried under the wrath of Him that sitteth in the heavens and hath the heathen in derision.

We hear such a warning in our text this morning. We shall call it

A MIGHTY WARNING AGAINST UNBELIEF.

It was spoken directly to the Jews, but it is meant for all people and for all times. There are three things in the

warning of which we shall speak. We might call it a three-fold warning. First:

1. *The examples of the Jews:* “Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city.” Jesus is stating what He is doing for His people; He is sending them these different messengers. We are to think here of the Lord’s servants of New Testament times, the evangelists and the apostles. They are called prophets because teachers of wisdom; scribes, because interpreters of the Scripture and penmen of the Holy Scriptures. These the Lord will send in addition to the prophets, those who had been sent in Old Testament times, including John the Baptist whom they had already put to death. All these they would persecute. Some they would kill as John the Baptist who was beheaded by Herod Antipas because he had the courage to reprove him for living in the sin of adultery. James the brother of John was put to death with the sword by Herod Agrippa I. Some they would crucify like Jesus Himself. Tradition tells us that Peter was crucified, Stephen was stoned. John and Peter were scourged, Paul was persecuted from city to city.

The purpose of sending these men to the Jews was that “upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.” Abel was the first to suffer death at the hands of the enemies of righteousness; and he is called righteous because he sought to obey the voice of the Lord over against his brother Cain who walked in his own ways of wickedness. Zacharias is the last — not the last of the Old Testament martyrs in fact — but the last recorded in the arrangement of the old Hebrew Bible. Possibly too he is named as the last because his death was so atrocious, he having been slain in the sacred precincts of the temple, probably near the very place where Jesus was standing when He uttered these solemn words.

When Zacharias died he said, "The Lord look upon it and require it." This solemn adjuration the Lord is now making good; not only the blood of Zacharias but all the innocent blood that was shed shall be required of that generation.

Why was this? Why this fearful curse laid upon this people? It was not simply because they were sinful. If that were the case then who could escape, for where is there a man who is not sinful? If God had made no effort to save us, if He had not redeemed us, if He had passed us by when He saw us in our sins and lying in our blood, then sin itself would be sufficient to bring everlasting condemnation upon us. But God has not passed us by; God has redeemed us; He has made it possible for each one of us to be saved; the plan of salvation is easy enough for each one to follow, not by his own strength, of course, but by the strength of God. The cause of the Jews' utter undoing and the cause of any man's utter destruction is not mere sin but a special kind of sin, an aggravated form of sin, stubborn persistence in sin. "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world and men loved darkness rather than light."

Neither could the Jews say that, though God had planned salvation and provided the means, He did not apply the means and seek to convert them from their evil ways. Let no man try to console himself on any such ground as this, that if he is lost it must be God's fault; that if God would make the proper efforts to save him he would be saved. We may not be able to explain fully the case of the heathen who have no opportunity of hearing the Word of life, but this we know that on the Day of Judgment no man who is lost will be able to fix the blame upon God. Have no fear, God will be able to justify His ways with men. The Jews were constantly finding fault with Jesus, criticising His teachings, His claims, His works, His methods, but in not a single thing has time vindicated them. In every single contention between Jesus and His enemies time and history have vindicated Jesus. He has been found correct all along the line and His opponents in every case

have been put to shame. Consider well this fact. Is it at all likely that enemies of Jesus will succeed any better today than in the days of His flesh? Consider well. You may find fault with Jesus' teachings, with His methods of work and His plan of saving man, but be assured that His words are going to stand and whoever opposes Him will bite the dust.

No, the reason of the awful judgment upon the people of Israel was their unbelief; "So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief." And as usual, Jesus locates their trouble in their will, "Ye *would* not." Oh, it is a fearful privilege, a terrible power, this free will of man, by which he can choose to accept or reject the grace of God in Christ Jesus. Or to be more exact, that when God offers His grace to man and offers him at the same time power to accept it — for without that power man has no ability to accept it — that he can of his own will and power say, No, I will not receive Thy grace and Thy salvation. This we say is a terrible privilege. But it cannot be otherwise. Man is to be free and God will not force even such a good thing as salvation upon anyone. But dire consequences must follow the wrong choice: "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." Their temple, their city, their land, the whole nation — all were smitten with the rod of desolation. Nor was this desolation to continue for only a short period. Israel had been made to feel the judgment of God long before this, even to the scattering of the nation, but Jehovah had always again shown mercy and had gathered them. But now they had filled up the measure of their iniquity, they had not only killed the Lord's prophets, but now they had slain the very Son and Heir Himself and hence there should be visited upon them fearful desolation.

But so great is God's mercy that even now He does not leave them without hope. "For I say unto you, ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." We may not be certain as to the exact meaning of these words. They can hardly refer to the coming of Christ to judgment, for if the Jews are still impenitent, they will hardly bless the Lord for His coming.

Nor does it seem satisfactory to refer the words to individual conversions among the Jews. They do seem to refer to a time of more general turning to the Lord on the part of outcast Israel. The fact also that the Jews, though not a nation but scattered about in all countries of the earth, still retain their identity as a race in a most remarkable manner might seem to indicate that the Lord still has some special mercy in store for the people chosen of all as His heritage. — The second warning we find in:

2. *The social nature of sin and its judgment:* Mark well the words of Jesus here: "That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily, I say unto you, all these things shall come upon this generation." Certainly Jesus could not have laid this fearful curse upon the Jews of His day if there had not been some connection of guilt between them and their wicked ancestors even so far back as Cain. If their rejection of Christ had involved no other guilt but their own present and personal act of unbelief and persecution, it would surely seem unjust that they should be held responsible for the blood of Zacharias and much more that of Abel. There must therefore be some necessary connection between the sin and guilt of succeeding generations. Indeed all sin in some way hangs together. You cannot say of any sinful act, no matter by whom committed, that it has nothing to do with you. Neither can you say that any sinful act of your own does not concern other people. Sin, like the human race, is a sort of family affair. If, for example, one member of a family commits a sin of theft, that sin concerns every other member of the family in a most real manner. If one member suffers all the other members must suffer with it.

This is strikingly brought out in the punishment of Achan. Achan had taken some of the spoils of Jericho. Until he was punished the whole army of Israel had to suffer, though no one knew of the sin except Achan alone. And it is very significant that when the Lord told Joshua why his men were smitten before the men of Ai he said,

“Israel had sinned,” not Achan, not a certain individual, but the whole people have sinned for “they have taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen, and dissembled also and they have put it even among their stuff.” The whole people sinned in one individual even though they had no conscious share at all in the deed. The whole people had already also suffered for the sin in the defeat of their men before Ai, but for the family of Achan a still greater punishment was in store; for not only was Achan taken but also his sons and daughters and even his oxen and asses, his sheep and his tent and all that he had, and all were burnt with fire.

But the most appalling example of the social character of sin and its judgment is that of our text where the blood of all the righteous from Abel on is brought down upon the heads of the generation of Jesus’ day. It was like a great storm where the atmosphere for days had been heavily charged with humidity and electricity and where the elements finally burst forth in all their might and poured their fury upon homes, fields and cattle.

But you may say, How then can anyone escape? If sins are so knitted together and if the guilt of an individual sin like that of Achan reaches out its tentacles like an octopus and lays hold upon the entire family, even the whole nation, how shall we escape? How shall any one escape? The case indeed seems to be desperate; and God wants it to appear so in order that we may fear. As a matter of fact we are too prone to place the guilt of some particular sin altogether upon the person who did the deed: He did it, I had nothing to do with it. Are you sure? If a member of your own family of his own volition commits a theft are you sure that you have nothing to do with it? Are you sure that what you had been saying and doing in that family did not bias that member toward that kind of sin? The Lord indeed says, “The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son, the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.” But the Lord is not

pointing out what part the father may have in the sin of the son, nor what part the son may have in the sin of the father. He only declares the simple fact that each one must suffer for his own sin and guilt. If there is participation in each other's sins there must likewise be participation in each other's guilt. Therefore we have that other Word of the Lord, "I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children upon the third and fourth generation of them that hate me."

The only way we can escape this solidarity and this continuity of sin and guilt is to get away from the sin itself. If you do not want to be carried along with the current, you must get out of it. There is no other way. God will not lay everlasting punishment upon you for the sins of others, only for your own sins and impenitence. You may frequently have to endure some temporal evil on account of some other man's sins, sins in which you possibly had no part whatever, for in this life the innocent often suffer with the guilty, though we should not always be too free to assert our innocence. But no one will perish eternally except through his own sin and impenitence. But just because we are so closely knit together and our sins are so interlocked so that the sins which we do, affect not only ourselves but others also, therefore we need to heed the warning of our text. Especially is it a solemn warning for fathers and mothers, for they not only sin against themselves but especially call down upon their children God's wrath. For the probability is that the children will do just as the Jews did, walk in the wicked footsteps of their parents. — The third warning of our lesson we find in:

3. *The tears of Jesus:* But how can there be a warning in the tears of Jesus? Do they not speak of love and mercy and compassion? May we not take courage here? If He is so compassionate will He not take pity on us and save us? Yes, the tears of Jesus shed over Jerusalem spoke of love and compassion, compassion so great that the compassion of all human hearts taken together could not begin to equal it. But just why did Jesus weep over Jerusalem? It was not because the city was about to repent and receive

Him as Savior and King. He would then have wept tears of joy. But He wept because the city was lost — doomed to destruction, for both time and for eternity, and because nothing could help it. Not even the omnipotence of God could save it. The clouds of God's wrath that had hung over the city for generations was about to burst and no hand could stay the fury thereof. Jesus wept because of its impenitence. He could not help the city. Is there not a warning in such tears?

Oh, think of the possibility of Jesus weeping over you for such a reason! If you should be living in sin and impenitence and He would see that you would heed no offer of grace and He should now weep over you because of that fact, oh, what an awful fate! Lost, your house left desolate; no peace at the hour of death, no hope for the world to come! Or take a little more hopeful view. Possibly there is one in this house over whom Jesus is weeping this moment because that person is still impenitent, still refuses to accept Christ, still refuses to surrender to Him. Should not those tears move you to repentance, especially since you have now heard what a storm of wrath will break some day? There is a mighty warning in these tears of Jesus, and that warning should drive every one to his knees at the foot of the cross.

Some think it impossible that Jesus who is moved to tears by His love and compassion should be capable of visiting wrath upon any child of man. They cannot see how God who is love can at all punish people with anything like everlasting punishment. But this is not at all strange, this combination of love and wrath in God; it only means that He loves and rewards the good but hates and punishes the evil. However, we shall not stop here to explain this fact. Only consider that it is a fact. What loving invitations, ever falling from the lips of Jesus! What promises of mercy, of help, of peace, of rest, of everlasting life! "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions, if it were not so, I would have told you. I go

to prepare a place for you." He is like the genial rays of the sun seeking out every nook and corner to give light and warmth and start things growing. But behold an example. In an instant, as it were, He sweeps down upon the scribes and Pharisees like a flash of lightning, withering, scorching, burning, consuming. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell. Those genial rays of the sun, when they are caught and gathered in a glass and focused upon a heap of dry thorns set fire to it and consume it; so the love of Christ which is as it were the bright side of His hatred of evil, will finally focus upon the wicked and the impenitent and consume them to the utmost.

Let no one think that it is inconsistent in God both to love and save those who repent, but also to punish with everlasting destruction those who reject His mercy and who continue in sin. God's dealing with the Jews is proof sufficient. King Frederick the Great, an unbeliever, once asked his great general Ziethen, who was a most pious Christian, What can you produce as proof of your faith? "The Jews," replied the general. The history of the Jewish people proves that God deals with men. They are proof that God has sent a Savior into the world. They are standing proof, in their continuation to this day as a race but as a scattered people without home or country, both of the mercy and of the severity of God. They are proof, too, that whatever God has declared concerning the future, whether it pertain to Jew or to gentile, shall come to pass in its time. The Jews are proof therefore of the reality of the Christian religion, both as to the past and as to the future. May God have mercy upon them and bring them to repentance. But may the awful warning of our text, uttered because of the Jewish impenitence, drive us to a deeper thoughtfulness of our own sins and bring us nearer the cross of Him who saved us. Amen.

ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

LUKE 7: 36-50

And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisees house, and sat down to meat. And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that *Jesus* sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, And stood at his feet behind *him* weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe *them* with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed *them* with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw *it*, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman *this is* that toucheth him; for she is a sinner. And Jesus, answering, said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty: And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that *he* to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped *them* with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, *the same* loveth little. And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven. And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also? And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee: go in peace.

WE have here an account of most beautiful deeds performed by a woman and by Jesus. Everything Jesus did was beautiful and admirable, because everything He did was good. Yet some of His words and some of His deeds stand out with exceptional beauty; some appeal to us more strongly than others and lay hold on us with a more life-like grip. On a blooming rose bush every flower is a thing of beauty, yet some show a more perfect form and richer shading than others. Among the one hundred and fifty psalms of the Psalter the twenty-third is the sweetest. Among the almost countless hymns of the Church

there are some like Rock of Ages that are in a class by themselves. So we feel that the things which Jesus said and did upon this occasion are among His most gracious acts. One thing which makes Jesus' conduct stand out so beautifully here is the dark background. And we think here not of the past sinful life of the woman, for that does not belong directly to the picture, but the cold, proud, bigoted character of Simon the Pharisee.

In casting about for an expression to set forth the great thought of our lesson the words of the Apostle came to our mind as most appropriate.

WE LOVE GOD BECAUSE HE FIRST LOVED US.

Let us consider in the first place:

1. *God's love to us:* God of course loved the whole world: "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son." It were sad indeed if we had to divide men into classes with reference to God's love. That would indicate that God does not love all, or that He loves some more than others; or again that He is not able to love all and do good to all and must therefore make a selection, favoring one class and passing the others by. There are some people who impute to God some such method of love and selection, that from eternity He has chosen certain ones whom He will love and save, and rejected all the others. We can accept no such doctrine. What would you say of my preaching this morning if I should say to you, There is no assurance that God loves you all and that He wants you all to be saved? It is very well for you to come to church and hear His Word, but there is no absolute assurance that He loves you all and stands ready to save you all. You would go back home and say, I am not sure whether the Word of grace and forgiveness which I heard this morning was meant for me or not. Possibly it was meant only for my neighbor, but not for me. No, we cannot work on any such basis; we want to know first of all that God loves us all, that He wants to save us all, and that if some are not saved it is their own fault. Yet there is a way of dividing

the human race into classes as objects of God's love. We may divide them into three classes:

The first class is represented by the woman of our lesson as she was before her conversion. It is said of her that she was a sinner. She belonged to that class among the Jews which made little or no attempt at observing the religious ordinances of the people. They lived in sin and knew it and made no attempt at anything higher and better. The term sinner as applied to this woman has reference more especially to those persons who were given to sins of the flesh, in particular to sins against the sixth commandment. But we want to include here under the term sinner that very large class of people who live according to the flesh. They live for sin, not necessarily for sin as sin, not to do things sinful just because they are sinful, but they want to do the things of the flesh, they want to follow the inclination of their own natural hearts, and these things are always sinful. We do not make these people out worse than they are; we assume that they delight in these things not because they are sinful things, but because they are the things in which the sinful heart delights. If the things were good and holy their sinful heart would of course find no pleasure in them.

Who belongs to this class? The class is very wide and includes all kinds of sinners, just as the way of the world is very broad. Paul indicates to some extent how many belong to this class when he says, "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners shall inherit the kingdom of God." And again he says, "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strifes, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like. They which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

These lists strike us all as we are by nature; and if one should imagine that he is not included here, let him note the words, "and such like." That is, there are still other things that are sinful and that place one in the sinner's class. You may also find among these doers of the works of the flesh quite respectable people, but when they do these things and live for them they belong to the sinner's class. They are not for God, they care only for the world and the lusts thereof.

But God loves these people. That is one of the wonderful things about divine love, it goes out toward the wicked, the unclean, the very enemies of God. God loves them not because they are sinful, much less does He love the sinfulness about them; but He loves them because they were originally created in His image and for Him; He loves them that He may draw them to Himself again and cleanse them from all their uncleanness and make them share in His own perfection and glory. This is the very first note in the chorus of the redeemed, that while we were yet enemies of God, the servants of sin, God so loved us and redeemed us. You and I and all the rest of God's people — where would we be spiritually if God had not loved us first? We would still belong to the class of sinners, to the unconverted, to those who walk after the flesh, to those therefore, who still sit in darkness and in the valley of the shadow of death. We have been rescued because God came to us first with His love and sought us out and drew us to Himself and made us to sit with Christ in heavenly places.

The second class is represented by Simon the Pharisee. Simon the Pharisee was a highly respectable man; he was a very religious man. He was altogether different in this respect from the woman in her unconverted state. With him it was a matter of conscience to observe the religious ordinances of his people. One sees that plainly from the lesson. He thought about religion, about the kingdom of God, about doing the will of God. But his religion was largely a man-made affair; it consisted chiefly in complying with some outward ordinances. The heart itself was unchanged,

it was sinful and worldly and fleshly. His religion was not of God, hence there was pride there and bigotry and self-righteousness. That is the nature of a religion that consists largely in outward forms and words and leaves the heart untouched.

You see it in the Pharisees as a class, who loved to pray on street corners, who stood in the temple and thanked the Lord that they were not as other men. You see it in the pagan religions, for example, in the caste system, where members of an upper caste will have nothing to do with those of a lower. The fact is, that the more of man you get into a religion the prouder the person becomes, there is nothing to be thankful for. It is only when one comes to feel that he is nothing and that God's grace and goodness are everything, that one becomes humble and thankful.

The Simon class of people is not extinct. There is more or less of the Pharisee in all of us, just as there is still more or less of the unconverted heart in us. We need to ask for grace to keep us humble, so that we may not be troubled with that holier-than-thou feeling, nor fear to be touched by a woman who is a sinner. But God loves these people also. Jesus showed His love for this Pharisee by accepting the invitation to dine with him; He showed His love by His rebuke of his bigotry and his lack of love and sympathy. He labored hard with the Pharisees to bring them to repentance. He loved the rich young ruler who kept the commandments from his youth up. He loves this class of men today and seeks their conversion. But His love is unrequited; it falls like the rays of the sun upon a marble statue. The object is not warmed, the heart is not touched. Consider well whether you may not be loved in that way. There is nothing wrong with the love, but there is much wrong with the heart; it does not respond and remains cold.

The third class is represented by the woman in her converted state. Jesus' love for the woman, the sinner, was just the same as His love for Simon, or for the woman as the penitent. God knows only one kind of love, the kind that goes out after the lost sheep and rejoices at finding it

and bringing it home. In this woman the love of God accomplished its purpose; here was a heart that was warmed by the rays of the sun.

Just when and under what circumstances her heart was touched and melted we do not know, possibly already at the preaching of the Baptist. But wherever or whenever it was, God's goodness, love and mercy moved her to repentance. Doubtless, too, her heart was filled with fear at the greatness of her sins and the deserved wrath of God, yet it was the love of God that started the real tears of penitence. The fear of divine wrath may have driven her to her knees, but it was the love of God that brought her to the feet of Jesus that she might bathe them with her tears. We may think of her as saying, If God is so good to me as to love me in all my sins, to seek me out with His grace and Spirit among the dark haunts of vice, to plead with my spirit that I should turn from my downward course to the way of virtue and to look to Him for complete forgiveness and cleansing, then I shall return and go to Jesus, who has shown himself to be the Savior, and pour out my soul before Him in penitence and faith.

If God then loves us while yet in our sins, how much more does He not love us now that the leprosy has been cleansed away and the spirit of holiness has taken possession of our hearts? If "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more than being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." In this woman the love of God accomplished its purpose; she was moved to love God, to believe in Jesus and to forsake her sins through Christ's forgiveness. It is here that the love of God must do its final work in all that would be saved.

Do you know and feel, my friends, that these things have been done for you? Has this melting process taken place in your heart? Have you shed tears over your sins, and again shed tears at the feet of Jesus for the love and mercy of God? Somehow and somewhere these things must be done. The storms and floods of emotion may not burst all at once as in the case of this woman; but the heart must

melt, the tears must flow, before the soul can receive that word of pardon, "Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee; go in peace." — This brings us to the second part of our subject, namely:

2. *Our love to God:* We love God because God first loved us. It could not be more plainly stated that our love to God has its source in God's love to us. This fact is brought out already in what was said above, but the matter is so important that we need to dwell upon it a little longer. It is contrary to the natural way of thinking. Naturally man thinks that he can love God of his own accord, but here we are told that we can love God only as God first loves us, and exhibits that love through the forgiveness of sins in Christ Jesus. How did this woman come to love God? Did some one tell her that she must now go and love God? Or did she read somewhere that she should now love God? Or did she say to herself of her own accord, Go now and love God? No, she came to this love by beholding the love of God, by allowing it to shine in upon her soul. Like an object lying under the rays of the sun she was warmed with the divine glow; like a piece of iron near a magnet her soul was drawn toward Jesus. She beheld the love of God in the goodness, compassion, mercy and conquering grace of Christ, and that opened the springs of love to her own heart. If an object is removed from the sun's rays it becomes chilled; if the iron is placed too far from the magnet it is not attracted. That is why Simon did not love Jesus. He did not dwell upon His Word, His grace and mercy. He was near Jesus in body, but far from Him in spirit. Hence his heart remained cold and there was no utterance but that of criticism both of Jesus and of the woman.

But this love to God must show itself. Love is not a mere sentiment that today is and tomorrow is not. Love is not a mere emotion hidden away in the heart. Neither is love a mere gush of tears while witnessing some touching scene. With all its tenderness, with all its gentleness, with all its sweetness, love is a thing of reality, a thing of strength, a thing too that is discoverable and tangible.

The love of this woman showed itself in a number of ways. For one thing, she now hated her former sinful life. Her tears were in part tears of penitence. If she had approached Jesus as she did, but had still found pleasure in her former sinful ways, then would she have been a greater hypocrite than Simon the Pharisee. Then too, would Jesus the reader of every heart have exposed her hypocrisy as He did that of His host. Our love to God does well when it begins at this very point; in fact it must begin its manifestations there. You cannot love your sin and love God at the same time. Right at that point already you can begin to measure the greatness of your love to God, the greater your love to God, the greater your hatred of sin.

But this woman also forsook her sins. We know nothing of her subsequent life. Some identify her with Mary Magdalene from whom Jesus drove seven devils and of whose subsequent holy life we know considerable. But this is evidently a case of mistaken identity. Yet we may certainly observe that this woman turned from the slippery ways of an unchaste life and walked in the ways of holiness through the faith and love which God's love had awakened in her heart. Weeping over sins is not enough; assumed hatred of past transgressions does not suffice; there must be actual forsaking of one's evil ways and a real turning to the ways of righteousness. Here again we can test our love to God. That love will not permit us to live in willful sin, and if we really hate sin then we shall want to turn from it more and more, and walk in the ways of God. Holiness is not something negative only, a keeping from sin; it is also something positive, a doing of the things that are right and the walking in the ways that are pleasing to God. We cannot go half-way here, turning from the ways of sin but stopping short of the path of righteousness. Jesus said to His disciples that they must not only forsake their former lives but that they must follow Him.

This woman showed her love also in doing something directly for her Lord and Savior. We need not dwell here upon the particular service she rendered Him. She chose to show her love to Jesus upon this occasion in this particular

way. That Jesus was pleased and accepted her service of love is very evident. Simon His host neither offered Him water for His feet, nor did he kiss Him nor offer Him oil for anointing. The very common courtesies of life he did not observe, for he had no love for Jesus. But this woman whose heart was full of love, though unbidden and frowned upon by the master of the house, honored the guest with her offering and service of love. You are to do likewise; and you will not need to be told upon every occasion just what to do. Love will find something to do and some way to manifest itself. The opportunities are numerous; every day they present themselves. Kind words may be spoken, kind deeds done; a tear of sympathy dropped for the afflicted, a stroke of the hand to smooth the pillow of the suffering. Then there is the great work of the Church with its many opportunities for benevolence and service. Whatever therefore your condition in life, whatever your abilities, your pathway through life is fringed on each side with opportunities for the service of love.

There is another thing here. We must not expect our love to God to become strong unless we have an acute sense of the greatness of our sins. Jesus says of this woman that her sins were many, that a great debt was forgiven her. This she herself knew and felt and hence her great love. Simon believed that he had few or no sins, that little or nothing was forgiven him, hence he had no love for Jesus, not enough even to move him to accord to Jesus the common courtesies of life. These things work in the same way today; the psychology of love is the same with you and me. If we realize the greatness of our sins then will our love wax warm and great. Paul loved much; he could not help but preach the Gospel and was ready to suffer for Jesus. But it was Paul too who said that he was the chief of sinners.

There is one more thing here, an objection that may be urged and that needs to be answered. Does not Jesus say, This woman's sins were forgiven because she loved much? Jesus' own words are these: "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much." This seems to be a straight declaration that her love was the ground or cause

of her forgiveness. There are three things here which show that such cannot be the sense. First is the little parable about the creditor with the two debtors. The fact here is that the debtors loved the creditor because he forgave their debts, not that the creditor forgave the debts because the debtors loved him. So we love God because He forgives us; but He does not forgive us because we love Him. Secondly, Jesus says, "To whom little is forgiven the same loveth little." This again shows that our love flows from God's love to us exhibited in the forgiveness of our sins, not that forgiveness was granted because of any love we may have toward God. Thirdly, Jesus' last word to the woman was, "Thy faith hath saved thee." Here we are told directly, as in so many other places, that this woman's forgiveness and salvation are ascribed to her faith; that is, with her faith she laid hold upon the mercy and grace of God, upon Jesus Christ as her Savior, and therefore she found forgiveness. When Jesus therefore said that "her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much," He points to her love as outward evidence of her faith; her love was a fruit of the forgiveness, not the forgiveness a fruit of her love. We therefore close as we began: We love God because He first loved us. Amen.

TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

JOHN 8:31-36

Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, *then* are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house forever: *but* the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

THE great thought of our lesson this morning is freedom, true freedom; or stated more fully,

THE WAY TO TRUE FREEDOM.

True freedom consists in always choosing to do that which is pleasing to God; or as a great preacher has put it: "Freedom is not the right to do what one wills, but the pleasure to do what one ought." Ordinarily people think that freedom consists in being permitted always to do what one pleases. That rule works among the holy angels, for they always please to do the will of God; but it will not work among sinful men who by nature are prone to do things that are wrong.

In considering the way by which we can attain to true freedom our text has two things to tell us. First:

1. *The way of true freedom is continuance in Jesus' Word:* It was the feast of Tabernacles, one of the three great Jewish festivals when all Jews were expected to go up to Jerusalem and worship. Jesus was teaching in the temple. As usual there were many there to hear Him; some, His friends, others, His enemies. He spoke to them of His relation to the Father, of His going away and that they could not follow Him. He told them also that they would lift up the Son of man and that then they would know who He is. We are told that "as he spake these words, many believed on him." Their faith, however, did not yet seem

to be the saving faith; it was not full-fledged. It was a sort of conviction that Jesus was the Messiah, promised by the prophets, but it was hardly yet a personal surrender to Jesus as the Savior.

Such a faith is easily possible, and no doubt there is much of it in existence today. We may call it the first step in faith, the acknowledgment that Jesus is the Christ and the Savior of the world. So far faith is easy, because at this stage it does not require any change in a man's life. He can believe on Jesus, but do just as he did before. That is easy. But it does not save. It is like regarding a certain medicine as good for a certain ailment but stopping short of its use. You do not show real faith in that medicine until you take it. So a man may believe that Jesus is the Savior, that He can do all that the Bible claims for Him, but if he stops at that point and does not cast himself upon the mercy and power of that Savior, he finds no healing.

Jesus was aware here of the state of these men's faith, that it was very imperfect and incomplete. Of course no man's faith is complete to begin with. The cry of the father of the possessed child, "Lord, I believe; help thou my unbelief," well portrays the beginnings of faith. Faith like all living things must have its beginning and then must grow and develop. But in the case of these men, it appears that Jesus discovered some radical defect in their faith. The tiny shoot from a grain of wheat is very small and tender and weak, but if it contains all the elements and functions necessary to its growth, we can call it complete for its present stage; it is all that can be expected. So, too, faith in its start may be weak and tender, yet it is a complete faith of that stage of growth and development, and complete fulness will follow. But the faith of these men apparently lacked an important element at the start. To judge by what Jesus said to them and by what they said in reply, they had not yet all experienced the real power of truth; they had not begun yet to surrender themselves in reality to Jesus as their Savior; they had not rightly yet felt the power of sin to which they were in bondage and therefore had not yet come to experience the true liberty wherewith Christ makes us

free. Hence Jesus admonished them, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

These men are here told what they must do to reach fulness of faith, to become true disciples and to gain real liberty. They must continue in Jesus' Word. Something there is to which they must hold, with which they must stand in fellowship; that something is Jesus' Word, His teaching, the divine truth which He came to reveal. Do not overlook the fact that it is *Jesus'* Word which is thrown out to you as the line of rescue. Do not persuade yourself to believe that anybody's word will do, any sort of a truth or opinion, just so you are sincere and hold fast to it. If a drowning man clings to a water-soaked plank, he will go down, no matter how tightly he clutches the same. There is no truth that can save but the truth as it is in Jesus; no Gospel that can set free but the Gospel according to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Everything else is hay and stubble that will burn, or water-logged human doctrines that will sink. Beware of false prophets who come to you with other doctrines; for even if an angel from heaven should preach to you another Gospel than has been preached to you, let him be accursed, says Paul.

But the other point is likewise important and needs to be emphasized, namely, that you must continue in that Word. That means much. For one thing it means that you take that Word to be your guide through life and that you daily make it a matter of conscience to follow it. Jesus has a severe rebuke for such as say, "Lord, Lord!" but do not do what that Lord bids them. He calls them workers of iniquity and declares that they shall not enter the kingdom of God.

But to continue in Jesus' Word also means faithful continued reliance on it through life. There are temptations in life; you are to trust that Word for power against temptation. There are trials and burdens and crosses; you are to trust that Word for grace and strength to bear up under the load. There are conflicts before you, you are to trust that Word for courage and might to meet them. But chief and above all there is sin on your conscience that needs to

be purged away; there is a righteousness that you must claim as your worthiness before God; there is peace that needs to fill your heart; there is the dethronement of the devil of which you need to be assured; there is the sting of death that must be drawn and the victory of the grave that must be cast under your feet; for all these great things you must trust that Word of Christ. And in these things you are to continue. They are to be the element in which you live, the atmosphere which you breathe. There are amphibious animals that can live both on land or in the water, but the Christian may not play such a double game. You cannot be with Jesus today and with the world tomorrow. It must be one or the other, a slave of Mammon or a free-man with Jesus.

Continuance in Jesus' Word is fruitful in a three-fold way. "Then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." First ye are My disciples indeed. Oh, friends, that is an important distinction. What have you gained if you are disciples of Jesus only in name, in appearance, in reputation? Do you suppose Jesus cares for a name so long as it is merely a name? Do you suppose that He does not detect the sham beneath the fair appearance? Or what does Jesus care for the mere reputation a man may have among his fellows? What would you think of a professed friend of yours if he did not show himself a friend in your need? You profess to be friends of Jesus, disciples of His, but you can prove that fact only by continuing in His Word. And right here we need to apply the test to find out whether or not we are playing the hypocrite. Look into your daily life and experience to see if you are following Jesus' Word as your guide, if you are relying upon it for the strength of life and if you find in it the assurance of the forgiveness of sins, peace and salvation. These things are marks of the true disciple.

The second result is, that "ye shall know the truth." Jesus of course means real truth, the truth of the Gospel, that God through Jesus Christ saves the penitent sinner. This truth you shall know, not simply as a truth or fact,

but as a power that is at work in your own heart changing you, filling you with the fear and love of God where before there was fear of death and judgment. But consider well under what conditions alone you can come to know that truth, namely, only by doing the truth, continuing in the Word: "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." A friend offers you a basket of apples and says, They are yours. But they are not really yours until you accept them and use them. You say to a sinner, God is gracious; if you repent and believe in Christ, God will forgive you all sins, cleanse and purify your heart and make you eternally happy. When that sinner accepts those words and casts himself upon the mercy of God in Christ Jesus, then only has he begun to know the truth as the power of God to save from sin and death. Then, too, it is that his heart begins to rejoice and to bless God; he leaps for joy, thanking and praising God as did the lame man in the temple, healed by the words of Peter.

The third result is that "the truth shall make you free." Freedom is the great object which we are after and here you have it, you shall be free. True freedom is always the choice to do what is pleasing to God; to walk in freedom, therefore, one must always know what the will of God is. Here God has made it easy for us. In His Word He plainly shows us what His will is; it is a light unto our feet and a lamp unto our path. But the more difficult thing is to do that will after we once know it; for there is where our wills must be broken and self be offered upon the altar of obedience. And that is the very power that a living knowledge of the truth will give us. Let us trust God's Word in this. When Paul says that the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth he means this very thing, that we are not only made free from the curse of sin and the condemnation of the Law, from the fear of death and the wrath of God, but free also from the power and service of sin, so that we may present ourselves both in body and soul as instruments unto holiness to the glory of God. — The second thing our text tells concerning true freedom is that:

2. *The way to true freedom is through deliverance by the Son:* This does not mean that there are two ways to freedom, one by continuing in Jesus' Word, the other through a personal deliverance by Jesus, and that now the sinner can have his choice. No, these two ways are one and the same; or perhaps, better, they are two aspects of one and the same thing. In the first place, Jesus has given you that Word in which you are to continue; and in the second place it is through that Word that Jesus saves you. You cannot separate the two, and when you have the one you have the other likewise.

Some of the Jews here objected to what Jesus said about their being made free. They said, "We are free, we are Abraham's seed and were never in bondage to any man." They misunderstood Jesus. If they had in mind political freedom they were not truthful, for at that very time they were subject to Rome and often before had the nation chafed under a foreign yoke. But their word rather seemed to imply that as Abraham's seed, the chosen people of God, they had always been God's people and therefore not in bondage to any other master. If that was their thought then it was even farther from the truth than the former, for from the very beginning the great national sin of Israel was idolatry, forsaking the true God who spoke to them through Moses and the prophets, and worshipping the idols of their heathen neighbors: And though they were cured of their outward gross idolatry by the fearful divine chastisement at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, yet at the time of Christ they were a race estranged from God and held fast in the bondage of sin. But they did not know it and hence resented Jesus' implication that they were slaves. People do the same thing today. Tell them their sins and point to their shackles and they often deny and resent it: We are free, we are free! Remind a man addicted to strong drink of his slavery, and he will insist that he can stop the use of the cup whenever he wants to. But he does not stop; he is a slave to the passion for drink, though he neither knows nor acknowledges it. So these Jews were mightily bonded to sin but did not know it and would not concede

it. Jesus therefore had to explain the matter more fully to them. Hence He speaks of the same bondage, of the same freedom and of the same way to freedom as above, only in other terms.

Jesus first of all shows the nature of their bondage; it is the bondage of sin; "Verily, verily, I say unto you, whosoever committeth sin is a servant of sin." Mark that double verily, it has a twofold force; not only does it emphasize the truth of what is about to be said, but it also shows its great importance: It is slavery, bondage. Why, the most fearful bondage into which any man can be drawn is bondage to sin. Notice, too, the universal characteristic of it: "Whosoever committeth sin." Wherever there is sin there this bondage exists, for sin is never the act of a free man, but always the deed of a man who is tied up with Satan as his master. But do not think that Jesus is allowing an exception here among men, implying that not all men commit sin, but that whoever does is of course a slave to sin.

No, the meaning is that all men by nature are sinful and hence all men by nature are in bondage. The only exceptions are those who have been made free through His Word.

Furthermore, we must observe that Jesus has in mind here not so much particular sins as sin in general and the tendency of sin to play the master and to bring into bondage. If a man steals once and succeeds he will want to try it again. That is why it is next to impossible for a man who has drifted into some sinful way to turn from it. He is like a boulder rolling down a hill; he gathers momentum as he is carried along by sin's gravitation. They "cannot cease from sin," Saint Peter tells us, going on from one sin to the other until they have received the final wages of sin which is death. How can it be said of such, that they are free? That man with uncertain steps and puffed face seeking the cup yet again; that man clutching his gold with one hand and with the other reaching out for more; that other person with a high temper flaring up at every little provocation; that wreck of manhood, with fornication written all over his face still following hard after lust, though he knows that it

is sapping his very life; are they free? Do not deceive yourself by thinking that such is the character of only certain gross sins; no, such is the nature of all sin. In so far as you commit sin you are the slave of sin and you will never find freedom along the path of sin, but only in getting away from it.

Therefore Jesus says that "the servant abideth not in the house forever." He may continue there for a while but eventually he will be cast out. Ishmael, the first son of Abraham, was born of his maidservant. For a while he continued in the house, enjoying all its privileges, but the day soon came that the Lord said, "Cast out this bondwoman and her son."

So the Jewish nation for many centuries enjoyed the privileges of God's special care and mercy under the Law and they were dreaming of being made free and saved by that Law. But the time now was drawing near that they should be cast out, because they had not availed themselves of God's grace to be set free from the mastery of sin. The Christ, the Son, was now in their midst, offering them forgiveness and freedom, but they did not accept Him. So men at the present day may abide for a time in God's love, they may stand in connection with the Church, hear the Word of God, receive the Sacraments, but, if with all this, they continue in sin and so in reality choose the mastery of the world, the flesh and the devil, then they must expect to be cast out. And even though in this life they may carry the name Christian unto the end and be laid away with a fine burial service and high-sounding eulogies, yet on the other shore they will find the door closed and a voice within saying, "I know you not; depart from me all ye that work iniquity."

But there is no need for this bondage and this exclusion from the house of freedom. "The Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." There was a custom, we are told, among the Greeks and Romans that at the death of a man his slaves, if he had any, went as a heritage to his elder son. This son had the power to declare any of these slaves free. Not anyone could set his slaves free, but only a son under such

circumstances. Jesus Christ is the great Son and He has fallen heir to the whole human family, for He has redeemed, purchased and won it with His own blood; "Ye are bought with a price," says Saint Paul, "be not ye the servants of men." It is in His power therefore to set us free. He is heir of all; the house belongs to Him; all its treasures and privileges belong to Him; He can therefore bestow them upon whomsoever He sees fit. And the one so honored is now a free man; every reminder of his former servitude is forever removed.

But how is this to be understood? In what way does Jesus make us free? Read the story of His life and death, of His resurrection and ascension as related by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, and then read further the explanation of His Word and acts as given by the Apostles in their letters. There you can learn how Jesus made you free. He made you free by placing Himself under the Law and fulfilling all things in order that you might be under grace; He made you free by bearing your sins in His own body on the tree that you might have forgiveness; He made you free by taking away all your sins and unrighteousness and enabling you to secure the righteousness of God in Him; He made you free by humbling Himself "that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death," that is, the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage; He made you free by giving you His Holy Spirit and conferring upon you new life and new powers so that you can withdraw from the service of sin and present your members servants of righteousness unto holiness; He made you free by delivering you from the vanity of mere earthly things and by giving you an earnest of life eternal in the city of God not made with hands.

This is the freedom which the Son alone can bestow. Have you that freedom? Have you made Jesus your own? Is He more to you than all things else? Do you find in Him "the peace of God which passeth understanding?" Is this your daily prayer: Lord, Thou art mine and I am Thine; Thine let me live, Thine let me die? Amen.

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

MARK 12: 41-44

And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. And he called *unto him* his disciples and saith unto them, Verily, I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: For all *they* did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, *even* all her living.

JESUS AT THE TEMPLE TREASURY.

THAT is the scene which our lesson presents to us this morning. We shall proceed at once without any further introduction, to see what we can learn from the things Jesus said and did upon this occasion. We learn first of all that:

1. *Giving in the house of the Lord is an acceptable divine service:* Jesus had just ended His terrific sermon, directed at the Jews, the Elders, Scribes and Pharisees, in which He exposed their blindness, stubbornness and wickedness and threatened them with the punishment of hell fire. He was just on the point of leaving the temple, no more again to honor it with His bodily presence. The temple of Zerubbabel, of which the prophet had declared that it should exceed in glory the beauties of Solomon's temple, should no more see Him whose presence gave it that distinction. The chosen people of God had rejected their Messiah for whom they longed and whom God had sent them. His preaching was not the preaching they wanted and hence they would have none of it. The very rulers of the temple who should have been the first to welcome the Messiah had become His bitterest enemies and were secretly plotting His death.

It might seem that under these circumstances Jesus would have withdrawn from the temple at once, without showing any further interest in it. To us the case might

have seemed hopeless, that the whole service of the temple had become corrupted and that there was nothing else to do but to leave it to its doom. But no; Jesus did not think so. For Him it was still the holy temple, the place where the true children of God still brought their offerings of prayer and praise, acceptable unto the Lord. The various offerings and sacrifices were still to be continued; the seat of Moses still stood there and the people were still to hear his teachings in that place. The time was of course growing short, the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the Prophet, should soon set in, but for the present it was still God's house and the great curtain had not yet been rent in twain. So, too, the treasury in the temple was still holy unto the Lord; and there, before taking His final leave, Jesus seated Himself to observe how the people cast money into the treasury. There was much wickedness connected also with this part of the temple service, yet there were still humble and upright souls there who brought their offerings of thankfulness unto the Lord, and for whose sake the Lord was still in His temple accepting the worship of His people.

From the very beginning this treasury in the temple was God's own arrangement. He ordained that thus, by means of the people's offerings, the house of God and its holy service should be maintained. These offerings, therefore, were holy unto the Lord. And what the Lord thus ordained as a divine arrangement for the Old Covenant and its worship and support has passed over into the New. We also have our houses of worship with divine service, the preaching of His Word and the administration of the Sacraments. This service is to be maintained. We have various other institutions which need to be supported, the work of missions, educational institutions, institutions of mercy as orphanages, homes for the aged and the like.

When, therefore, you come to the house of God, there to worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness, then know that a part of the service consists in bringing offerings for this work of the Lord. Jesus recognizes that service and He honors it as well pleasing unto the Lord. If you as children of the kingdom of God share in the blessed fruits of God's

love and rejoice in the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free, you must be ready also to honor Him with your substance. It follows from the above that giving must always be looked upon as an index of the life of the Church and of the state of one's religion. Ordinarily a poor giver is a poor Christian. Our own Church, we believe, has been making progress in the grace of giving. We are better givers — at least more liberal givers — than we were twenty or thirty years ago. But we are by no means yet what we ought to be. In reality, what a pittance we give in the end, when compared with the amount we use for the comforts and pleasures of life.

The whole thing is not right; we do not have the right perspective of religious life and duty and, let me add, of our religious privilege. For we ought to look upon giving as a blessed privilege, not as an irksome duty. Giving for missionary work, for example, what a blessed privilege! The opportunity, by means of a little cold cash, to bring the Gospel of life to dying men! And yet how slow the fire burns! Must it be said that there seem to be some among you who do not give even a widow's mite for missions throughout the entire year? Awake, thou that sleepest, and know that giving is a part of the divine service and one of thy finest church privileges. — That is the first lesson of our text. The second is this that:

2. *All are to take part in this giving.* Jesus sat over against the treasury and observed how the people cast money into the treasury. He marked how the rich came with their large offerings: "Many that were rich cast in much." He observed also how a certain poor widow threw in two mites which make a farthing, equal to about one-fourth of a cent of our money. Jesus found no fault because the rich gave; He was likewise pleased that the poor widow brought her offering. Between these two extremes, the rich and the poor, was the great body of givers, concerning whose giving He makes no remark, but with which He was likewise pleased. All the people therefore gave and Jesus was pleased that they did so. That is the lesson that we are to learn here

this morning: Jesus wants us all to cast our offerings into the Lord's treasury.

Concerning the poor we might sometimes think that they should not be expected to give; that they need all they have for their own comforts, and that the rich should assume their part of the Church's burden. But here again our thoughts are not the Lord's thoughts. This giving is not a human arrangement, but a divine one. If it were a mere human arrangement, then we could say to the poor widow, You need not give; keep your two mites and buy more bread for your children or a little additional comfort for yourself. But this giving for the work of the Church is the Lord's arrangement and nowhere has He said that the poor are to be excused from having a part in it. The Lord does not say how much any one is to give, neither does He say that the poor are to give as much as the rich, but He wants all to give. In this matter as in many others, St. Paul has made the way clear. To the Corinthians he said, "Upon the first day of the week let everyone of you lay by him in store, as God has prospered him"; and again he says that God accepts our giving "according to that a man hath, and not according to that a man hath not." All are to give, therefore, and if even the poorest are to give, how can any one, even if he do not belong to the class called rich, withdraw his hand from this service? Consider well that Jesus sits over against the treasury and observes any failure of yours in this part of the service.

There is a good reason too for this giving. Giving is the manifestation of love, the outward form of love. Love always seeks the well being of another; therefore love is always seeking to give something, to do something for others. That is the very nature of love. So, too, if you love God you will be seeking to do something for God. But in reality you cannot give God anything, for He needs no help at your hand. But you can do something and give something for God's kingdom, that men may be brought into it and built up within it. We need not repeat here what the opportunities for giving are, or tell you that they are many and great. You are all to love God, from the rich

man down to the poor widow and with her two mites; therefore too you are all to give; you are all to manifest your love to God in this way. If there is real love to God in the heart, you will want to give, you will feel constrained to give. Your flesh may say "nay," but your heart and your conscience will say "yea," and you will find no peace until you have honored the Lord with your substance. — The third thing we learn from our lesson is this that:

3. *We are to give even though we are not absolutely certain that all our offerings will be put to the best possible use.* We speak here, of course, of giving directly for the work of the Church, not of giving for charitable purposes in general. In the matter of giving in general, especially where one is approached by all sorts of people and for all sorts of purposes, one needs to make use of good common sense. There may be circumstances and conditions where one does more harm than good by injudicious giving. Here we have to do with giving for the Church and, to be still more exact, to have in mind here giving for one's own particular church, for our own congregational and synodical work. That is the particular field in which you and I are called upon to labor and give.

And we say that here we should give even when we are not absolutely certain that every part of our offering will be most wisely applied. We may certainly assume that not everything that was given for the service of the temple in the time of Christ was faithfully applied to the best possible use. When even the temple itself had become a house of merchandise, so that Jesus felt compelled to drive the merchants and money changers out with a scourge; when Jesus denounced the Pharisees and rulers of the temple for their avarice and covetousness; when He said of them that they devoured widows' houses and for a pretense made long prayers — where such conditions existed we may be certain that the offerings of the temple were not always faithfully and conscientiously applied. But Jesus did not say in view of these facts that they should not give. On the contrary He was pleased with the people's giving and especially did

He praise those who gave with an upright heart and with a motive of love.

Thus, also, should we look upon our giving. We expect, of course, that the men who apply our offerings to their respective purposes for which they were made will faithfully and conscientiously use them, that not even a penny shall fail of the object for which it was given. We should feel that these men can be trusted for honesty and faithfulness in these matters. The man who holds such a trust and proves unfaithful, who diverts the gifts of the poor from their holy purpose, it may be to personal and selfish ends, will have a heavy sin to account for before Him who marks the offerings of His people. And not only should we be assured that they have the necessary wisdom and fitness for the work. However, even where we have reasonable assurance of these qualifications, it may still occur that the best application is not always made of the Church's offerings. All the circumstances, conditions and eventualities are not always known, and even the best of men may make mistakes. Sometimes a man proves morally unfaithful. But it will not do for one now to say: I gave for this or that purpose and my gift was not wisely applied; I shall not give anymore. Ask yourself, How much of that which God has given we have I not failed to apply wisely and even honestly? Suppose the Lord stopped giving, what would become of you? We are to give, therefore, even when we know that now and then a mistake will be made in the application of our gifts; for it is still the Lord's work. — We learn furthermore that:

4. *God's delight with our gifts does not depend upon the size of our gifts but upon the state of our hearts:* Jesus was doubtless pleased that the rich cast in much. Of course if there were some among them who were liberal simply to make a show, Jesus did not and could not praise them, but He does not say that their gifts were not to be accepted. But not all the rich were such givers in the time of Christ, neither are they all such givers at the present. There were men like Joseph of Arimathea who gave unselfishly, from motives of love. When such men bring their large offerings

the Lord is pleased, for He loves a cheerful giver. But a distinction is to be made between the gifts of the rich and those of the poor. Jesus Himself indicates here what that difference is; the rich give of their abundance while the poor give of their want. The rich have more than they need; they often have more than they even can properly use. When they give, they therefore suffer no loss, they need not deny themselves any comforts of life. What they give may therefore be called a gift, but hardly an offering, because there has been no sacrifice. But the poor give of their want, of what they could easily use for a little additional comfort for themselves. What they give is therefore not only a gift, something given, but also an offering, something that requires self-sacrifice. The poor man's nickel or silver dollar means more to him than the rich man's eagle or one hundred or thousand dollar check.

But there is another distinction between the gifts of the rich and those of the poor. We may not be able to discover it but the Lord sees it. Love belongs to giving. Paul says: "Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing." Now a poor man could give all his goods to feed the poor just as well as a rich man, and both may do it without love, as Paul intimates. In that case, of course, the gift of neither would count for anything so far as reaping God's commendation is concerned. But if love is to be measured according to the sacrifice made, then the widow who gives the two mites out of her living makes a greater sacrifice and shows more love than the rich man who gives from his abundance and surplus. Therefore it is that Jesus spoke so highly of the widow's gift. A certain picture presents this widow as giving her two mites with her babe upon her arm, intimating how much she needed the pittance for herself. The gifts of the poor are therefore to be held in high esteem; they may speak of greater love and deeper devotion than the great contributions of the rich. — The fifth lesson we learn from Jesus at the treasury is this:

5. *If you want to compare your giving with that of this widow you must also give as this widow.* Quite often

we hear it said in connection with church offerings, yes, I will do something, I will give my mite. I cannot do much, says such a person, but I will do a little. What is strange about this is that one may hear such remarks from persons who are rich or who at least enjoy a good comfortable living. How about this comparison with the poor widow? You cannot give like this widow unless you are conditioned like the widow. To begin with, a rich man is no widow. Again, a man, even if he is not rich, even if he is poor, but has ability for work, is not a widow. A rich widow is not like this poor widow. A widow with grown children about here is not like this poor widow. You can give like this widow only when you are obliged to give out of your want. If therefore you want to compare your giving with that of the widow, then give as the widow did, otherwise you will be casting dirt upon her good name and reputation. You will likewise be deceiving yourself, making yourself believe that your giving is as acceptable unto the Lord as was that of the widow; whereas your remarks are but a cloak to cover up the niggardliness of your own heart. Such a comparison would likewise be a misjudgment on your part of the all-seeing eyes of Christ. He knows all about your giving, even though He is not physically present to watch the collection plate. He understands your giving better than you do yourself; He knows all the truth and all the falsehood about it. He is not being deceived, only you and your neighbor.

Let us therefore be honest with ourselves. Let us not say that we are giving like this widow when we know that we are not, and when the similarity consists only in the smallness of our gifts. To give like this widow is not an easy thing to do. It would really mean to give everything one has and retain only a bare living. That would be giving from one's want.

But aside from the size of the gift compared with what one has to give, there is another thing that is even more important. Jesus does not say that one must give all that he has. This may be needful in some cases, just as He told the rich young ruler to sell all his goods and give to the poor. That was the only way for that young man to

wrench his heart from his possessions. We cannot say, therefore, that unless a man gives all he does not give with the right spirit. But the thing that is absolutely necessary is this that one first of all give himself to Jesus. That is the secret of all true giving. That, too, is the most acceptable gift to God. God does not want our gifts so much as He wants us. He knows, too, that when He has our hearts all other needful gifts for His kingdom will be forthcoming. Then, too, it will be easy for us to give. Where the heart has not been surrendered to the Lord, there the flesh is pinched and there is a great outcry every time something is given: You can't afford it; it's too much; you'll feel it; you need that for yourself; some day you will go over the hill to the poor-house if you keep on giving. Did you ever experience that, my friends? It is the flesh, your old self that is being hurt and is crying out. But keep right on giving as the Lord has prospered you, and even the flesh will become used to it. You will find that you will not starve, that you will not even need to go to the poor-house. You will find that there is always enough left to feed and clothe you, like another widow's jug, the oil will always keep flowing to fill the empty vessels. Yes, you will realize that with all your giving you will have as much more than you had before, for "the liberal soul shall be made fat." Amen.

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

JOHN 5: 1-14

After this there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep *market*, a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in, was made whole of whatsoever disease he had. And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years. When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time *in that case*, he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole? The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me. Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the sabbath. The Jews therefore said unto him that was cured, It is the sabbath day: it is not lawful for thee to carry *thy* bed. He answered them, He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed, and walk. Then asked they him, What man is that which said unto thee, Take up thy bed, and walk? And he that was healed wist not who it was: for Jesus had conveyed himself away, a multitude being in *that* place. Afterward Jesus findeth him in the temple, and said unto him, Behold, thou art made whole; sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.

WE shall spend very little time in explaining certain particulars given concerning the pool of Bethesda; whether it was really an angel that periodically troubled the waters and imparted to them healing qualities, or whether this was merely an intermittent spring with healing properties that escaped soon after the water had bubbled up, and which periodical movements were popularly ascribed to an angel as a ministering spirit of God. Doubtless if all the facts in the case were known to us we could readily see just what is meant. Here as in many other cases the Bible does not gratify our curiosity. For example, we should like to know much more than we do about the childhood and youth of Jesus, but the Gospel record does not gratify our wish. Such things are in no sense necessary unto our sal-

vation. But the things necessary for us to know, need not be misunderstood. We may not know all the particulars about this pool, may not be certain either at which feast these things occurred, may not be sure even with just what malady this man was afflicted; but there are things here that are plainly stated and that we can read as easily as we can read the multiplication table. They are things, too, that pertain directly to our soul's salvation. To these things we shall address ourselves. We find outlined here, and that quite plainly,

THE WAY TO WHOLENESS IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

There are three things or steps to which we shall call your attention. The first step is:

1. *You must want to be made whole:* The pool with its five porches surrounding it seemed very much like a hospital. Bethesda means house of mercy. God had shown His mercy by placing there the healing spring; the people had responded with their mercy by building the five porches for the comfort of the afflicted. "In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the waters."

The whole scene represents very correctly the state of the human family. We look about us and everywhere we see sick people. We find these sick among all classes and ages. Even when we look upon the blooming health of youth and admire the spirit and like that look out of the sparkling eyes, yet we can there already detect the germs of disease that lurk underneath the roseate skin. And when you now ask, Why is this so? why so much sickness and suffering? why the need of so many hospitals and why are they all filled? The only satisfactory answer is sin. "Sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Sin is the moral and spiritual disease that has laid hold upon every man and corrupted soul and body with all their powers and functions.

Some men do not look upon sin as so great an evil, nor regard its fruits as so fearful and they therefore play with sin

as a child may play with fire. But every one who takes the Bible at its word and sees things as Jesus Christ saw them will allow nobody to delude him into believing that sin is a minor evil, possibly even a good. Not only is the Word of God very specific in showing that sin is the cause of all our ills, but the pages of history and our daily observation declare the same fact. Take up your daily paper as the daily and hourly record of human actions and conditions and what do you find? Do you not find murder, adultery, theft, drunkenness, lying and every other crime in the whole category of sin? This is sin at work, the exceeding "sinfulness of sin" showing itself.

Now, if a sick man expects to get well he must, to begin with, want that healing; his will must act in the matter. If his will does not act he will not apply the means that may be needed for his recovery. But aside from the use of means, physicians recognize the importance of a strong desire and will power. They like to see their patients keep up their hope and courage and determination to get well. Jesus recognized the importance of will-action in His work. He healed all who came to Him, but all who came to Him wanted healing, otherwise they would not have come. But Jesus did not heal all the sick that He found. We read that once while He was in His own country "he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them." The reason given is that the people lacked faith in Him, for "he marvelled because of their unbelief." All the sick may have wanted healing, but they did not want it at His hands, for they did not believe in Him.

Doubtless all the afflicted at Bethesda wanted healing, otherwise they would not have come there. Why did Jesus not heal them all? Why did He single out just one person from the multitude? Possibly because some of them could get healing by other and natural means; but quite probably it was because He did not find in them the right spiritual desire; for He was after healing the soul as well as the body, but these people did not seem to care for that kind of healing.

Spurgeon draws a beautiful picture of how Jesus went about, threading His way among the blind, the lame and the halt, looking benignly upon them all, but that none looked up to Him. He was ready to scatter mercy and healing with a liberal hand but they were not ready to receive it. However, there was one man here who looked up to Jesus. Notice what Jesus at once did to encourage him. "Wilt thou be made whole?" said He. A strange question, you may say; of course he wanted to be made whole. But no, not a strange question, on the contrary, a needful question to encourage the man, to awaken hope again, to create desire, to start his will to action. Thirty-eight years he had been afflicted, long had he lain there, without help. His hope must have been about gone, when Jesus came to him. Here is a man who looks upon me with a kindly eye, His face shows sympathy, His voice seems to imply authority, He takes an interest in me; here there is hoping again; I will look up to Him — will hang upon Him. Some such thoughts must at this moment have passed through the soul of the afflicted man.

In spiritual healing we likewise find the necessity of will-action. Men must want to be saved, otherwise they will not and cannot be saved. If God could force the will of man and make him believe then doubtless all would be saved, for He wants all to be saved. Or if Satan could force all men not to believe then all would be lost, for Satan wants all men to be damned. This shows the importance of the will in this matter. Generally men say that they want to be saved. If they are approached with the question, Do you want eternal salvation? they will generally say, Why yes, if there is such a salvation as you speak of, we want it. But it is clear that many of them do not desire it like they desire some other things, as, for example, money, pleasure, power or a great name. It is not a dominant desire in them, it does not move them to anything. A man with little will power will not turn the world up-side down; and these people will surely not turn the world up-side down; and these people will surely not turn their evil hearts up-side down, or rather right-side up. Their desire for salvation is

not strong enough to put down their stronger desire for things sinful. Especially can they not bring themselves to forsake their pet sins.

Have you, my friends, examined yourselves on this point? You want to be saved, but is that desire a dominant one in your life? Does it influence and control your life as the rudder guides the ship? Do you think of this matter much and often? Or does it come to you only when some one else brings it to your attention? or when some great catastrophe befalls you or your neighbor? or when you are brought to stand at the portals of death? Do you deceive yourself into believing that you want to be saved when there is only a little interest in heaven, but everything else is heavily drawing you to this world?

But you will say, How can I come to have such a strong desire for heaven? Jesus is seeking to do for you what He did for this man. He awoke within him the desire to be healed. He is seeking to do the same for you by having you look upon the evil of sin. Look upon that multitude of miserable folk; gaze at the hideousness of sin and at its fruits. Do you not tire of it? Do you not long to behold a better scene? Jesus is at hand by His word of grace and his messengers of peace to direct your eyes to that better picture. He wants you to reflect upon the blessedness of the forgiveness of sin, of peace with God, of a good conscience, of a life of holiness and righteousness, of eternal glory with the angels and the saints made perfect. That is the picture of a happy family, of the blessed life. Look upon it continuously as you look upon the beauties of nature and the sublimities of the heavens, and feel the desire for eternal life grow within your breast. — The second step to spiritual wholeness is:

2. *Get up and walk:* These persons at Bethesda had to do more than wish for healing; and they did more. With all his ardent wishing for wholeness, if a man remained upon his couch and did not get down and bathe in the troubled water the healing did not come. This is God's order everywhere. Men must go after that which they want. If we want bread to eat we must work for it and sweat for it.

Years ago men wanted a better light than the smoking, flickering flame of a pine knot. They got the tallow dip — that was better; then they got the oil lamp — that was still better; then they got the gas light — that was still better; then they got the electric light; and that is the best of all; probably the best light that we shall have until we get into the light of the great white throne. But they got these better lights because they sought them out. We may expect this same principle to obtain in the spiritual world. Salvation is ready and free for all, but you must come and get it. “Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price, is the Prophet’s urgent invitation. There is nothing to pay, it is free as the flowing fountain; but you are told to come and buy. You must perform the act of buying even if it does not cost you anything. It is like taking over an inheritance; it does not cost you a cent and yet you must take it over according to the law of the land. Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. What Jesus offers us is free, but we must come. Some things God brings to us and lays them in our hands as the mother bird lays the worm in the nestling’s mouth. Thus He gives us air for our lungs, sunshine for our eyes, rain for our fields. But most things God only offers to us, makes it possible for us to get them; He expects us to reach out for them, to get up and walk. This is especially true of all higher and spiritual blessings.

The chief thing about this getting up and walking is faith. The people here at Bethesda believed in the healing properties of the spring. This particular man believed in Jesus’ Word. If he had thought: Well, who is this man anyway? I do not see that He can do anything for me, he would have continued in his impotence. But he felt and thought otherwise. A stranger indeed He is; but there is something remarkable about Him. Why, only to look at Him does one good and His words come with a strange force and a peculiar authority. I believe in Him; I shall do as He bids me.

Nor did he need to wait long until faith began to realize its object. At the words of Jesus, “Rise, take up thy bed,

and walk," he instantly felt a thrill of life in his withered limbs, a strengthening of his bones and muscles, a limbering up of his joints and a stiffening of his backbone. And the imparted life pressed for action; he could lie still no longer; he must get up and walk, he could not help it. He was like a steel spring that has been released, it must spring; or like a high-spirited horse chafing at the bit to go. He had done nothing for himself, not a single thing; he had not imparted the least bit of strength to his flabby muscles; Jesus had done all that for him. But now that these things were done unto him he must get up and walk and exercise that life and strength bestowed.

So Christ comes to man spiritually sick and helpless and says, Arise, and walk. But you say, How can I? That is the very thing I cannot do. And yet we say, You can just as well as this man could. When Jesus commands you to do something He at the same time gives you the power to do it, otherwise He would not command you. The words of Christ will set the spring; action will follow, if only you will believe and try to do His Word. The Word itself will give you the power to do its divine behest. The power to heal is there if only you have faith to lay hold upon it. Jesus never once said to a man, Be healed, with no healing to follow. He says to you, My son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee. When you now believe that Word faith gives you the assurance that it is really so, that your sins are really forgiven; like Christian in Pilgrim's Progress, you feel the burden of guilt roll off your shoulders. So He says to you, You are a child of God through faith in Christ, you are an heir to everlasting life. Again He says, My Spirit shall be in you to keep and guide you. If you with faith lay hold upon these declarations, then you will know that these things are really so and you will feel the presence of the Spirit in your heart and the power of a new life, filling you with impulses for a life of holiness and righteousness in the service of God.

You cannot possibly do these things yourself; but remember that Jesus can do the impossible, therefore believe Him. And if you still ask, How can I know these things?

how can I be sure of them? then ask in reply, How did this man know that he could walk? By getting up and walking, by relying on Jesus' Word and doing His bidding. There is no other way for you; you must take Jesus at His word and act. The evidence or assurance may not be quite so clear and so irresistible as the physical healing of this man. But if you believe that assurance will come. If there is any weakness it must be in your faith; it cannot be in Jesus' Word, for that word works just as certainly in the spiritual sphere as in the physical. Therefore when Jesus speaks, get up and walk. — After you have secured the spiritual wholeness there is still something else to do in order that you may keep it, namely:

3. *Take care of yourself*: This third step is a long step. It reaches from conversion until the gate of heaven swings open to receive the weary traveler. But the whole of it may be summed up in the words, Take care of thyself; or as Jesus elsewhere says, "Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation"; or as Saint Paul tells us, "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed, lest he fall." Shortly after the healing Jesus saw this man in the temple. That was a good sign, for he was doubtless there for a good purpose; we may assume that he was there for the purpose of thanking God for the recovery of his health; he was taking care of himself. If people would spend more time in the house of God, hearing and learning His Word and worshipping Him with prayer, praise and thanksgiving, there would be less sinning and less need for divine chastisement.

Jesus said to the man, "Behold, thou art made whole; sin no more lest a worse thing come unto thee." This remark of Jesus made it almost certain that the man's affliction had been the result of some particular sins which he had committed in his youth, quite probably certain sins of the flesh. Especially great afflictions are not always the fruits of certain great sins. Of the man born blind Jesus said that neither did he sin nor his parents that he was born blind; but it had come upon him that the works of God might be manifested in him. Sins are like an evil tree, they bear their fruit and much of the bitterness of which we complain is but the fruit

of our own evil doings; we are reaping what we have sown. Yet we cannot always reason back from some affliction to certain sins which the person must have committed.

But we need to notice here too the severity of God as a warning against sin. Some people think that because God is love, therefore He cannot be severe, that He must always punish with a gloved hand. But consider what the Lord did to this man; thirty-eight years was he laid upon the couch, withered, impotent and helpless, and why? because of his sins. Where else do you find such severity? Where is there a criminal law of our land that metes out proportionately such punishment for sin? And now Jesus threatens him with a still worse thing if he should fall back into his old ways. The fact is that there is no limit to God's means for inflicting punishment. There are a thousand ways in which He can pour out His wrath, and great as is His love so great too is His anger at all ungodliness and sin. Consider well therefore Jesus' warning to this man; He spoke of his past, his sins and the afflictions he bore; He speaks of the present, that now he is healed; He speaks of the future, of worse punishment if he sins again. In view of these things Jesus now tells him to take care. The root of the old sin was still there after thirty-eight years of suffering, and if encouraged it would again grow and bear its deadly fruit. The only safe rule was to heed Jesus' warning and sin no more.

We have no means of knowing what this man's subsequent life was, but doubtless he did not forget the goodness and mercy of the Lord and ever took heed to Jesus' words. But this same admonition is meant for each of us; we need to take heed to our steps. The Psalmist already says that blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. Two ways are here spoken of; the one is association with sin and with sinners. You cannot wallow in the mire and not become filthy; you cannot take poison and experience no evil effects. The other way is association with God through His Word;

that leads you by the still waters, through the clear fields of virtue and to the hills of God crowned with everlasting peace and glory.

And notice here too, that whatever ills you may have suffered heretofore, the Lord is always able to send a worse thing upon you. Perhaps you have experienced great bodily affliction, perhaps it was great mental anguish; perhaps it was a blow at your good name and character; whether it was the result of some particular sin or not, which God probably only knows, this you should know that the Almighty can always send a worse evil. And that is not the worst, so long as you can find peace again through repentance and faith. There is a worse evil. You might not be able to find repentance again. Esau could not find it, after selling his birth-right for a mess of pottage. Judas could not find it after having betrayed his Master and Savior. "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame."

This third step is not easy. We cannot take it of ourselves any more than we can take the second or the first. God's grace must do it. "Ye are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." But just because it is God who does it, therefore it is possible. If we continue in Jesus' Word there can be no danger. The faithful use of the Word and sacraments and dwelling in the house of the Lord, that will insure continual spiritual wholeness. No one can ever pluck us out of Jesus' hand. Amen.

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

JOHN 11: 1-11

Now a certain *man* was sick, *named* Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. (It was *that* Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.) Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick. When Jesus heard *that*, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby. Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. When he had heard therefore, that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was. Then after that saith he to *his* disciples, Let us go into Judæa again. *His* disciples say unto him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again? Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him. These things said he: and after that he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep.

THAT there is much suffering among men is a well-known fact. Around the pool of Bethesda at Jerusalem were five porches wherein lay a multitude of impotent folk, blind, halt, withered. In every city are hospitals full to overflowing with afflicted people; from every home in the land there may be heard at some time the low woman of suffering. We do not consider this strange, for we know that all this trouble is the fruit of sin and that men are very sinful. But it may seem strange to us that there should be suffering among God's people. Why does God not protect His own? Where is the father who would allow his child to languish upon the bed of sickness if he could prevent it. We believe that God could prevent these things. Why then does He not do it? That fine home at Bethany, whose inmates Jesus so dearly loved and where He frequently found refreshment and rest from His arduous labors—why did Jesus not protect it against the ravages of disease?

Our lesson this morning shows us that there is

TRIBULATION AMONG GOD'S CHILDREN.

What shall we do about it? We may learn here first, What God's children ought to do, and secondly, What God does do.

1. *What God's children ought to do in their affliction:*
It hardly needs to be stated that we should make use of all legitimate natural means to relieve one another in bodily affliction. The Lord expects us to do this. He has therefore surrounded us with almost innumerable means and remedies for the relief of bodily suffering. It would be unfaithfulness to our trust and our opportunities, and unkindness to ourselves and our neighbors, if we did not seek out the remedies which God has provided and apply them to our brother's relief. Nothing is said in our lesson as to what Martha and Mary did for their brother, but who could think for a moment that they did not do everything within their power to bring relief and to nurse him back again to health and strength? Doubtless too, there were neighbors there whose hands and feet were ever ready for any service that might promise succor. We might use our imagination to picture to ourselves how Martha with quiet though hurried step went about doing this and doing that for her brother's comfort; we might think of Mary sitting by the bed with a grave countenance intent upon inspiring her brother with hope and trust, holding his weakening hand and carefully noting the pulse as it gradually grew slower and weaker; we might think of friends and neighbors coming early and late and asking with bated breath how the sufferer was doing and whether there was anything which they could do for the comfort of the family.

This is all as it should be. God is pleased with such interest in each other's welfare. Every hospital that is erected for the relief of suffering, every home that is reared up as a place of rest for the weary and of protection for the homeless, every organization whose purpose is the kindly relief of the afflicted — these are all things with which God is pleased; they all breathe the spirit, though of course with much imperfection, of Christ who went about doing good

and healing all manner of sickness. Right here is a field of service which the Church especially in this country has not occupied at all yet as she should. It is one of the phases of Inner Mission work, to the need and importance of which we are just beginning to awake. A Christianity that does not take up this work, especially when it is once seen and recognized, is not a well rounded-out Christianity. It is like an apple with a gnarled and undeveloped side; it is not the kind of apple we like. And let us not forget that afflictions are sent not alone for the sufferer's sake; but also for the sake of his friends and neighbors. When your neighbor becomes sick, that is a call upon you and an opportunity for you to exercise love and kindness, to show that you are not living for self alone, but for your neighbor as well.

Much can be done therefore under God for the relief of the sick and suffering by our own strength and efforts; but in the end our resources are very limited. The human arm is very short, in extreme need especially it cannot reach far. Therefore we need to look to the Lord. Men of the world who do not know the Lord, do of course not call upon Him in their trouble. Not so God's own people. They not only recognize their own weakness, but they also believe in the gracious and mighty hand of God, that He is able to help and deliver even unto the uttermost.

The sisters of Lazarus sent word unto Jesus saying, "Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick." They had done with their own hands what they could, of course ever trusting in the Lord and praying His blessing; but they had now come to see that all their efforts must fail, that unless a mightier hand intervened and stopped the onward march of disease their beloved brother must be taken from them in the midst of his days. The day of trouble was upon them and they fell back upon God's promise: "Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me."

We notice here that the sisters did not tell Jesus to come to their house as the nobleman at Capernaum insisted that Jesus come down ere his child die and heal him; they did not even say that Jesus should do anything for their brother at a

distance, they simply told Him that their brother was sick. To some this might appear like timidity on their part, or it might seem to be proof of a weak faith. The latter it could not have been, for when Jesus did come, the very first statement of both Martha and Mary was, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." Nor is the matter to be regarded as timidity. It was rather a holy and reverential restraint. They did not wish to say what Jesus should do in the case. Their hearts were bleeding and they were yearning for Jesus to come, but they must not tell Him what to do nor prescribe the hour when He should come; they must leave all that to Him. Instead, therefore, of seeing a weak faith here, it is rather a strong faith, coupled however, with humility and resignation. The strength of faith is seen in this that they deemed it enough to tell the Lord of their trouble; their resignation is seen in this that they left it all to Him; whatever the Lord might do, would be right and they would make no complaint.

Just these are qualities of faith and habits of prayer that we need to acquire. When afflictions come let us try to feel that it is enough to tell the Lord of our trouble, and then to rely upon His wisdom and love to do the very best for us. We do not mean to say that we may not be importunate in our prayer at times. Jacob of old insisted that the Lord bless him before he left off wrestling with Him; the woman of Canaan followed Jesus with her cries until He granted her prayer and then praised her for her great faith. Jesus even teaches us how we ought always to pray and not to faint by the parable of the widow who kept importuning the judge for relief from her adversary until he came to the rescue. There are times when we should cry loud and long and where we may even tell the Lord just what we think He ought to do, but let it all rest upon this basis, that the Lord knows our trouble and that He will do what is best. Without that groundwork of faith and assurance we shall become impatient and cannot learn to wait on the Lord.

There is another thing here that we need to learn from these sisters. It is the argument they use as the reason why Jesus should come. They did not say, Lazarus is our only

brother and we need him very much; nor did they say, We have often entertained Thee at our home and Thou therefore owest us a return favor; nor did they say, Lazarus is a good man and he deserves that Thou shouldst do something for him. Some such reason usually lies nearest at hand and we are apt to resort to it in order to move the Lord to help us. This is a mistake; at least, these things must not be brought in first. We may mention them, or at least some of them, but we must not make these things the basis of our appeal. God will never hear us for anything that we are or have done; we must shift our ground completely.

What argument then did these sisters use? They said, "Behold, he whom thou lovest is sick." Ah, my dear friends, there is the fount of every blessing and there the source of every answered prayer, God's love, His unspeakable and inexhaustible love. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son." Let us shift ourselves to that basis if we have not yet found it. Learn to plead with God on the basis of His love and mercy, not on the basis of anything that you may be or possess or have done. I wonder whether the explanation of many unanswered prayers is not to be found in this very fact, that we do not lean enough upon God, upon His love and mercy in Christ Jesus. Our staff is taken from the wood of this world and is of our own making instead of the staff of God's eternal promise and mercy that alone can sustain us and comfort us as we pass through the valley of suffering. — These are some of the things which we need to do in times of affliction. In the second place, we need to consider:

2. *What God does in the days of His people's affliction:* The very first thing we note here is that it is God who permits these afflictions to come. Whatever our trouble may be, let us not look upon it simply as the necessary bitter fruit of sin. Sin is the final source to which we must trace it, but there are also other causes and influences at work. A stream may have its source in the mountains, but there are springs there and rains and snows from which its waters are gathered. What a fearful fact it would be if we had to be told that we must necessarily eat all the bitter fruits of

our sins; or that there is a blind fate hurling its arrows at us from which there is no escape; or that Satan is in full control of all the forces of evil and that he can pour the contents of the black clouds of his ire upon us at will. Little hope would there be for us then in the day of our affliction.

From such dark thoughts and harassing fears we turn away and fix our eyes upon the Word of revelation and promise. This sickness did not come upon Lazarus without Jesus' knowledge, nor without His consent. He permitted it. He was willing that the beloved family should suffer for a time. But the very fact that Jesus permitted it threw a ray of light over the shadow of the cross. Sin and Satan and suffering — these spell only hopelessness and despair; that is the realm where all is dark. But bring in Jesus, Jesus the loving One, the merciful, the compassionate, the mighty Savior, bring Him in and you at once shoot all the darkness through with rays of light. It is because of this that Jesus could say concerning Lazarus, and that we can say of our friends, "This sickness is not unto death." It is sickness indeed, but the Prince of life is in control. He permitted it, but He also controls it and His mercy will bring deliverance.

We further see that God not only permits afflictions to come, but at times He also allows them to linger. There are occasions when the Lord hears the cry of His people immediately, for the prophet says, "And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." When the ten lepers cried unto Jesus, saying, "Master, have mercy on us," He at once turned and said unto them, "Go, show yourselves unto the priests"; and as they went they were cleansed. But Jesus did not always grant the solicited favor so quickly. The woman of Canaan had to cry repeatedly and argue with the Lord before He granted her request. And here we see how Jesus when he learned of Lazarus' sickness "abode two days still in the same place where he was." Sometimes the Lord is pleased to hide His face from us for a moment or two. Sometimes the storm continues longer than is to our liking; and anyway at such times minutes seem to us like hours and hours like days.

But these things should not give us any uneasiness. Only remember whom you are dealing with. You are not dealing alone with sin, working out its inevitable bitter consequences; you are not dealing with a blind fate that is set to be your enemy and from whose power there is no escape; you are not dealing with Satan, that arch foe of men and of all that is holy and blessed; but you are dealing with the Lord God almighty, "merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgressions and sin." If you sent a child on a journey you might feel some uneasiness if the child were all alone; but if you knew that the child was in the friendly care of some competent escort you would have no fear whatever. So here, sickness is a visitation from the Lord; it is in His hand and under His control and it can do only that which God in His love and wisdom has designed. This fact alone should give us confidence. No harm can come from it for God's children: "A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee." During the hot weather of the last few weeks there was much complaint of the heat, but some one who thought a little deeper and looked a little farther remarked, "This hot weather is ripening the corn." So afflictions come, sometimes with cruel severity and with lingering step, and we think them almost unbearable, but we forget that they are ripening the precious fruits of faith and patience.

This, however, leads us to another thing that God does for us in our afflictions, for our lesson shows us that God has some good designs in view in these trials. When Jesus learned of Lazarus' sickness He said, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." This sickness is a fruit of sin but Jesus is going to use it for another purpose than simply to measure out the penalty for one's transgressions. He is going to glorify God and the Son of God by means of this sickness. He will allow Lazarus to die, He will allow him to be buried and to lie in the grave for four days in order that there might be no doubt on the part of anyone concern-

ing Lazarus' death. Then He will go back to Bethany and there in the presence of the family, in the presence of His disciples, in the presence of a multitude of people and — in the presence of His worst enemies, He will call Lazarus forth from the grave and declare the power and glory of God and prove Himself to be the very Son of God, the promised Messiah and the Savior of the world.

Jesus came to reveal God, especially in His love and mercy, in his great purpose to deliver us from sin and death. There is nothing for which we glorify God so much as for that. His wisdom and His power are great; we admire them and stand in awe at His infinitude. But what comfort should we find in the greatness of God if we knew ourselves shackled in sin and chained to the body of death? When Jesus, however, appears in our midst and declares Himself the Prince of life, the victor over death and the spoiler of the grave, then it is that the heart must break out in glorification of the Lord. These are things that Jesus did here at Bethany, God was glorified because He revealed Himself as the Conqueror of death and the grave.

But this was not all that Jesus designed in the sickness of Lazarus. Further on Jesus said to His disciples: "I am glad for your sake that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe." That sickness was also designed to lead the disciples to greater faith. Away back at the marriage of Cana it was said of Jesus that "he manifested forth his glory, and his disciples believed on him." Between the marriage at Cana and the sickness of Lazarus at Bethany there was an interval of about three years. That period was crowded with observations and experiences for the disciples. At the beginning they already believed, here they are to believe still more. What is the lesson? It is this, that all along Jesus was training them up to a stronger and greater faith. Nor did the work cease here, but it went on until they were endued with the Spirit from on high, and even then they still grew in faith until their work upon earth was done.

These are things which our own faith needs to lay hold of. The Lord designs that our troubles should glorify God. We may not always know how, but let us believe the Lord.

He designs, too, that we ourselves should profit by our afflictions; we may not always know in just what way, but here again let us believe and wait on the Lord. Lightning often does damage, yet the benefit is far greater than the hurt, though you and I cannot explain the process.

What is the final outcome of this affliction among God's children? It is a blessed one and may we be sure that it is. We know what Jesus finally did for this family; He restored Lazarus to his sisters, in perfect health and strength. The cloud was lifted from that house and the fulness of joy and gladness once more filled its court. Final deliverance, that's the truth for which we are looking and of which we want to be sure. Afflictions are not so hard to bear when we know that there will be an end to them. We want to be sure of an answer to the final petition of the Lord's Prayer, "Deliver us from evil." It will come in its fulness at the end of our lives just as it comes at the end of the Lord's Prayer, and we can wait, for God Himself will give us grace. And we can wait the better when we consider that our joy will be the greater at the journey's end. The shadow of the cross falls upon our pathway, it often casts a gloom over our homes; but the fact that it is God who is casting the shadows and that He is working out His great designs of goodness and love, that fills our hearts with hope and turns the gloom of night into the brightness of day. Amen.

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

MATTHEW 11: 25-30

At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and *he* to whomsoever the Son will reveal *him*. Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke *is easy*, and my burden is light.

LET us suppose a community in which there is great distress. There is much laborious work; there are many difficulties and disappointments; there is much sickness; there are many enemies; and last of all there is no prospect of an end to these distressing conditions. Let us now suppose that a person from some other clime appears in that community. He is the picture of health, has great physical strength and mental vigor and alertness, possesses great will power and determination and is morally incorruptible; his very appearance begets hope, his voice is full of sympathy and his words carry encouragement. We assume that he can do what he promises. He stands up and says to those people; Come unto me; I will give you relief from your burdens, from your fears and distress. Believe me and your land shall be swept free from all evil as the sky is brushed clear from threatening clouds. What a boon that person would be to that suffering community!

What we have thus imagined is really a fact, even more true than we have pictured it. The evils we have mentioned and more and greater ones exist in our midst and so far as man can see there is no end to them this side of the grave; and for what lies beyond we have even greater fear than for what we see about us. But there appears one in our midst from another clime. He is not only the picture of health

and the embodiment of strength and courage, but there is that about Him which declares him to be more than a man. He speaks as no man spake; He commands the wind and the sea and they obey Him; He heals the sick with a touch; the devils flee before Him; and at His voice the very dead wake up and live again. To this wonderful person we look for some word of hope; and we are not disappointed, for He says, Come unto me and

YE SHALL FIND REST UNTO YOUR SOULS.

Our text speaks of three things in particular that belong to this rest:

1. *Ye shall know God*: First of all let us note that we have here a little hymn of thanksgiving on the part of Jesus — a little doxology: "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth." According to Matthew's account Jesus was lamenting over the cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum, cities where most of His mighty works were done, because in their own wisdom and in their pride they repented not at His preaching. It was a discouraging outlook. These cities were centers of religion and learning, there the law of Moses was expounded and discussed, there the prophecies and expectations of the promised Messiah were debated; there above all other places Jesus and His teaching should have been welcomed. But nowhere was His reception so cold, nowhere were the walls of unbelief and prejudice so thick and so high. With all His teaching, with all His mighty works, little did He accomplish in these centers of learning, religion and ecclesiastical leadership.

But discouraging as this outlook was, Jesus Himself was not discouraged. He saw that His work was not in vain and that the gracious purpose of God was still being accomplished. If the great and the wise in their wisdom refused to hear, there were other souls who were ready to hear and to believe. Therefore Jesus said, "I thank thee, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight." Jesus is speaking of the great things

of the Gospel of forgiveness of sin, life and salvation through Himself. These are the great things about which He is concerned and upon which the present and eternal welfare of men depend. There are other things about which we may be concerned, but our chief concern must ever be the things of the Gospel. Jesus went about doing good and healing the sick, but when He breaks out in a doxology to His Father it is not for bodily healing, but for the revelation of the blessed things of the Gospel.

But you may ask, If Jesus is so thankful that these things are being revealed, why does He seem to thank God that they are hid from the wise and understanding? Does He really rejoice that these men are blindfolded and so shut out from the kingdom of heaven? No, Jesus wanted to save the Scribes and Pharisees, the chief priests and the elders just as well as the vine-dresser or the fisherman, the publican or the sinner. We must hold fast to the fact that Jesus came to save all without distinction and if any differences appear, the ground for such differences must not be sought in Jesus nor in the plan of salvation, but alone in the persons themselves. The wise and the understanding of whom Jesus here speaks were learned and good in their own eyes, far better and above anything that Jesus offered them. In their estimation Jesus could do nothing for them. It is a common trait of human nature that when a man has some knowledge of a particular subject he thinks that he knows it all and no one can teach him anything further. A little learning is a dangerous thing and knowledge puffeth up. That was the state of these men on religion. Jesus, of course, was not glad for this, but He was glad that there were other people who were humble and teachable, who did not think themselves better and above Jesus, who were willing to learn from Him and to whom therefore the things of the Gospel could be revealed. We have here therefore not a double subject of thanksgiving, the blindness of the one and the seeing of the other, but one subject with two sides or aspects.

But there is another reason here for thanksgiving, namely, that the conditions for receiving the Gospel are

such as the unlearned, the humble, the poor and lowly can comply with. A man need not be great, nor learned in the eyes of the world, for then the great mass of mankind would be shut out. It is like life; if bodily life depended upon the luxuries that wealth alone can buy, then few of us could live; but the things we need are so common that we can all get them, and therefore we can all live.

Again, Jesus is thankful that the value of the things of the Gospel do not depend upon the approval of the wise and the learned, for when would we ever then get a Gospel that is satisfactory to all? About the only things upon which the wise agree are such simple propositions as that two and two make four. Men of humble spirit, however, are ready to lay aside their own thoughts and ideas and accept the word of Jesus. These are the persons to whom the heavenly things can be revealed; for they are like babes, ready to hear and to learn and to believe. The worldly-wise and the proud cannot enter; heaven is not intended for them. Jesus therefore thanks His Father that those for whom heaven is intended can really find it and enter in, can learn to know God and rejoice in Him.

But Jesus here tells us also how they got this knowledge: "All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." We shall not dwell upon all the facts given here, how all things have been delivered to the Son according to His human nature; how no one knows the Son but the Father; and how no one knows the Father as God except as the Son reveals Him. Jesus came into the world for the very purpose of revealing God, that is, His love and mercy and His plan to save us. Moses has told us many things about God, especially about His holiness and righteousness, about His anger at sin and about the doom of the wicked. You can also learn many things about God from the book of nature, for the hills and the mountains speak of God's power and glory and goodness. But nowhere can we learn that God is love, that He is gracious and merciful, that He sent His Son into the world to save us from sin and

death, that in that Son we have forgiveness of sin, life and salvation. These things we learn only in Christ the teacher come from God. You look upon Christ, His love and compassion; you behold His works of mercy and healing; you observe His yearning for the souls of men; you see Him in conflict with His enemies, with men and devils and all the powers of death and hell to rescue us from death and destruction; you see Him dying upon the tree that you and I and all the world may live. In these things you see God, you behold the glorious face of the Father. Jesus said to Philip upon a certain occasion, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

But if God reveals Himself to us only in His Son, what shall we say of those who do not accept Christ as He is shown to us? who do not believe Him to be the Son of God and the Savior of the world; who look upon Him only as a great and good man, a mighty prophet and a master teacher? How will they learn to know God by looking only at the face of a mere man? How will they discover the infinite compassion of God, His unmistakable love, His readiness to forgive sin, His power to cleanse from all unrighteousness and that He is the source of eternal life and blessedness? Will they mount up to the throne of God as upon eagle's wings and look directly upon the face of Him that sitteth thereon? That is not necessary, even if it were possible. Here upon earth in the face of Jesus as portrayed in the Gospel — here already we may behold the blessed countenance of the Father. In Him we see "the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person." We expect to see more of Him some future day, to behold greater things than these, when we shall see Him face to face as He is. That is the beatific vision for which we long. But what we now see suffices for this life. If we saw more we might fain live forever in this imperfect world and might thus miss getting the fuller vision.

Now it is in just this knowledge that our life begins: "This is life eternal that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." Here

begins the soul's rest: "Learn of me and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Friends, are you finding that rest in the knowledge of God? Do you find peace and comfort therein that God is love, that He is merciful and gracious, that He forgives iniquity, transgression and sin, that He wants to own you as His child and make you forever blessed? Here is a poor widow left with a family of small children, would it not be comfort for her to know of some strong rich person who would befriend and help her in all her trouble? But what would a service like that be compared with what God has promised to do for every one who looks to Him for help? Has your soul found that assurance, or are you like Philip that you have been with Christ so long and yet have not come to know Him nor experienced the love of the Father? Oh, brothers, if in all our laboring and searching we should only devote more time to the searching out of these things of God, and as we found them should store them away in our hearts as Mary kept the words concerning Jesus — then should we find greater things than in the field and shop, in club and theatre; we should find that fuller rest unto the soul without which there can be no real peace, contentment and happiness. — The second thing that belongs to this rest of the soul is this:

2. *Ye shall be delivered from your burdens:* "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." There are many things in this life that are burdensome. Labor is a burden when it becomes too arduous, as it often does; bodily suffering is a burden, disappointment and misfortunes are burdensome. The world is full of burden-bearers; especially do we find thousands upon thousands in our large cities who are so weighed down with toil and destitution and wretchedness that they have little or no inclination to look up into the clear blue of the sky above them. Yet grievous as these things are, they are not the real burden of which Jesus here speaks. We can endure these things without overmuch grief, if only we can be freed from the real burden. Indeed, we are not freed from all these things when we do come to Christ, though what He

gives us will go far toward removing some of these burdens and helping us to bear the rest with patience.

What then is the real burden of life? Ask the publican who stood in the temple smiting upon his breast and crying, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Ask the jailer who came running to Paul and Silas, and crying out in fear and trembling, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Ask the Psalmist when he moans as he tosses upon his bed, "I am weary with my groaning; all the night make I my bed to swim; I water my couch with my tears"; or when he laments, "Thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore. There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger; neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin." Ask Judas the traitor when his conscience awoke to the guilt of his awful deed and he could no longer endure the pangs of remorse and went out and hanged himself. Or ask the woman who was a sinner and who in the joy of her forgiveness anointed Jesus' feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. These can tell you what is that burden from which Jesus promises relief. It is the burden of sin, the curse of guilt, the pangs of an accusing conscience, the fear of transgressed law that is bound to come back with crushing condemnation, the dread of an offended holy God who has declared Himself a consuming fire and that He will by no means clear the guilty. These things constitute the crushing burden under which no man can stand up when he once comes to feel them.

We may notice this, too, as an additional burden for some, that they try to make satisfaction for their sins and yet feel that divine justice is not satisfied. They do penance, they practice self-denial, they do good works, they afflict themselves, they pray, they lament, they go hither and they go thither in the vain attempt to quiet a guilty conscience and to appease an angry God, but there is no relief.

Of course there are many people who are not at all aware of the burden of sin that rests upon them. They go tripping along through life with head erect and a light heart. They seem to spread their branches abroad as a green bay tree; they are not in trouble as other men are. But it is not

because there is no burden there and no trouble in sight; it is only because they have not yet come to see and to fear the lion in the way. Or they are drifting lightly along with the smooth current, unaware of the maelstrom below them. Jesus in His invitation here is not thinking especially of these people; at least He must wait until they come to feel their sins and guilt and to realize the danger before them; then only will His invitation appeal to them. He has in mind those who feel this burden but who have not yet found a way of relief. They are like a lost man looking for some one to show him the street home; they are those who are ready to cry out, "Sirs, what must we do to be saved?"

To these Jesus now says, Come unto Me, and I will give you rest, I will relieve you of that burden. What is it that Jesus does for us when we thus come to Him? He assures us that our sins are pardoned, that God will not remember them against us, that though they be "as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." He assures us that we are fully reconciled with God, that neither our conscience, nor the Law, nor the devil can condemn us, that neither sin, death nor hell can have any power over us, that we are God's children and heirs of everlasting life. He assures us, too, that our final entrance into that kingdom does not depend upon a perfect life, that we must keep all the commandments and so fit ourselves for heaven, for we know that we are not able for those things, but that we daily sin much and therefore need daily forgiveness. This forgiveness we shall have, for coming to Jesus means the privilege also of daily coming - to the Father and praying, Forgive us this day our trespasses. Jesus assures us, too, of the guiding presence of the Holy Spirit and the sustaining power of His grace, so that it will be our aim and pleasure to walk in the holy ways of God; and that we shall be sustained in our fight against the temptations of the world, the flesh and the devil; and that though we be assailed daily, we shall nevertheless prevail and finally gain the victory.

These then are the things that constitute deliverance from the burden of sin and guilt and these the things that give rest to the soul. Have you found this rest also, my friend? Are you sure and can you rejoice that all your sins are forgiven, that you are free from condemnation, that God is your friend and that you are His child and an heir to eternal life, and that His grace will keep you in the way until your work on earth is done, the victory won and the crown of life has been placed upon your brow? Do not say that these statements are mere platitudes or dreamy nothings or impossible ideals. There are people who think so, who think that the only real things are the things that smell of bread and butter and have the aroma of earthly pleasures or success. No, these things are real, though for the present yet ideal, for the only things that will abide are the ideal. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." But just because these things are spiritual and ideal, therefore do not expect too much in this life, even when the burden of sin has been removed. You will still need to work, you will still get sick, you will still meet with disappointments, there will yet be many a pain and many a sting before your work is done. But when once the work is done, then will you lay off this cumbrous clay, and the spirit, set free from all that binds to earth, will mount up to glory and to God. — But there is a third thing necessary to this rest of the soul:

3. *Ye shall be happy in my service:* "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." You have come to know God as a loving, merciful Father, you have been relieved of your burden of sin and now rejoice in complete forgiveness and acceptance before Him. Is that all now that your soul asks? Are you in the possession of these gifts satisfied to go on and live to yourself? Do you not find that the moment you depart from the service of Christ an element of unrest enters your soul? When you were a child at home under the parental roof and you there in your self-will disobeyed your parents and did what seemed good

in your own eyes, were you at rest then, were you happy, were you glad for the presence of your parents, and did you look upon their kindly faces with a light heart and a good conscience? If not, what was the cause of that downcast look and that uneasy feeling? What could it have been but your disobedience and your departure from the service of your parents?

So is the service of Christ, only that the obligation is greater and the distress that follows self-will and waywardness more acute. If you have asked Jesus to take the burden of sin from your shoulders, you cannot be at ease if you do not accept His yoke of service. You may seek to explain why you do not serve Him at all times, you may seek to excuse your waywardness and indifference, but the pain of wrong-doing will not away, it will remain as a thorn in your soul. It will be the old burden of sin rolling back again. No, there can be no real rest until we have entered fully into Jesus' service. To that end He made us free, that we might consecrate ourselves to Him in a new life of loving obedience.

Jesus therefore says, "Take my yoke upon you." A yoke is made to draw with, it implies service. Jesus wants you in His kingdom to work: Go, work today in My vineyard, is His call to every one who would confess His name. You are not to be idlers in that kingdom. God has no more use for idlers than the state has. He has given you certain talents, perhaps ten, perhaps five, possibly only one, but He says to all, Occupy till I come. Some people seem to think of heaven as a place for nothing but passive enjoyment, a realm of sun-kissed hills where there is nothing to do but to bask in the everlasting beams of God's abundant goodness; and they want to begin that heavenly career here upon earth already, doing nothing but sitting around, rejoicing in the forgiveness of sins and in their title to the glories of the future world. Some, too, may be so secure in the possession of God's present and eternal favor that they see no danger therein if they now and then make excursions back again into the world of sin and iniquity out of which they have been rescued. Do not deceive yourselves with such false representations. Take Paul for an example. No one re-

joined more in the relief from the burden of sin and from the galling yoke of the Law than he did, but mark well how he consecrated himself to the service of his Master, how occupied he was with the things of God, how he offered himself upon the altar of service even to the sacrificing of his life at the cruel hands of Nero. We have not so many pounds to occupy with as Paul had; no such splendid gifts and powers of grace have been entrusted to us; but we are to be faithful, whatever the trust that has been imposed.

Consider well, too, what Jesus says about the yoke, "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light." You had the burden of sin; that was crushing. Jesus took that from you and laid upon you His own burden, for He says that whosoever would be His disciple must take up his cross and follow Him. But though that burden is a cross, yet it is not heavy; you bear it cheerfully because faith makes you strong and your heart is filled with love and hope. So, too, you were wearing a yoke, the galling yoke of service of sin. You thought at times that your sins were the means of much pleasure, but you found that when they went to seed it was all bitterness, pain and remorse. Or again, you were wearing another yoke, the yoke of the Law, trying by your own works and virtues to make peace with God and with your conscience. That, too, was a galling yoke; it was cutting your neck and wearing out your life. This yoke Jesus has also taken from you and has placed upon you His yoke of faith in full and free forgiveness through God's grace, and a loving service for His name's sake. This yoke is easy, or it is lightened with grace and cushioned with love. His commandments are not grievous, for you are moved to do them by love, and a loving service is always a joyful service. Ask yourself the question, When am I happiest in my relations to my fellowmen, when I sit down in my own cozy room and do nothing but feed myself with the good things God has given me, or when I am engaged in kindly service for others whom I love? I know you must say that it is the latter. That is just what Jesus wants to lead you to by calling you into His service.

Do not expect the fuller rest for your souls, therefore, until you have entered fully into the service of your Master. You can, of course, speak of forgiveness of sins and of justification apart from your life, and of how salvation itself depends upon these. Yet you cannot really separate forgiveness of sins and the peace that follows from your service and life in Christ. You cannot get rid of the burden of sin and then run about, either in the Church or in the world, without a master. Throw off the old then, but take up the new. You must have a master, some one to serve; and it will be either God or Mammon. If it is not the merciful and gracious God it must be the hard-hearted and claw-footed Mammon. Rejoice, therefore, that Jesus has a yoke for you. And choose ye this day whom ye will serve. Amen.

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

MATTHEW 12: 1-8

At that time Jesus went on the sabbath day through the corn; and his disciples were an hungred, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat. But when the Pharisees saw *it*, they said unto him, Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day. But he said unto them, Have ye not read what David did when he was an hungred, and they that were with him; How he entered the house of God, and did eat the shewbread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests? Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless? But I say unto you, That in this place is *one* greater than the temple. But if ye had known what *this* meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day.

THE Sabbath question has ever been a sort of burning question.

Long before Christ came there were bitter controversies among the Jews as to what all was permissible on the holy day. Nor had the question been settled when Christ came, as our lesson this morning clearly shows. Some of the difficulties propounded are really laughable. We are told, for example, that it was a question among the learned whether it was lawful or not to eat an egg that was laid on the Sabbath day. Again it was questioned whether a man with a wooden leg might take a Sabbath day's journey inasmuch as by carrying his wooden leg he would be bearing a burden. These things seem ridiculous and yet they are very little more so than when the Pharisees charged the disciples with breaking the Sabbath because they plucked a few heads of wheat and rubbed the grain out in their hands.

The Sabbath question is still not settled even among those who call themselves Christians; some have it one way and some another. Of course as usual each party is right. But how about ourselves? Are we sure that we have the right answer? I am thinking not of the Church as such,

but of ourselves as individuals. And if we are sure as to our understanding of the Sabbath, how about our observance? Much depends on that. Blessed are they that hear the Word of God and *keep* it.

This morning then we shall try to clear away some possible difficulties as to the right meaning and intent of the Sabbath, or as it is more commonly called, Sunday, or better yet, the Lord's day; and we shall try to add at the same time a word of admonition for a better observance of the blessed day.

OBSERVANCE OF THE SABBATH:

We find suggested in our text three ways of observing the Sabbath, The world spirit, the legalistic spirit, the Christian spirit.

1. *The World Spirit:* The world's way of observing the Lord's day can be inferred only indirectly from the text: "At that time Jesus went on the Sabbath day through the corn; and his disciples were an hungred and began to pluck the ears of corn and to eat." What the disciples did was not wrong, for Jesus Himself defended their action. Indeed what they did here had nothing to do at all with the observance of the Sabbath. They were hungry, a very natural feeling or desire and withal quite legitimate, and they simply tried in a measure to satisfy their hunger and even the Jewish law permitted a man who was passing by a field of grain to pluck with his hand what he might want to eat. What we find here is this that these men on the Sabbath gratified a natural desire. They did not sin in doing so, but what we want to show is that the spirit of the world is to use the Sabbath or the Lord's day simply and alone for the gratification of natural desires.

What is the spirit of the world? What is the man of the world after? If you know what a man is seeking, what he is living for, then you know the dominating factor in his character. If a man constantly talks in terms of business and money-making, then you know his spirit, the controlling force in his life. If a man in his activities can never get his eyes off the grain fields of this world, then he is a man

of this world. He has no interest in things spiritual, things heavenly, things beyond the grave. His vision carries only to the grave and never much higher than the tree tops or the sides of hills and mountains covered with pasturage and flocks. Even sunrise and sunset may be of little interest to him apart from the possibility they offer of determining the state of the weather. The spirit of the world is the spirit that seeks its satisfaction in the things of this world and within the span of earthly human life.

Nor does it matter just what of the world a man may be seeking. There are lower and higher things of the world. A man may live for gold and silver or for lust, or he may live for knowledge, for art, for science. He may set his mark high and be an inventor, a discoverer, a patriot, a benefactor, a philanthropist. Yet so long as he lives for the things of this life he is of the world. He may be of a higher order in the world but he is still of the world; he may be of the great ones, he may even have his name in some hall of fame, yet he belongs to the class, world. No matter how large a diamond may be and how much it may sparkle, it is still nothing more than carbon.

But you may say, What has all this to do with the Sabbath or the Lord's day? Much indeed. The right observance of the day depends upon the rightness of the man. If a man is purely in the world he will use the blessed Lord's day for the service of the world just as he places his team of horses or his stock of dry goods or his trained mind in that service. The Lord's day as the day of rest is a gift of God like every other good thing that He has given us to enjoy. As such it is to be used in His service and to His praise. But the man of the world does not so use it, just as he uses no other gift of God in that service. He has a tongue but he never uses it to praise God. The brook does, the birds sing to Him, the tree-tops whisper His glory. He has a heart capable of emotions, but he feels no gratitude toward God. But the floods clap their hands, says the Psalmist, and the mountains and the hills break forth into singing and all the trees of the field clap their hands. So the day of rest is for the man of the world not an oppor-

tunity to rest in the Lord, to meditate upon His wondrous works, to find comfort, good cheer and hope in His goodness, mercy and loving kindness. That is what the Lord gave the day for, that we should cease from our ordinary labor and seek rest and recreation in Him.

But what do you see on the Lord's day on World-street? Why are the street cars crowded so early on a nice June Sunday morning? Whither that long line of automobiles? The interurbans, why have they a double schedule for Sunday? And the steam roads, why extra trains on the Lord's day? To accommodate the extra number of worshippers, perhaps? And the parks and watering places, why special arrangements made for Sunday? What do all these things and a hundred others mean? It's the world spending Sunday, that's all — the world *spending* Sunday. Not, however, to hear and learn God's Word, not to praise God and bless the Most High, but to have a good time, a jolly good time.

That then is the world's spirit in its bearing on Sunday. And the worst feature about it is that it seems to be spreading, it is getting over on Church-street. It is generally conceded that it is becoming more and more difficult to fill our churches. Some blame the automobile, some the interurban lines, some the parks and other pleasure resorts and some, of course, blame the preacher. But these things are not to blame; they are innocent and even helpful in many ways. The automobiles do not take the people out but the people take the automobiles out. It is true that all these things make the right observance of the Lord's day more difficult. But what do you do when you have a harder task than usual to perform? You simply apply more energy, more will-power. So the Christian will only more resolutely set his face toward the house of God on the Lord's day and let worldlings with their automobiles go whither they will — to the devil, if they choose. Notice what Paul said to the Philippians, "That ye be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world." It is probably harder to be blameless in perverse

surroundings, but it is just as necessary or even more so. And, besides, it all depends upon the spirit; if your heart is right with the Lord it will be just as easy to face toward the church on Sunday, even if the crowds are on their way to an outing. Remember, too, that the darker the surroundings the brighter will your light shine. — We pass from the world spirit concerning the Sabbath to:

2. *The Legalistic Spirit*: “But when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto him, behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do on the Sabbath day.” How these men came to be upon this scene we are not told. It is generally thought that Jesus and the disciples were on their way to the synagogue. It would seem then that the Pharisees must have been preceding or following them at some distance; or possibly expecting Jesus and His disciples to come through that field of wheat they had stationed themselves at some convenient place from where they might observe any infraction of the Sabbatic law. But however that may be, they were not there for any good purpose. They were looking for faults. And they found what they were looking for, at least they thought they did. If you are looking for faults in a man, you can always find some. Jesus Himself did not pluck any wheat here, but upon other occasions the Pharisees often found faults in Jesus, though He was faultless. If you go to church to discover defects you can discover them. If you listen to a preacher to criticise, you can find things to criticise. What these men found in the disciples was not much. They plucked some heads of wheat and rubbed them out in their hands and that was a kind of threshing and hence work. That was all that these critics found. But for them that was enough. They held up their hands in holy horror: This man claiming to be a prophet and yet allowing His followers to do a thing like that on the Sabbath? He cannot be a prophet, he cannot be from God, he is from the house of Beelzebub. We do not claim to be prophets sent from God, yet we would not do a thing like that.

Notice now the real animus of this legalistic spirit. God Himself is jealous of His law. He wants it observed

and every infraction of His holy law must and will be punished. But God does this not because there is a written law which says, You must not do this and you must not do that, but because His holiness and His righteousness require these things. It is God's holiness that expresses itself in these laws and in the punishment of the evil-doer. But was it holiness on the part of these Pharisees? Not at all. It was envy and hatred and malice. They found fault here, not because they loved the Law so much but because they hated Jesus more. This incident simply gave them opportunity of attacking Jesus under the appearance of a defense of the holy Law of God.

Furthermore, when God shows His wrath at transgressions of His holy Law we must always think as united with that wrath His infinite love and compassion. While with one hand He smites the sinner in holy wrath, with the other He reaches out in love and mercy to save him. Do you find any such love in these Pharisees? Not at all. They were glad that they had observed this supposed infraction of a holy statute and instead of extending one hand in protection they smote with both.

Moreover we should notice this, too, that with these men the letter was everything. If they observed the Law as to the letter, kept it outwardly, that was holiness. They did not inquire as to what the state of the heart might be. Therefore Jesus compared the Pharisees with whited sepulchers full of dead men's bones; with cups and platters made clean on the outside, but they themselves within full of extortion and excess. He declared that they tithe mint and anise and cummin, but omit judgment, mercy and faith; that they strain at a gnat but swallow a camel.

All these things are characteristics of the legalistic spirit; laying emphasis upon the letter and overlooking the spirit; a proneness to find fault, to judge and condemn rather than a desire to help and to save; a sense of pride in a supposed superior holiness rather than humility and esteeming others better than one's self. These things need to be spoken of, too, in connection with the Sabbath question. Doubtless the greatest danger threatening the institution of the Lord's day

just now is not the legalistic spirit but the world spirit, not a narrow view of the Sabbath but a liberal one. Yet we need to be on our guard against legalism also. There are some — and they are not Jews — who maintain that we must observe the seventh day of the week, because that was the day originally fixed by the Lord Himself. Others are willing to accept Sunday, the first day of the week, but transfer to it all the requirements of the Jewish Sabbath. Both are wrong; both are legalistic in their demands; both are making more of the time and the other external things connected with the day than with the real spirit and purpose of the institution. — But we pass on to consider:

3. *The Christian Spirit with Reference to the Sabbath:*

You notice that Jesus did not meet the objection of His enemies by showing that what the disciples did was really no infraction of the Sabbath law. Whether this act strictly interpreted was or was not an infraction of the law did not concern Jesus. He simply ignored that phase of the question and went straight to the heart or the spirit of the matter. Not whether this or that is permissible according to a strict interpretation of the law, but what is the spirit, the underlying design and purpose of the Sabbath? That was the question.

To show this He wisely took two incidents bearing on the Sabbath from Jewish history. The first showed what an individual under certain conditions might do; the other showed what the Law itself required to be done. As to the first, David and his men were fleeing before Saul. They came to the tabernacle and David asked the priest for bread for himself and men. The only bread there was the holy bread which priests alone were allowed to eat. But under the circumstances, it being a case of necessity; the priest allowed David and his men to eat the holy bread. This incident does not relate directly to the Sabbath, but it shows — and that is what Jesus wanted to show here — that under certain conditions the ceremonial law — not a moral law, mark you, but a ceremonial law — could be set aside in order to show mercy, to extend help in times of need.

The other case is taken from the temple service and bears directly upon the law of the Sabbath. The law required offerings on the Sabbath. To prepare and make these offerings required work on the part of the priests, and this work if performed apart from this service would have been a profanation of the Sabbath, and yet the priests were blameless. Why? Because there was a higher law which required the worship of the temple on the Sabbath day and in order that such worship might be rendered the Sabbath law had to give way.

The application of both cases to that of the disciples plucking the heads of corn was this: They were hungry just as David and his men were hungry and that the hunger of these men be appeased was more important than that some ceremonial law should be observed. Notice Jesus did not at all concede that the disciples were likely not so hungry but that they could have waited a few hours to get food in a perfectly legal way. In the mind of Jesus that question was too insignificant in this case to call for any consideration at all. He wanted to show here that mere ceremonial laws must give way to higher laws. So in the case of the temple service: God must be worshipped; or to look at it from the side of man, the worshipper in the temple must receive spiritual food and the ceremonial law of the Sabbath must give way in order that the offerings may be made. So also the disciples needed spiritual food and they were on their way to the synagogue for that purpose, or if they were returning it was all the same, for they were with Jesus the master-teacher, and were therefore at school whether in or out of the synagogue. The ceremonial law of the Sabbath must not interfere with these things, not even so little as to forbid them plucking the heads of wheat.

The climax of the argument is reached when Jesus says, "But I say unto you, that in this place is one greater than the temple." Laws of the Sabbath were annulled because of the temple, that is because of the worship of the temple. Much more has Jesus authority who is come from God, yes, who is the very Son of God, to set aside any ceremonial law. This is true of all ceremonial laws;

it is true therefore also of the Sabbath, "for the Son of man is lord even of the Sabbath day."

But the real animus of His critics and the real purpose of all laws and institutions are brought out in the words, "but if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless." To show His love and mercy was God's object in all the ceremonial laws and religious institutions. His purpose is not to condemn but to save. So He wants men to show mercy to one another. Where this is not done all one's observance of laws and all his offerings go for nothing.

For the Christian then the Lord's day is, to begin with, the day of rest. Man's physical nature needs this rest. But the Christian looks upon this bodily rest not as an end in itself but as affording him the opportunity of a higher rest, the rest in God. Rest from labor therefore is not enough, neither does it suffice simply to withdraw from worldly amusements and pleasure-seeking. One may do all that and yet not keep the day holy. To rest in God means to find peace and satisfaction and spiritual refreshment in God's love and mercy, in His goodness, wisdom and power. But we can so rest in God only as we make use of His blessed Word. In and through that Word we are brought into blessed communion with Him; for through that Word His Spirit comes to us and again draws us to Him. Therefore the greatest thing for us to do on the Lord's day is to hold God's Word sacred and gladly hear and learn it. We must do this every day, but it is well that one day in seven has been set apart for that work in particular. And since the Church has chosen the first day of the week in commemoration of our Lord's resurrection, that is our day of blessed rest.

And we should not forget in conclusion that when the Church made this change she acted in accordance with the will of the Holy Spirit. There is nowhere in the New Testament any command that the day of rest should be changed from the last day of the week to the first. But a careful reading of all that is said about the Sabbath and the first day of the week and of the Lord's day in the Acts,

the Epistles and in Revelation should convince any one that the change took place during the life-time of the apostles and with their knowledge, consent and will. Under no other supposition could we understand these words of Paul: "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days; which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ." The day is well-chosen and we need one day out of seven as a day of rest. Let us keep it aright hearing and learning the Word to the praise and glory of God. Amen.

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

MARK 10: 17-27

And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? *There is none good, but one, that is, God.* Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honor thy father and mother. And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth. Then Jesus beholding him, loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up thy cross, and follow me. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved; for he had great possessions. And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved? And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men *it is* impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible.

IT has been said that the proper study of mankind is man. That is true, but not all of the truth, for, the proper study of man is also God, man's Maker and Redeemer. In our lesson this morning we have a fine combination of these two objects of study. They meet as pupil and teacher, and there is a revelation here both of what is in man and of what is in God. It is not a full revelation of the human and divine characters, but it shows the things necessary to know and to do in order to be saved, and it uncovers some of the powerful motives that sway and delude the human heart. Especially should we discover in the picture before us the powerful and destructive influence of wealth and the great need of keeping ourselves free from its death-dealing tentacles. Let us then see what we may learn on these subjects as we study

THE CHARACTER OF THE RICH YOUNG RULER

under the crucial eye of the Master. We shall study the character of the man under two aspects: What he possessed; what he lacked. May the Holy Spirit give us wisdom to understand and speak, and power to believe.

1. *What Good Things do we Find in the Character of this Young Man?* For one thing, there was in this man a strong desire for salvation. To make a profession of religion and to manifest great interest in heavenly things is not the most popular thing to do among men. Even among the Jews who were a religious people it must have required considerable courage for a rich young man to identify himself prominently with religion. This the young man of our lesson did, for, as Saint Luke informs us, he was a ruler of a synagogue. But his strong desire for salvation becomes apparent especially in what he did upon this occasion. If you would see some person running across the street in the presence of other people to meet some prominent man as he passed along and fall down before him beseeching him, you would say, That man must be under the stress of some great need and he is not afraid nor ashamed to make it known.

That is just what this young man did. Jesus had gone forth into the street. There were people about Him, at least the twelve. A rich young man and a ruler, who was well known in the community, came running to Him and knelt before Him. He did not hesitate because others were near and might see him, he did not care for their remarks. There was something on his heart that was making him much trouble and he wanted relief. Here is a man who could probably help him; he will tell him his trouble. And what was the thing upon his heart? It was the great question about salvation. What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?

Here then is an exhibition of interest in one's soul that is well worth noting. We are not accustomed to seeing men show such interest. You can any day see men rushing from one side of the street to the other, from home to office and from office to home; you can see them making hurried engagements to meet one another, or taking flying trips to

neighboring towns and cities or to the country's metropolis, but all this in the interest of business, politics, amusements and the like. But where do you see men running down the street to ask some one what they must do to be saved? And again you will find not a few who are very much busied with the affairs of the Church, with projects of benevolence or the promotion of missionary work, but even these things do not necessarily indicate great interest in one's own personal salvation. Not for a moment would we intimate that a Christian need not be greatly interested in these things of the Church generally, but the thought is this that, unless such activity springs from the conscious joy of personal salvation, it can neither be very sincere nor very effective.

Furthermore, this man had a serious purpose in life. At his age people are not as a rule given to very serious thinking. It is the heyday of life when the mind prefers to dwell upon the pleasures and transient interests of life rather than upon the serious problems of the soul and of eternity. Furthermore, he was rich. We shall indeed see that riches had ensnared his heart, but nevertheless, his soul's interests weighed heavily upon him and doubtless many were the hours he spent in studying the great problem of the world to come. He was also the ruler of the synagogue in his city, a leader, therefore, in religious activities. This may show that in addition to interest in his own salvation he was also interested in the religious welfare of the community at large. He then was a man who in spite of his youth, in spite of the time, means and opportunities for the pleasures of life, settled down to the serious problem of preparing in this world for the world to come.

We are thankful that at the present there still are young men and even many young men — and some of them too are men of wealth — who have caught the vision of the highest and greatest things in life, and who by the grace of God are lending their strength and the zeal and enthusiasm of youth, not only for making their own calling and election sure, but also for helping others to find salvation and for helping the Church in general to solve the great problems

upon her hands. We have such men, but would to God that there were more. For it is a sad fact that the majority of young men in our country are either entirely outside of the Church or else only very loosely and distantly connected therewith. Many a young man's name is upon the church record, but his heart and his strength are elsewhere. It is sad that many think that with the vigor of youth they will serve the world, the flesh and the devil, for that is what an irreligious life in the end amounts to, even if it is outwardly respectable, but when their knees once begin to grow weak, their joints stiff and their eyesight dim, then they will begin to do something for the Lord and their own soul's salvation.

This young man also had a knowledge of God's Law. Jesus said to him, "Thou knowest the commandments"; and when He then rehearsed those of the second table the man replied, "All these have I observed from my youth." He must have been conversant with the commandments, he must have made a study of the Scriptures. The Jews were careful in instructing their children in the Law and this young man was no exception and therefore he said, "These have I observed from my youth. There is much reading at the present day and much study, but for the great body of young men the Law and the Prophets are not among the subjects studied. Yet when the Psalmist answers the question, how a young man should cleanse his way, he says, "By taking heed thereto according to thy word." And of the man who can be called blessed he says that "his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night."

This leads us to speak of another good trait in this young man. It was the fruit of his knowledge and observance of the Law. He had certain outward virtues. We call them outward, for in view of what is said further on that is about all we can say of them. But outward virtue is something. It is not eternal life by any means, nor is it the new life that the kingdom of heaven calls for; it is not even a sure token of the presence of that life. Yet this is not the fault of those virtues, but it is the fault of the person

who bases his hope of salvation upon the filthy rags of his own righteousness. Let these virtues stand for what they are worth. We should rather see a moral man even if his heart is still untouched by the grace of God than one both whose heart is corrupt and whose life is vicious also.

There was one more thing which this young man had. He had wealth; or, to put it more correctly, wealth had him. The ethical element in his character at this point was love of money and we shall see further on that that love was the strongest element in his character — it was the controlling motive. This, of course, was not virtue. Hitherto we could say, We praise you; but here we must say, We praise you not. Yet even here we must say that the young man doubtless came by his wealth honestly, and to have that said of one at this day is considered no little praise. But we see here the seductive power of wealth, even when honestly acquired. It seizes upon the heart and deadens it to every real, spiritual interest. There may be some fine traits of character, some things which men call virtues, but there is no real life there. A statue may be very beautiful as a statue, but it is a poor thing to take to your bosom as a friend to love and to be loved. Let no one, therefore, desire great riches. Let your prayer be that of Agur the son of Jakeh. "Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me; lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal and take the name of my God in vain."

Whatever now the faults of this young man may have been there was something attractive about him, for it is said here that Jesus loved him when He beheld him. We are not told just why He loved him. Possibly it was on account of his earnestness in seeking salvation, possibly he was of an amiable disposition, possibly he was a man of exceptional gifts, and if Jesus could win him as one of His followers those powers could be enlisted in the work of the kingdom, instead of being prostituted to the mere acquisition of material wealth. Whatever it was, Jesus yearned upon this young man to have him as one of His disciples, but all in vain, he was not fit for the work, he could not be used as he

was, and he was not ready for the radical change. This now brings us to consider the second question:

2. *What faults do we note in this young man?* First of all we are told that Jesus looking upon the young man "loved him." Jesus loved all men, but the declaration of His love in this case shows that there must have been some special reason for loving this person. The declaration of Jesus' love here is significant also for what follows. Jesus always spoke the truth and He always said the very best thing that could be said for the good of the man. What He said here was rather hard on the young man, yet He spoke the truth and spoke it in love; and therefore we know that when He here said that this young man lacked a certain thing, it was the very thing which the man needed for his salvation.

"One thing thou lackest," said Jesus; thou hast many virtues, many good qualities, thou hast some very fine traits of character; but what thou hast is not enough, thou canst not be saved. Jesus repeatedly represents the thing needed for salvation as one thing. Of Mary who sat at His feet hearing His words He said, "Mary hath chosen the good part," over against the many things about which Martha was cumbered. To Nicodemus He said that one thing was necessary: "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Again He said, "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Or again He says that God gave His only begotten Son "that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." So this young man is told that there is only one thing which he lacks. This one thing, however, is not to be conceived of as only something additional that is needed. If you owe a man one hundred dollars and have only ninety-nine you need only one additional dollar. Not so here that this man had honesty and truthfulness and purity and other virtues and that he needed only one more virtue then he would be perfect. That doubtless was his thought; he felt that he had not enough yet, was not safe. What he had was very good, possibly the best of its kind, but he felt that there was something else lacking,

but something of about the same character, a few more dollars, whether gold or silver, to round out the sum.

Many men today have such notions. What they have is very good, it's all gold, but they need a dollar or two yet, and they are willing to go to Jesus to get some more of the same kind of coin. Some go even further and say that they have the full amount; they have all the virtues required, all the righteousness needed to get to heaven. Possibly their virtues can stand a little polishing yet, but the jewels themselves are there.

It's an awful delusion under which such people labor. Suppose you owe a large sum of money, the debt has been worrying you for years, you have been saving and scraping and pinching to get the needed amount, you have denied yourself many pleasures, even comforts of life; the pile has been growing slowly year by year and one day you come home and call your wife and children together and tell them that you have earned the last dollar and that now you are able to pay off that old worrying debt. After it has been paid there will be a feast in your house. You get your money, go to the banker, hand him the amount called for and ask for the note against you. He takes the money, looks at it a moment and then turns to you with a strange expression on his face and coolly remarks, Friend, I am sorry to say it, but this is all counterfeit. You can imagine better than I can tell you what your feeling would be. Such, only infinitely greater, will be the surprsie and the confusion of people who dream that they can pay the debt of their sins with the coin of their own righteousness, when Christ on that great day shall say, Friend, it's all counterfeit, it's all filthy rags, I cannot use it; depart from me, you that work iniquity.

Or to use that other parable where the king said to the man who had come to the wedding without a wedding garment, "Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Oh, it is an awful solemn fact, but it is plainly written on every

page of the Bible, that a man cannot be saved or justified by his own works or virtues.

The one thing lacking was therefore something altogether different from anything which this young man already had. What was it? We could make the answer very short by saying that he lacked Jesus Christ as his Savior. His thought was to be his own savior, but that, we have seen, could not be. Or, we might say the one thing he lacked was faith in Christ, for it is alone through faith that a man is justified and saved. Or, we might say that he lacked the righteousness of God. Paul says of the Jews that they went about seeking to establish their own righteousness and did not submit themselves "unto the righteousness of God."

But neither of these was just the answer the young man needed. Jesus knew His man, knew just what was needed, for He was a master teacher, a model pastor, a savior of souls such as never was before nor ever shall be after. Almost every man has some ruling sin, some prevailing weakness. In this man it was love of money. There is where the stronghold must be stormed. And it must be attacked directly; there is to be no maneuvering, no getting at the point gradually. That might be the best thing in some cases, but not in this. Here it must be one direct deep home-thrust at the seat of the evil. Therefore Jesus said to him, "Go, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor." The young man's heart was on his money and it must be torn loose. Money cannot enter the kingdom of God, neither can that kingdom be purchased with money. For the call is to come and buy wine and milk without money and without price. The man must therefore be set free, for he is a slave to money. And the only way he could be made free was by getting rid of his possession. Then there might be a chance of enlisting him in the service of another Master.

But in getting rid of his riches Jesus wanted him to take up at the same time real virtue. Therefore he should give to the poor. He should begin to love his neighbor in a real manner. Hitherto he had not been doing that; he may have been honest and fair toward his neighbor, he

may even have been helpful to a degree, but there was no real love, no love that makes great sacrifice.

Jesus knew now that this advice would be a hard blow for the young man, for he was used to looking for some profit in every exchange. Therefore He hastened to hold out an inducement by saying, "And thou shalt have treasure in heaven." Jesus did not mean that by giving all his goods to the poor he should save himself. Something else he must do to be saved; and if he did that something else, then he would by no means be a loser by giving to the poor, but on the contrary a great gainer. Now he had only treasures upon earth where moth and rust corrupt and where thieves break through and steal; then he would have treasures in heaven where moth and rust do not corrupt and where thieves do not break through and steal, for there is to be a reward in heaven for all the good a man does on earth; "whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward."

Here now we are brought to the most essential thing. Simply to get rid of his money did not yet make him a servant of God and a child of heaven; and even if he gave all his goods to feed the poor, that would not earn for him a title to eternal life. The way to heaven is by an altogether different route; and here is the one thing so radically different from anything which the young man had. He must follow Jesus: "Come and follow me." Following Jesus means much; therein is contained the whole plan of salvation. It means to believe in Christ and to accept Him as your Savior. It means to believe His Word and to follow His teachings. It means repentance, turning away from sin and doing the will of God. It means a denial of self, of the world, of the devil and a surrender to Christ as one's only Master. To pick out the most central thing, it means that through faith in Christ we get forgiveness of sins and righteousness before God and that through the power of God's grace and Spirit we are begotten again unto a new life.

But note well here the thought of the young man. Following Jesus was not the thing that troubled him most. He might have been ready to do that, if only he had been allowed to cling to his money. But there is where the shoe pinched. There is where he was the slave to another master. Therefore "his countenance fell at the saying and he went away sorrowful." He wanted eternal life but he wanted his money worse. Do you now see why Jesus spoke to the man as He did, why His first deep thrust was at covetousness? Jesus did not mean to say here that every man must sell all that he has and give to the poor. He did not tell Nicodemus that, He did not tell Joseph of Arimathea that, He did not tell Zacchaeus the publican that. Even the apostle Peter had some property and so had John, and probably also others. But Jesus does say to every man whose heart is on his possessions, Sell whatsoever thou hast and give to the poor. It is the only way you can be saved. Just so He says to another man, If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off and cast it from thee; or to another, If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee. Wherever you are grown fast to the world, there you must apply the knife. We once saw a large tumor removed from a woman's body; just where the tumor had grown fast to the body, there the skillful surgeon did the cutting.

But let us come back again to the matter of money. Note well the effect of Jesus' words upon the young man: "His countenance fell." Ah, friends, how often does the countenance not fall when the question of money comes up in the church. All eyes may be upon the preacher, but as soon as the collection plate appears there is a fall of countenance. If to be a Christian only required no cash, how popular Christianity would be and how easy to win church members. What an everlasting fight it is to overcome this spirit of covetousness in our hearts. Therefore Jesus' solemn warning as He looked round about and said, "It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." Jesus does not mean that a rich man cannot be saved at all, for it is plain that a camel cannot pass through a needle's eye. But He does

mean that a man who trusts in his riches, whose heart is set on money as was the heart of this young man, cannot be saved as long as he is in that condition. He must get away from his wealth otherwise he cannot get to God.

But Jesus means too that the difficulty of getting such a man away from his money bag is so great that nothing but the grace and power of God can do it. For when the disciples here heard Jesus' remark they said, "Who then can be saved?" If the process is so difficult, who then in any case is sufficient for it? No man, says Jesus, "with men it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God." Yet even under God's grace many a one fails to be saved, whether because of riches or because of some other evil. Jesus applied the grace of God to this man with infinite wisdom at His command, yet the man went away and we have no assurance that he ever returned, ready in repentance and faith to follow the Master. Therefore there is another warning here, namely, that riches in themselves are a dangerous thing. They are like the weeds that steal over your garden and gradually choke every plant. They are like a cancer upon the body, unless it is dealt with radically at the very start, it will send its poisonous roots throughout the entire body and vitiate the blood of the whole system. Keep us, O Lord, by Thy grace free from the deceptive power of Mammon. Amen.

NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

JOHN 9: 24:41

Then again called they the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise: we know that this man is a sinner. He answered and said, Whether he be a sinner *or no*, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see. Then said they to him again, What did he do to thee? how opened he thine eyes? He answered them, I have told you already, and ye did not hear: wherefore would ye hear *it again*? will ye also be his disciples? Then they reviled him, and said Thou art his disciple; but we are Moses' disciples. We know that God spake unto Moses: *as for this fellow*, we know not from whence he is. The man answered and said unto them, Why herein is a marvelous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and *yet* he hath opened mine eyes. Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth. Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man were not of God, he could do nothing. They answered and said unto him, Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us? And they cast him out. Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him. And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind. And *some* of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also? Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin; but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth.

THERE sat, doubtless at the temple gate, a blind man begging. As Jesus and His disciples passed by the latter asked, "Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus replied, "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him." Jesus then anointed the blind man's eyes with clay made of spittle and sent him to wash in the pool of Siloam. The man did so and came seeing. Thus was the work of God made manifest in him. And this glory of God was shown both in the opening of his eyes, and in the subsequent dialogue between this man

and the Jewish authorities, of which our lesson this morning speaks in particular. It is a most interesting colloquy, and if time permitted it would be instructive to follow it through, word for word; but we can dwell only upon a few leading points. We may take the dialogue as setting forth, not expressly and intentionally, nevertheless really,

THE BLESSEDNESS OF SPIRITUAL VISION.

We see the blessedness of such a vision, in the first place, negatively, or by contrast in:

1. *The folly of the Pharisees:* These men were absolutely blind to the things passing before their own eyes. Many a time had that blind boy sat begging with the sun shining upon him in all his glory, but he saw it not. He felt the warmth and felt that it was good, but the light he saw not. So here, the Son of Righteousness with healing in His wings had arisen over these Jews and shed His glory upon their very eyes, but they saw no light, did not even feel the warmth of divine love and compassion that their hearts should have been touched only a little by the merciful deed on the blind man. Such a state of mind is calamitous and disastrous. How can a man have any peace of mind and any real pleasure in life, who is so utterly out of touch and out of harmony with the spirit of truth, love and mercy? We pity a man who cannot see the light of the natural day; we should pity much more the man who cannot see the light of the eternal day of grace and truth.

These men had all the proof that any reasonable mind could ask that this man had been born blind, that his eyes were now open, that they had been opened by Jesus and that no fault could be found with the manner in which it had been done. They had the testimony of the boy's neighbors, they had the testimony of the boy's parents, they had the testimony of the boy himself, and doubtless they themselves had often seen the boy begging at the temple gate, and could now see this young man who stood before them with two whole eyes was none other than the former blind beggar. Yet they persistently denied the fact that Jesus opened his eyes, and declared that if He did He was not of God but

a sinner because He performed this merciful deed on the Sabbath.

How shall we explain such a position? What shall we say of such a state of mind? Jesus said of such men, upon another occasion, that seeing they shall not see and hearing they shall not hear, neither shall they understand. Nowhere do we find a more striking example of the truth of these words. These men had every reasonable evidence that Jesus had opened this blind man's eyes. That fact should have moved them at once to ask: Is this not the Christ? When Jesus in speaking with the woman of Samaria declared her domestic relations she at once went to the city and said to the people, "Is this not the Christ?" She had as yet seen very little of Jesus, but her eyes were already opening and she was seeing more. But these men had not only every proof here that Jesus had opened the eyes of the blind man, but had seen and heard much of Jesus before, yet not a ray of light has yet penetrated their inner eye. Instead of considering that this may be the Christ they close their eyes and stubbornly say: No, he is not, he cannot be, he is not from God; this fellow is a sinner.

But this race of blind Pharisees is not yet extinct. Jesus no longer walks about upon earth among men opening the eyes of the blind. Yet today also there is an abundance of just this kind of proof that He is the Savior. Remarkable things are being done at the present by science and art in giving sight to such as are blind or of defective vision, or when sight cannot be restored by giving them an education and teaching them some art or trade. These things are done, it is true, by natural agencies; but are not all these things evidences of God's goodness, love and mercy? Are they not proofs too that God is ready to grant us still greater blessings, spiritual blessings, the opening of our eyes that we may behold the glories of His love and mercy in Christ Jesus? We are missing the very chiefest blessing of the wonderful progress that science has made in our day, if we are kept only to the things of nature and are not lifted to the plane of the things of the soul and of what God can do there through His appointed means. Jesus told the

men of His day that if they could not believe in Him because of His words they should believe Him "for the very works' sake." If men today cannot believe the mere preaching of the Gospel, let them begin by believing that God, who can do such great things through men in the world of nature, can also do great things by His Spirit in the world of spirit.

Nor is that all. Jesus is working by His Spirit and through the Word upon the souls of men. Christians and the Church are much criticised, for there are still many imperfections. But say what men may, the fact stands just as plain as the sun shines in the heavens, that men are being converted by the power of God's Word, that their lives are being changed, that they are moved to live for nobler, higher things; and furthermore it is clear that the men who are thus changed come to be the very salt of the earth and light of the world. Even in the realm of science, is it not in Christian lands that we find its greatest conquests, its mightiest works? Pagan lands are not bringing us the light: we are bringing them the light. It is evidence therefore of moral perverseness and blindness when men continue to say that the Gospel of Christ Jesus or the Christian religion has nothing to do with progress in real culture and civilization.

The explanation then of such a state and condition as we find in these Pharisees is this that they purposely closed their eyes to the light. Such a state in an individual is not the result of a single act of rebellion. It is the result of a tendency. And that tendency may have been at work before ever the man was born. His parents may have persistently refused to see the light, and like Adam, they brought into the world a son after their own image. Throughout their own lives these Pharisees and their parents before them walked in the dark and barred the light from their souls, and now that the light was beginning to shine in all its fulness they did not and could not see. And what was even worse, there was no promise of future deliverance. When Jesus said, "For judgment am I come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind," some of the Pharisees who heard these words said, "Are we blind also?" Jesus said, "If ye

were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth." Their sin remaineth; the evil continues before their eyes, the darkness abides upon their pathway. And why? Because they say, We see. Because they persisted in calling the darkness in which they lived light, and in declaring the light which Jesus brought darkness.

Note well here that Jesus calls this state and condition judgment, For judgment am I came into this world. It is the fruit of their own doing. It is what they have deserved, and moreover, it is a fixed and unalterable state and condition. Here then is a warning for all who wilfully resist the work of the Holy Spirit. Stephen called the Jews a stiff-necked and stubborn people because they always resisted the Holy Ghost. The Holy Spirit operates upon the hearts of men through the Word of God which is the word of truth. When a man in his inmost heart feels that the word which he hears is the truth, that it concerns him, that it means him and that he ought to turn from his evil ways and accept Christ as his Savior; or even if it does not as yet speak in such plain terms, but simply makes him feel a little uneasy, that is the working of the Holy Spirit. He is then and there trying to open the eyes and let a little light into the soul. Resistance then paves the way to his own final hardness and state of judgment in sin and condemnation. — By contrast then we see in the folly of the Pharisees the blessedness of spiritual vision, but we see this blessedness more fully in:

2. *The wisdom of the healed man:* This man first of all gave proof of wisdom in that he saw and accepted the evidences of coming light as they were presented. When Jesus told him to wash in the pool of Siloam, he asked no questions and offered no objections, but obeyed at once. We are not told how he found his way thither. Doubtless a brother or sister or his parents or some other friend led him to the place. Possibly he knew the way himself and found it without assistance, for we know that the blind have a wonderful facility in finding their way in unexpected places. But what we are most interested in here is the fact

that he went, that he felt the command of Jesus to be a word of authority which he should obey and from which great things might be expected. What means if any had already been used to open his eyes we do not know. Doubtless the man had been hopeless as far as getting his sight was concerned. But here now there was hope. No man had ever told him to do what Jesus said and no man's word had ever come with such force and authority as Jesus' word. Therefore he obeyed, for he believed and hoped and expected something.

He was not disappointed in his experience, for he went and washed and came seeing. But this was not yet full vision. His bodily eyes were opened and he saw for the first time the wonderful world about him. How strange everything must have seemed! Doubtless efforts had been made to tell him how some of these objects looked, but you cannot describe form and color to a man born blind. However, we cannot dwell here on the delights of his soul in seeing for the first time the beauties of the natural world. He had also other thoughts and experiences. He, of course, had been taught concerning God and the expected Messiah and when he here now received bodily sight he at once connected that up with higher things. When the Pharisees said to him that God spoke by Moses, but "as for this fellow, we know not from whence he is," he replied, "Why herein is a marvelous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes." He saw much where these men saw nothing: This man has opened mine eyes, therefore He must be from God and God must be speaking through Him, for since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man were not of God, He could do nothing.

This poor man did not fully know who Jesus was. Indeed, the great probability is that up to this point he had not yet even seen Jesus at all. But He did know that He was from God and that His words therefore must be words of God. That was the first lesson he learned. He had already climbed up from the realm of mere nature, mere physical science, up to a higher plane where God is working

directly through the agency of man and is revealing His power and goodness. He soon learned the lesson which men today are so slow to learn, that the wonderful things in nature and the great accomplishments of science should lead up to nature's God. There will be no full revelation yet here, just as there was none to this man at this point; but it is getting nearer to God, and if we are willing to see at this state, greater and higher revelations will follow.

Notice how soon the higher revelation was granted this man. Because he persisted in maintaining that Jesus had opened his eyes and that therefore whoever He might be, He must be of God, the authorities cast him out of the synagogue. For they had before declared that whoever confessed that Jesus was the Christ should be put out of the synagogue. This was a fearful blow for the young man, for during his state of blindness he must virtually have been an outcast from society, since his blindness was looked upon as an act of divine judgment for some sin, committed either by himself or by his parents. Now his eyes have been opened by a man of God and now the awful stigma upon his character is removed. Now he can rejoice with his relatives and friends as one of God's favored people. But the unspeakable joy is but for a moment. Because he confessed the truth and gave God the glory he is cast out and so is made more than before an outcast from society, for that was one result of being put out of the synagogue. All the better class of people would shun him. It mattered not that, as one has said, he was probably the only one in really good standing in the synagogue, he would nevertheless be shunned as an outcast.

When Jesus now heard that they had cast him out He sought him, for He wanted to comfort him and make further revelations. He said to him, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" The man said, "Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?" Notice well his eagerness to find out who the Son of God is and his readiness to believe on Him. There you have the right kind of heart, the heart that is seeking for light. Such a heart is never left in darkness. We often wonder why one man is brought to

repentance and faith and another is not. There are many things that need to be considered. There are some things, too, which we cannot explain. But this we always find, that the person who is looking for light and looking too in the right way, will find the light. Now and then the light seems to be revealed to persons who are not looking for it as it was to Paul, but we have no right to expect it when we do not look for it, for the promise is, Seek, and ye shall find. But when we do look for it with an humble spirit, when we look, furthermore, where God has promised to show it, in His Word, and when we look for it with the thought of receiving it and walking in it, then God is going to show it and show it too just as fast as we are ready and able to take it in.

Upon the man's statement that he was ready to look upon the Son of God and to believe on Him Jesus at once said, I am He, and the man at once said, "Lord, I believe." And forthwith too "he worshiped him." Only a few hours before he was still sitting at the temple gate begging, a blind man dependent upon the cold sympathy of men who even shunned him. There was no light for the eye and little for the soul. Now he had two good eyes to behold the beauties of God's wonderful world; and what was far more, he had found the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He had found his Savior; there was light in his soul and peace and joy. That he was cast out of the synagogue mattered little. He was received into fellowship with One who was infinitely greater and better than all the Jewish councils. Indeed only as he got away from the latter could he get into fellowship with the former. Thus had he attained to the blessedness of spiritual vision.

Now in conclusion, note well the process. It is the only way to get into the light and the only way to get into greater light. This man simply used the light as it came to him. As the doors were opened he walked in, from one apartment to another, until he finally found himself in the apartment where all is light, where there is no darkness at all. This is God's rule in natural things: to him that hath shall

be given, and he shall have more abundantly. It is God's rule also in spiritual things. When the Holy Spirit asks you to say a, say it, and He will soon ask you to say b. And ere long He will have you spelling words and then uttering sentences. That is, He will lead you from one truth to another until He has you rejoicing in the full light of blessed salvation. Amen.

TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

JOHN 15: 1-8

I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every *branch* that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye *are* the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast *them* into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.

THE grape vine produces fruit; to that end God created it; for that purpose we plant it. When Jesus therefore in our lesson compares Himself and His followers to the vine and its branches He does so with a view to spiritual fruit as the aim and the end of the divine arrangement. Few things in nature are more beautiful in appearance or more precious in fact than the autumnal vine richly laden with luscious fruit. So too one of the glorious things in the kingdom of God is the precious fruitage of the spiritual vine. But it is the branch that bears the fruit, not the vine itself; and since believers in Christ are these branches, there comes to us, out of the beautiful allegory of our lesson, this admonition,

BE YE FRUITFUL.

We cannot expect to continue in the kingdom of God if we do not produce fruit. Fruitfulness is one of the characteristics of that kingdom and as we therefore dwell upon this admonition this morning let each one ask himself, What kind of a branch am I? what am I doing? what fruitfulness is there about me in which my heavenly Father can rejoice? — We should ask in the first place:

1. *What is the fruit which we are to bear:* The lesson does not tell us expressly what the fruit of the vine is. We might therefore pass this particular question by in the consideration of our text. However, we shall better understand other points in the lesson, if we know beforehand just what kind of fruit we are expected to bear. We cannot work intelligently at anything unless we know in advance just what we are to accomplish.

What then is the fruit which we as branches on the vine are to produce? We might say that Jesus assumes here that every true disciple knows what is required; for no one can receive the instruction which is necessary to true discipleship without learning what fruit this new life is to produce. But Jesus does not let it rest with the mere supposition that we know. In the twelfth verse following the text He tells us expressly what this fruit is: "This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you." Jesus never contradicts Himself. Elsewhere He has told us that the one great commandment is love, that on this commandment hang all the law and the prophets. Wherever you find Jesus speaking you do not find Him saying anything in conflict with this great truth or principle, that the doing of the whole law, the fulfilling of all righteousness, consists in love.

When He therefore in our lesson declares that the branches are to produce fruit and that the aim of His Father the husbandman is an abundance of precious fruit, it is love that He is after, that His followers love one another even as He has loved us. We find this same uniformity in the natural vine; you do not find scattered among the clusters of grapes, apples and pears and cherries, but grapes alone, every branch heavily laden with nothing but luscious clusters of grapes. So, too, we start out here in the consideration of the spiritual vine with nothing in view but love, great exhibitions of love all along in the life of the disciple. If you go into a vineyard when the grapes are fully ripe you not only see nothing else except grapes, but the very atmosphere is laden with grape aroma. So, too, there should be in the life of the believer such an aroma of

love about the person that every one who approaches him will at once be led to say, Here is a branch of the spiritual vine, here is the blessed fruit of a new life in Christ Jesus.

We may, however, go a step further in the consideration of this fruit. If you allow a ray of white light as it comes from the sun to fall upon a glass prism you find reflected therein the seven colors of the rainbow. That one beam of white light has been separated into seven distinct rays, each one of a different color. Something similar takes place when a beam of God's love through Jesus Christ falls upon the human heart and is again reflected. That love manifests itself in various ways; it is separated into various exercises or affections and acts of service, but the essence of each is love. Paul says of the fruit of the Spirit that it is "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." Again he says that the fruit of the Spirit is "in all goodness and righteousness and truth." Again to the Philippians he says, "And this I pray, that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God."

The one great thing which we are to do in our relation to each other as disciples of Christ is to love one another. But that love will show itself and apply itself in our actual life in many ways. The vine produces grapes and only grapes, but grapes are put to various uses. We eat the grape and it refreshes us; the wine thereof "maketh glad the heart of man"; Paul advised Timothy to take a little wine for his stomach's sake. There is one fruit but many uses. So also love is applied in many ways. Jesus tells how to love our neighbor by showing what the good Samaritan did for the man fallen among thieves; He told the rich young ruler to sell his riches and give to the poor; He tells us to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to take in the stranger, to visit the sick and those in prison and says that by doing these things to the least of our brethren we do them unto Him. He told His disciples to wash one another's feet,

to perform the humblest service of love, even as He their Master had washed their feet; He tells us not to judge and not to condemn one another; He told the healed Gadarene to go home to his people and tell them what great things the Lord had done for him.

In view then of what Jesus Himself has said and in view of what you read in the epistles of Paul and the other apostles where so much is said about the service of love, you cannot help but see how love, the great fruit of the Spirit, is to exercise itself in your every-day life. If there is contention in your home, if there are strife there and bitterness and frowns and pain and sorrow uncalled for, it is because the fruit of love is not found on your family vine. If, on the other hand, there are sunshine there and gladness, good will and good feeling, peace and harmony, it is because love sits enthroned there as queen of the home. Other things, of course, are also needed; there must be faith and hope and understanding and wisdom and prudence and many other graces near of kin, for love must have her servants; but the greatest of all is love.

2. *What are the conditions of fruitfulness:* Every one who has tried to grow grapes knows that certain conditions must be met. To begin with, he must have the right kind of vine; he needs the right kind of soil; it must be planted where the sun strikes it; the climate must be right; the vine needs culture and pruning. So, too, there are conditions under which alone we are able to produce fruit to the praise of God. First of all, we must be in Christ. "I am the vine," says Jesus, "ye are the branches." That means that we have grown out of Jesus just like the branch grew out of the vine. When we were baptized into Christ we put on Christ, and His Spirit was put into our hearts and by that Spirit we walk and live. It is just what we find in the natural vine; the vine by its inner life first puts forth a bud and then it puts more life into that bud and develops it into a branch with blossom and fruit in season. You cannot find a branch with fruit upon it except upon the vine; and although the branch bears the fruit, yet it is the vine that bears the branch. The substance of the fruit as well as

the substance of the branch comes from the vine. So you, as a believer, are to bear fruit and though you may call that fruit your own, yet the substance of the fruit comes from Christ, for it is only as you inhere in Christ that you can do things pleasing to God. "Without me ye can do nothing." If you as man or wife love and honor your spouse as a Christian should; if you as parent love your child and train him up in the fear of God; if you take in the stranger and advise and cheer him; if you move on to still higher service and meditate upon God's Word day and night; if you cheerfully give of your time, strength and substance for the spread of the Gospel, for gathering in the lost; if your prayers and supplications for your fellow men ascend daily to the throne of grace; all this is blessed fruit of the branch, but the root and strength thereof is in and from Christ. In natural things men understand this; they know that no branch cut off from the vine can produce fruit, that no man can work unless there is a source of constant strength-supply; but in spiritual things men still think that one can do the works of God without knowing Christ Jesus and without the indwelling Spirit. There are natural virtues and natural works that may look good but they are not the fruit of the Spirit. They cannot be what God is looking for, or else what Christ says here cannot be true, that without Me ye can do nothing.

A second condition is this that we abide in Christ. This follows from the preceding: If the beginning of our life is in Christ, then must its continuation also be sought in Him. The importance of abiding in Christ is great. Jesus shows this by using the expression in some form or other ten times in connection with the lesson. Surely if it is so important in His eyes, it should be even more important in our eyes, for we are the ones who must suffer if we fail to abide in Him. In reality we should have about ten thoughts on abiding in Christ to one thought on abiding in the world. That would about measure up to Jesus' great rule: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness." You need not look far for the cause when you see many barren branches dead or half-dead hanging about on the vines;

it is because they are not making the proper effort to abide in Christ.

And what is required of us here? What can we do to continue in Christ? For one thing you must exercise your own will. In this you are different from the branch on the vine. The branch is absolutely dependent upon circumstances and conditions over which it has no control. It conditions are favorable the branch grows, if they are not favorable it languishes and dies. But you have a will which you are to exercise; you are constantly to make choice of abiding in Christ. Therefore Jesus says "Abide in me." He throws the responsibility upon you. You are to choose to dwell in Christ just as you choose to dwell in your house and enjoy its comforts. That is plain, is it not? Nor does it conflict with that other word of Jesus, "Without me ye can do nothing." He will abide in you; you need not fear that part; and He will supply you with the necessary life and strength, but you must choose that life and strength and use it and find pleasure in it.

And if you now ask, What are the means by which Christ will nourish me, you again have the answer right here. That Christ Himself in His person abides in us is a spiritual and mystical fact of which we cannot form a very clear conception in this life. We cannot get hold of it rightly and therefore we are apt not to attach great importance to it, or to forget about it entirely.

But there is something here that we can grasp, that we can understand, namely, how Jesus' words can abide in us. Therefore Jesus says, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you." That is the answer to the question, How am I to be nourished? If you treasure up Jesus' words in your heart as Mary did and meditate upon them day and night as did the Psalmist; if you find pleasure in that Word and make it the very meat of your soul; if there is a yearning for the courts of the Lord; if you faint when you are prevented from dwelling in the house of God; if you would rather be a door keeper in the house of the Lord than to dwell in the tents of wickedness; if you daily comfort yourself with your baptismal covenant by which you have become

a child of God and He your Father; if you frequently nourish your soul at the sacramental altar; and if in your home you have erected the altar of family worship from which ascends daily the sweet incense of prayer, borne upward to the throne of grace on the wings of God's blessed Word; if you do these things — and let it be said that all these things are possible for you — if you do these things, then have no fear, Jesus' Word will abide in you and you will abide in Him and there will be abundance of precious fruit.

A further condition of fruitfulness is pruning. The grape-grower knows the value of the knife. The vine, if left to itself, will waste much of its strength in the production of useless wood and leaves while the fruit itself must suffer for want of nourishment. Pruning is necessary in the realm of nature generally. You must prune your apple tree and your rose bush. You must also prune your child, train and discipline him; many a wish must be denied him, many an act corrected; if you let him grow up as he will, there will be bitter fruit to eat both for him and for you. So, too, there must be pruning and purging in the spiritual realm. "My Father is the husbandman." He does the pruning. In general there are two things that He does: "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away." Notice well the fact that it is fruit that the husbandman is looking for, and that if he finds no fruit he has no use for the branch and cuts it off. It is like the barren fig-tree that only cumpers the ground. Cut it down that a fruitful tree may take its place.

We have seen what the fruit is that the Lord expects of us; it is love exercising itself in the many relations of life for the good of our fellow men and for the praise of God. Look at your life, look at your everyday doings. Is there love there that goes out in kindness, sympathy and loving service to those about you and that does all these things for the sake of Him who loved you and gave Himself for you? And do not look around for great things to do for which men will praise you and the world stand amazed at. Begin with the ordinary things of life, a kind word, a word of

encouragement, a willingness to forgive and forget, a cup of cold water, a helping hand. Here is where the precious fruitage begins, and unless these things appear the husbandman will come with His sharp knife and cut you away, for you have ceased to abide in Christ and His Word no longer abides in you.

Nor is the branch simply cut off, but men gather them and cast them into the fire. That has its meaning. If you no longer receive God's grace, if you will no longer be nourished by Jesus' Word and so cease to abide in Christ and cut yourself off from all possible fruitfulness, then must God reject you and consign you to the fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

The other thing in this pruning is this: "Every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it that it may bring forth more fruit." Note here again the eagerness of the husbandman for fruit; not only fruit, but more fruit and better fruit. Of what use is the vine if it bears no fruit? Of what use are the people of God if they do nothing for the praise and glory of God? "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who has called you out of darkness into this marvelous light." This purging begins with the Word of God: "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you," says Jesus. The very first time you heard that Word and you were made to feel your sin and to behold the wondrous love and grace of God and you began to repent of your sins, to turn from them and to look to Jesus Christ for pardon and for a new life, then and there the husbandman began to purge you that you might bring forth fruit. Yes, already at your baptism in infancy the Spirit of God was given you and you were washed clean from the guilt of sin; and all along the Word has been active, instructing, admonishing, correcting, encouraging, strengthening you; for that word is "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." But our heavenly Father has also other means for purging; there are sickness, death of friends,

loss of property, disappointments, reverses, crosses and trials without number. All these things are intended in the wisdom and mercy of God to train us unto more spiritual living and to that fruitfulness in which He rejoices.

3. *What are the blessed results of such fruitfulness?* They are three: First, we have the promise that our prayers shall be heard: "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." What a promise! God is able to give us anything and everything that we can possibly need for our happiness; and now you have the privilege of asking Him for anything that you wish. Reflect on that for a moment. Should not this one truth and fact make us the happiest of all creatures? — happier even than the angels, for they do not need so much as we do. Is there anything that can cheer us more under the shadow of the cross than this one promise? Oh, what praying people we should be! Is it possible that under such a bow of promise we should be found bending our knees scarcely once a day? Oh, is it any wonder that our lives are so weak, our strength so feeble, our fruitage so meager, when we fail to make use of this most blessed privilege?

But note well the condition here laid down of acceptable prayer: "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you." Join with this the remarkable saying of Saint James: "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much," and the example he gives of such praying, that mighty man of God, the prophet Elijah. Here is the explanation of our weakness in prayer: We have not a sufficiency of the faith and fervency of the righteous man; and we lack that because we do not abide in Christ, allow His words who is the source of all strength to abide in us as they should.

The second blessed result is the glory of God: "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit." Jesus said upon another occasion, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." We need not here consider the question why it is that God is so eager for His own glory. We know that the thing is all right, for Jesus Himself did only that which was pleasing to His Father and sought in all things to

glorify Him. Nor did Jesus lose anything by doing so. On the contrary because of that very thing He was honored and exalted to a place and name above every name. We are safe, therefore, in making this the great aim of our life, that in everything we do, whether in word or deed, we do all to the glory of God. We shall not see the blessed result of it so much in this life; here it is ours to give glory; but in that life we shall not only give glory far beyond everything that we are doing here, but we shall also share that glory with Christ our exalted brother.

The third blessed result of our fruitfulness is the assurance that we are disciples of Christ: "So shall ye be my disciples." "By their fruits ye shall know them." We may sometimes be mistaken as to the fruit, whether it is really the kind God wants or not, for we cannot see into the heart to weigh all the underlying motives and purposes. But this is certain that when the fruit is good the tree also is good; when the branch produces luscious grapes, it does so because it is a part of the vine, and has the life of the vine within itself. If we are producing the fruit of the Spirit, or to put it the other way, if the Spirit is producing His fruit through us, then we belong to Christ; we are joined to Him, His life is in us and we are His disciples. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." Amen.

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

MARK 10: 13-16

And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and *his* disciples rebuked those that brought *them*. But when Jesus saw *it*, he was much displeas'd, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And he took them up in his arms, put *his* hands upon them, and blessed them.

WE are very glad for these words of our Savior about little children. The Bible does not very often speak of little children in their relation to the kingdom of God. Their relation to that kingdom would not be in doubt even if we did not have this passage. Already under the old covenant the sacrament of circumcision was provided for the entrance of little children into the kingdom. And as for the new covenant, on the day of Pentecost Peter said to the three thousand that were converted, the promise is unto you and your children. Christ came to save all; He died for the whole human family and therefore there must be some way for all to get the benefit of that death and to lay hold on the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. But nowhere are little children spoken of so touchingly and nowhere is their salvation spoken of so plainly and so freely as in the words of our text. Therefore we say that we are glad for these words of Jesus. They show us

THE RELATION OF LITTLE CHILDREN TO THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

Jesus makes three declarations concerning little children: First, that of such is the kingdom of God; secondly, that little children must be brought to Jesus; thirdly, that we must enter the kingdom of God as little children. First then:

1. *Of Such is the Kingdom of God:* When these mothers in Israel brought their little ones to Jesus that He

should pray for them and bless them the disciples rebuked them. Why, we are not told. One reason probably was that they did not want to see their great Master troubled with little children; but the more important reason, it appears to us, was that they did not think that such small children could receive any spiritual benefit through any association with Jesus and that it was simply gratifying a sort of whim or sentiment of these mothers to have Jesus lay His hands upon their children. But whatever their purpose, Jesus promptly rebuked them for interfering in His work and trying to keep away any one from Him; and the reason He gave for His sharp rebuke was that "of such is the kingdom of God."

When Jesus now says that of such is the kingdom of God, or when we say on the basis of Jesus' words that little children belong to the kingdom of God, further explanations are necessary. Just what did Jesus mean? that all little children belong to the kingdom of God, or in other words, are saved? Does He mean that they are born into that kingdom by their natural birth? Humanly speaking that would be a happy solution of the problem. That would do away with all anxiety about the salvation of our little ones. Every father and mother could then rest easy; it would seem that it would not be necessary even to pray for our children, they are already in the kingdom of God as a matter of course. The only object of concern then would seem to be, How long will they continue in that state as a matter of course? At what age may they fall from that state of grace through their own personal sin or fault? for up to that time all is well.

However, when we look more closely at Jesus' words we find that they do not make any such claim. When he says "of such" Jesus does not mean only little children, but He is speaking of a type or class, that is, persons who are *child-like*, persons who have the disposition or characteristics of children. That He does not have in mind children only is seen from what He says further on, that all must become *like* children if they would be saved. But it may again be objected to this that although Jesus includes grown

people who become as children, yet He must include all children because they are all alike. However, Jesus' words do not necessarily say that. He only says that the kingdom of God is made up of people who are like little children, but that does not necessarily imply that all children, as a matter of course, or just because they are little children, are in the kingdom of heaven.

The point we need to be clear on here is especially this that little children do not belong to the kingdom of God simply because they are *little* children, or in other words, that children are not born into the kingdom of God by their natural birth. When Jesus said to Nicodemus, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," He was speaking of the human family in its entirety, not only of grown persons, but of every one born in the ordinary course of nature. That such is His meaning is plain from the words following, "that which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the spirit is spirit." Our children are born of the flesh, that is, of a sinful nature and hence they have the same sinful nature and must be born of the Spirit in order to become subjects of the kingdom of heaven. Such was the Psalmist's confession when he said, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." Nor should we have any difficulty on this point. Not only are the teachings of the Scriptures plain on this point as on all other important doctrines, but our observation also shows that inborn natural depravity is a fact. If children are not born with a sinful disposition and propensity, whence do they have it so soon as they arrive at an age of self-consciousness? For one of the first things we observe in our children is a sinful disposition.

What advantage then, we may ask, has the child over the adult? and just what age does Jesus mean when He says, Of such is the kingdom of heaven? The great difference between the child and the adult pertains to the receptiveness toward the Word of God and of divine grace. The adult is not so ready to receive the Word of God; he has his doubts, questions it, raises objections, opposes it. There is willful resistance to the grace of God; and this resistance is hard to

overcome; indeed in most people the Holy Spirit is never able to overcome that willful resistance and they are therefore never brought to repentance and faith.

In the child there is no such set willful resistance. There is only what theologians call natural resistance, the resistance of the natural sinful heart with which the child is born into the world. But this has not yet become willful, that is, the child does not purposely set himself against the truth. Tell a group of little children that God made the world and all the things therein, and they all believe what you say; and they not only believe it but they act on that knowledge; they say to one another, God made this, God made that. But tell a group of unconverted men the story of the first chapter of Genesis and you meet with all kinds of objections and possibly not one in the group believes the story and acts on it. Tell little children the stories of Jesus and how eager they are to hear and how readily they believe all that is said. Tell the same stories to a group of men and they question them, criticise them or even laugh at you for believing such tales. You see they have come to their full wits and think they know better.

That is the chief distinction between the child and the grown-up. It is a mighty difference and for that reason already it can be said that the kingdom of God is of such as are children. But we cannot understand fully what Jesus meant by saying, "Of such is the kingdom of God," until we consider His second declaration in the lesson, namely, that:

2. *Little children must be brought to Jesus:* Here now we need to remember that all men, old and young, are by nature sinful and in need of a Savior, for Paul tells us expressly that "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Remember on the other hand that Jesus Christ gave Himself a ransom for all, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. But Christ has also ordained certain means by which this salvation must be acquired. If a prisoner hopes to be pardoned he must do certain things before he can get his pardon

and be set free. He must make application for pardon; his application must be considered; if the application is allowed, the pardon must be formally granted by the governor; this fact must be conveyed to the prisoner and the door of his cell unlocked. Only after all this has been done does he get his freedom. So there is a plan of salvation for men and it is for all, not only for grown-ups but for children likewise.

In this plan there are certain means that must be used. The Church calls them the means of grace, because by these means — and by these means alone — divine grace is imparted to men; that is, through these means men get the gift of the Holy Ghost, true knowledge, repentance, faith, pardon, righteousness, holiness and everlasting life. These means of grace are the Word of God and the Sacraments. What God may do for men outside of these means, or whether He does anything for them in the way of imparting divine grace aside from these means, we do not know, He has not told us. But this is plain that He holds us to the use of these means of grace and nowhere in all the Bible have we any promise that men, old or young, can be saved in any other way than through the use of the Word and the Sacraments.

When Jesus therefore says of little children that “of such is the kingdom of God,” we must take the words in connection with the means of grace which Christ Himself has instituted. Certainly Christ did not institute certain means by which men are to be saved, and then in speaking of such as are being saved wholly ignore those means unto salvation. Such means existed already under the old dispensation; especially was circumcision such a means. And as a matter of fact the little children whom Jesus here took upon His arms and blessed and of whom He said that they belonged to the kingdom of God were children who had been circumcised. The means of grace, therefore, which had been provided under the old dispensation had been applied to these children. The parents, too, were concerned about the salvation of their children and instructed them in the things of God as soon as they were able to learn. Here they now

brought them to Jesus, whom their mothers doubtless believed to be the Messiah, that He might add His blessing. Jesus therefore received these little children as belonging to His kingdom, for the condition of entrance into the kingdom of God had been complied with; and He not only received them, but added also that they were the pattern according to which all others, old or young, must enter into the kingdom of God.

When Jesus therefore says of little children that of such is the kingdom of God, He means that they are to be brought into the kingdom through Him, for there is no other way into the kingdom, whether for old or for young. "I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me." It is certainly His will also that we under the new dispensation should apply the means of grace to our children just as they did under the old. They were required to circumcise their children on the eighth day; if it was not done then it was to be done later. But instead of circumcision we have Baptism as the sacrament for reception into the Church. We believe then that Jesus wants us to bring our children to Him in holy Baptism. We are to bring them to Him in prayer, not only once but daily, but we are to bring them also in Baptism as that means of grace which is especially applicable to children.

Here, however, we are met with the objection that Baptism cannot benefit such little children because they cannot understand or know at all what is being done; and where there is no intelligence of the means used there can be no blessing. But notice that these children here were little children, for Jesus took them up in His arms, and Luke uses a word which represents them as sucklings, infants. Evidently then they — or some of them at least, for they were probably not all of the same age — did not know what Jesus' act meant, yet Jesus blessed them; that is, He imparted some spiritual good, some element of divine grace.

These children then received a blessing of which they had no proper conception at the time. That is all we claim for Baptism. Christ can impart a spiritual blessing to little children today through Baptism just as He did to these

children by taking them up in His arms and touching them. Who will gainsay that? If the root of sin can be implanted in the child's nature at its conception, why cannot God through Baptism, a means which He Himself has appointed, implant in the soul of the child the principle of a new life? Is the devil mightier than God? And the talk that is indulged in, that we who believe in baptismal regeneration ascribe magical power to a little water or to a mere ceremony, is either all ignorant talk or else malicious misrepresentation. We believe and teach no such thing. The water does nothing and the sacrament is not a mere ceremony, but a means of grace, "a gracious water of life," a "washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost" as Saint Paul says Titus, third chapter.

Our text says not a word about Baptism and therefore people who do not believe in infant Baptism say that it cannot be used in proof of such Baptism. What has been said shows in what way we use this passage in favor of the Baptism of children. First, it shows that children are to be brought to Jesus; we believe that in Baptism we can bring them to Him. Secondly, it shows that Jesus can impart some spiritual good to children even before they are old enough to understand what is being done; therefore little children can receive such a blessing in Baptism.

Here we also meet the question, What about the children who die unbaptized? As to children of Christian parents, we hope and believe that such are saved; though we must say at the same time that there is no plain word of God giving us that assurance. But if parents neglect bringing their children to Jesus according to His will and command, they would seem to be the ones who should suffer and not the helpless children. God, we believe, will take care of them in His mercy, though we may not be able to explain just how. As to the children of the unbelieving and of the heathen world, we simply say that we do not know. Nor is it for us to declare their fate. Paul said, "What have I to do to judge them also that are without?" God will attend to the heathen and in such a way that neither

His righteousness nor His mercy will suffer. — The third declaration that Jesus makes in our text is that:

3. *All must enter the kingdom of God as little children:* “Verily, I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.” Upon another occasion, when there was a strife among the disciples as to who was greatest in the kingdom of God, Jesus took a little child and set him in their midst and said, “Verily, I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of God.” We thank Jesus for these words also as well as for what He said about little children, for these words are not only full of instruction, telling us how we must be saved, but they are also full of comfort. They tell us that in order to get to heaven one does not need to be great and powerful among men, a king, a prince or a learned man, but that the way is open for every one. For the conditions to be met are not high and lifted up where few can reach them, but low down in the state of childhood where we all come from. It is not a question of climbing up to greatness as greatness goes with men, but of getting back to childhood. Jesus Himself thanked His Father for having hid these things from the wise and prudent and having revealed them unto babes. Much more should we thank God that He has made the way so simple and plain that the littlest among men, even the little child, can be saved.

But just in what way are we to become as children? Not in knowledge and understanding of course. Jesus Himself as a child grew in wisdom as well as in stature and he wants us to make the same kind of growth. Paul said to the Corinthians, “Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be ye men.” But the very fact that we are not to become like children in understanding shows that a man will not be saved by his understanding or his knowledge, for “knowledge puffeth up.”

We already touched upon the child character in contrast to grown people when we spoke of children as belonging

to the kingdom of God and if there is here a repetition of a thought or two, it will do no harm. All along we are told that we are saved through faith. The great call of the Gospel is to believe on Jesus Christ and be saved. Childlikeness, therefore, that fits for the kingdom of heaven must be sought in the matter of faith. That is, the child must exemplify to us above all things else how we are to believe in Christ. And how does the child believe? It believes readily, freely, without doubt, without question. The child does not consult its wishes as to whether it likes the story or not. In fact, whoever heard of a child that did not like to hear the story of Jesus or any other suitable Bible story? The little child also acts on the knowledge it gets. If you tell the child that God always sees it in all it does, the child thinks of that and feels it. When the child prays to Jesus and asks something, it is just like asking its parents for a piece of bread.

We grown people on the other hand are constantly questioning the things told us; we doubt them or reject them altogether. Or if true they may not suit us, we do not like them and do not want to submit. Or again, we think they mean some one else or are intended for some one else. In short there is always a mighty conflict on between our sinful hearts that have grown old and strong in opposition to the truth, and the Word of grace and truth that is spoken to us. The result is that the Holy Spirit has a mighty hard time in bringing grown people to repentance and faith, and indeed in many cases He does not succeed at all. Therefore our prayer should be that He may either convert us in our childhood or that we may become again as children. Amen.

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

LUKE 9: 57-62

And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain *man* said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air *have* nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay *his* head. And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead; but go thou and preach the Kingdom of God. And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell which are at home at my house. And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

JESUS came to seek and to save that which was lost. That is the great Gospel message for a dying world. That, too, is the foundation of all our hope. If Jesus had not come as Savior no one could be saved. If the sun did not rise daily in his strength and glory, no living thing upon earth could get light and life.

But whoever would be found and be saved must permit himself to be found and be saved. If you shut yourself up in a dark room the glory and strength of the sun's light will not reach you. If a man will completely incase himself with thoughts and plans and purposes of this world the voice of Jesus and the word of the Gospel will not reach and rescue him. There must be separation from the world on the one hand and a self-surrender to Jesus on the other. Only such as are willing to do these things are enrolled in the kingdom of God. That fact is brought out very nicely in our lesson this morning; in the kingdom of God there is

COMPLETE SELF-SURRENDER TO JESUS.

We shall note:

1. *That there are many people who have some mind to follow Jesus:* Many came to Jesus in the days of His flesh and activity here upon earth. At one time four thousand men, besides women and children, gathered about Him. At another time five thousand men, besides women and

children, were fed both with the bread of earth and the bread of heaven. At another time they pressed upon Him by the sea-shore to hear the Word of God, so much so that He entered into a boat and taught the people from the water. Repeatedly it is stated that multitudes were about Him or followed Him. When John the Baptist lifted up his voice in the wilderness all Jerusalem and Judea and the surrounding provinces came to hear the man with a message from God. But John the Baptist was only the forerunner, the advance agent. When the King Himself came there was a still greater movement of the people to hear Him who was heralded as the promised Messiah.

Many came to Jesus from curiosity; they wanted to hear and see what new and strange things were being done; they were especially interested in seeing Jesus' wonderful works or in hearing about them. You know how people are, what an excitement there is if something unusual takes place in a community; everybody wants to hear or see the new thing. It is a part of human nature and the Jews had it in the days of Christ as well as we today. Many came to Jesus for bodily healing. There were sickness and suffering then as today and as Jesus healed all who came to Him, it was only natural that many availed themselves of the opportunity. Some of these, we know, were led by the healing of the body to find the healing of the soul likewise, for that was Jesus' aim. Others, like the Scribes and Pharisees, came to find fault. They were envious of Jesus' growing popularity and incensed at His sharp rebukes. They therefore sought all manner of occasion to criticise Jesus and to disparage Him and His teaching in the eyes of the people.

But among the many who came there was also a goodly number who were moved by better and more serious motives. They found pleasure in hearing the message of Jesus; it was not only new, but it was also cheering and inspiring; it came with meaning, with force, with power, for He taught them as one having authority and not as the Scribes. Here was no repetition of mere platitudes and of meaningless and childish precepts. Here was real truth fresh from the fountain; here was strength and hope and

cheer in better things. The people found it was good to be there, even if they were not yet ready to accept the full message. It was like being in a beautiful garden, among blooming flowers and aromatic herbs, and where the soft winds were laden with nature's mild perfume. These people were ahungered and athirst for better things than they received in their synagogues.

Such were the three men of our lesson this morning. That they had not all sufficiently considered the matter of following Jesus will appear. They were thinking of building a tower, but had not yet computed the whole cost. Yet one plainly sees that there was some thought there, some desire, some dissatisfaction with present conditions, some readiness and preparedness even to follow Jesus.

What shall we say of the present generation in this respect? The natural man is, of course, no friend of God and of His Word. There is much there that does not appeal to him nor suit him. He does not want to submit to the demands of God's Word; he will not break his proud will nor bend his stiff neck to the yoke of Jesus. He is like the untrained colt that as yet knows nothing but the freedom of the fields and stoutly resists being hitched to the plow. The freedom of the life of the world is sweet to the natural man and there is only dislike for the restraint of the Word. This opposition to God's Word becomes apparent especially when real decision is called for, when the Spirit says, Either — or; either go completely to the world or else surrender yourself completely to Jesus; either serve God or else serve Mammon. But in this valley of decision a half-mind to follow Jesus will not pass muster; it is one or the other, going forward with the hosts of the Lord or else remaining in the camp of the enemy. Jesus had to deal with people of this class. Many followed Him at times, but when He pressed them for decision, they faltered and went back. With great fatigue they followed Him from the desert place where He had multiplied the loaves, around the lake to the other side, but when He told them that they must labor for the meat which does not perish, for the bread of life, and that He Himself is that bread, even His flesh which

He will give for the life of the world, then they said, This is an hard saying, who can receive it, and went no more after Him.

However, so long as you do not call for real decision, for a clean-cut positive confession of Christ, for actual separation from the world, people are willing to mingle with the followers of Jesus and to be accounted His disciples. They often speak beautifully about Jesus, praise many of His teachings and especially laud His works, and dilate too upon their own exquisite fellings and experiences; but when you aim to seize them at the vital point, the point where real faith in Christ and real religion have their seat, there is no vital point there; they have not yet come to real faith and real religion, there has been no real decision.

One sees already among pagans how the soul in its natural state is not satisfied. There is a longing there for God, a kind of seeking after Him, a groping about for some solution of the soul's longing search for some sort of a heaven. You see the same thing among civilized people when some one sets himself up as a prophet sent from God with a message for men, for example a Dowie, a Schlatter, a "Mother Eddy." There are always people who are ready to follow such impostors, even if the greatest nonsense is dished out to them. They feel the need of something of a religious character and here is something which they think will satisfy them. The same thing appears in the lodge life of the day. These lodges are not content to exist as mere social and benevolent institutions; they must also draw in religion. They feel that here is a want that needs to be supplied and so they add a little religion to the compound. It is not much, there is nothing positive about it, it is really only a travesty on religion, Christ Himself as the only Savior from sin and death is excluded. It is only a little religious flavor, a suggestion, but it satisfies some people; it gives them an excuse for not joining the church, or if they have joined, it serves as an excuse for dropping out; their lodge is church enough for them.

All these things then show that there is in the heart of man some original longing for God, some desire for a

savior from the evils of this world. Many therefore have some mind to follow Christ, if only the gate were not so straight and the way so narrow. — This leads us to affirm:

2. *That following Jesus requires complete self-surrender:* We are not told here whether any one of the men of our lesson really started now to follow Jesus. The first man of his own choice offered to follow Jesus whithersoever He might go. The “whithersoever” seems to indicate that he took the matter quite seriously, yet possibly not seriously enough to follow one who had not where to lay His head. The third, who first wanted permission to go home and bid farewell to his friends, did not seem to take the matter seriously at all and probably took no further steps to follow Jesus. If any of the three made up his mind fully to follow the Master it was the second to whom Jesus said, “Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.”

One thing, however, is clearly seen in the light of these examples, namely, that there are certain conditions which must be met before one can become a true follower of Jesus. Jesus does not accept followers without examination. He insists upon the right kind of mind and heart and purpose; a change of heart must be apparent. There must be a readiness to submit to inconveniences and self-sacrifices, a preparedness to turn from the friends and pleasures of the world, a determination to set the heart upon one thing, to follow one master. It is seen, too, that it is not so easy to meet the required conditions; that it is not mere play, but real work, a grappling with the difficulty and overcoming it. “The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.” These things are not meant to frighten or to discourage us. Jesus did not mean to discourage or frighten these men from following Him; He only wanted to move them to bethink themselves and to make a firm resolve so that they might not turn back in the face of difficulties.

When we now come to look at the examples in our lesson we find that in the case of the first it was especially a denial of self and of the world that was required. To

follow Jesus requires self-surrender to Jesus and that implies a denial of self and of the world. "A certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." This man came of his own accord and offered himself to Jesus. His offer also seemed very promising, that he would always continue with Jesus, no matter where He might lead, nor how hard the conditions of following might be: I will be Thy disciple from this day on; I will never turn back. Wilt thou not number me among Thy followers? But things are not always what they seem and words do not always reveal the real state of the heart. Here is a man who was like the seed that fell upon the stony ground. It sprang up rapidly and grew rapidly, but it had no depth of earth and could not stand the heat of the sun and the hot winds of summer. This man was impulsive, quick to make up his mind but just as quick also to unmake it. He was like Peter: Lord, though I should die with thee, I will not deny thee, but that same night he denied Him three times. Matthew tells us that this man was a Scribe and as such he had doubtless never experienced many and great hardships, and had probably judged discipleship with Jesus as being very similar to the ordinary Pharisee's life, a life consisting largely in the observance of outward ordinances, but not calling for a radical change of heart or of breaking with the world.

Jesus, however, knew the man's heart, whatever his words might promise. He knew that the man had not considered the cost. The man may even have expected certain earthly advantages from following Jesus, just as some men today hope to reap some social or financial gain by uniting with the Church. Therefore Jesus said to him: I must undeceive you, I must show you where your conception of what discipleship with Me means is altogether wrong. You will reap no social or material advantage; it will not be an easy thing for you to do, for "foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." Are you prepared for a life like that? If you are not, if you are not ready to cut loose from the world and to forego your own personal con-

venience and pleasure, then do not undertake to follow Me; but if you are ready for such self-surrender, then come on.

The words of Jesus come with special significance when we yet consider that according to Saint Luke's account Jesus had been refused lodging at a certain Samaritan village and was thus obliged to turn His face elsewhere; and again that He was now on His way to Jerusalem there to suffer and die, that He was going there with the fixed purpose of bearing all the evil that might come upon Him. Under other conditions Jesus would doubtless have replied to this man just as He did here, but we can readily see how under the circumstances He was in a mood to point to the self-denial that is required, to the cross that must be borne and to the necessity of a firm resolve not to turn back when a lion appears in the way.

And we do well to ask ourselves the question whether we are living and working under such a resolve. Have we fully considered what it means to be a Christian, a church member? That it means complete surrender to Christ and a denial of everything that can in anyway interfere with our life and service in Christ? If we have not, we are not yet the kind of disciples that Jesus wants. He may not require us to be exiles on earth without a place to lay our head; He may grant unto us the ordinary conveniences, comforts and pleasures of life, even many of its luxuries; but He does insist that all these things shall be placed in His service and that we be prepared at any time, if necessary, to leave all and follow Him.

In the second example of our lesson we are presented with a different type of character. The first man was too impulsive, ready to act without due deliberation. Jesus therefore warned him to be more thoughtful and to weigh well what must needs come before he took the step. This man is too slow, he is taking too much time to decide, especially to decide once for all that he will be one thing or the other. According to Matthew's account this man was already a disciple of Jesus, however in the wider sense; he had accepted Jesus as the Messiah, felt too that the proper thing to do was to become His disciple; but he had

been following Him only off and on, his decision it appears, was not yet completely made. He had not fully surrendered himself to Jesus and His service. Therefore Jesus said to him, "Follow me," and follow Me at once. Cease your wavering, come to a decision, choose once for all that you will follow Me and follow Me all the time. We may be quite sure that this is just what this man needed, for Jesus here again knew His man. He needed some one to urge him along to a full decision for Christ and to do it at once before other interests would completely steal his heart away.

That we are right in our supposition we see from the man's answer: "Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father." I am willing to follow Thee, indeed I have been thinking of it very much; I have felt that my way of following Thee up to this time has not been satisfactory; I have not been giving myself wholly to it. But there is one little thing in the way just now; my father is old and is about to die or may be already dead, allow me to go and bury him first; it is the last honor I can show him as his son. Thou wilt surely not take it amiss.

A most reasonable request, we say. God wants children to honor their parents: Thou shalt honor thy father and thy mother; and certainly the Lord wants children to show their parents this last honor and give them proper burial. But this very fact makes Jesus' answer here the more remarkable: "Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God." Two things are clearly implied in this answer: the one is that it would not have been safe for that man in the undecided state of his mind to have gone back to his old home. Worldly friends and worldly interests might at once have overwhelmed his heart and he would have been forever lost to Jesus. Often in the foreign mission field converts are taken away from home and kindred to keep them from being ensnared again in the devices of heathendom. Abraham was called from among his kindred that he might be more completely dependent upon God and solely under His guidance. Jesus not only tells us that we must be willing to leave father and mother for His sake, but He gives us to understand that

there may be times when we *must* do that and that if we love father and mother more than Him we are not worthy of Him.

The other thing that is implied in Jesus' words is this that the most important thing for a disciple of Jesus to do is to preach the kingdom of God. That was the work to which Jesus called this particular man and that work took precedence over all things else. Jesus did not mean to encourage disrespect on the part of children toward their parents, but there may be cases when such a thing as the burial of a parent may well be attended to by others and the Christian son left to go on with his work in the kingdom of God. It would be an exceptional case, just as it was exceptional when Jesus said to the rich young ruler, Sell thy possessions and give to the poor and follow Me. Preaching the kingdom of God is a great work; not every one can do it. But to bury the dead — there are plenty who can do that; even the dead, the spiritually dead, can do that. To preach the kingdom of God, however, requires a man who is alive. Here then the great thought is: Full decision for Christ, complete surrender to Him and His service, an entire yielding to the particular work to which the Lord has called us in His kingdom.

In the third example of our lesson we find some similarity to both the first and second: to the first, because the man offered himself to Jesus of his own choice; to the second, because he had also not yet come to a full decision on account of interest in the world. The distinctive element, however, in this third man's character was this that he was not willing to break completely with the world. It was again a question of full self-surrender to Jesus: I feel that I should follow Thee; I feel that my soul will not find full peace until I do follow Thee. I have been thinking much of the matter and have about decided to become one of Thy disciples. But I was brought up in a pleasant home, I have many good friends and acquaintances there and all I ask is permission to go back and bid them farewell. That this man's heart was still very much divided between Jesus and the world, between God and Mammon, appears clearly from Jesus'

answer, "No man having put his hand to the plow, and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God." You want to come into the kingdom of God; that is very well, for the kingdom of God is for men and God would have all men be saved. But a certain fitness is required and one thing is this that you must leave the kingdom of the world outside. This is purely the kingdom of God, it is in no sense of the world, and no part or element of the world can find any place in this kingdom. Therefore you must be prepared to separate completely from the world and mere worldly interests. I have no objection to your going home and saying good-bye to your friends, but it must be a complete and final good-bye; there dare be no going back again afterward, no looking back to the fleshpots of Egypt, no mournful look at the loss of Sodom and Gomorrah, but a complete surrender to Me and My service.

Here again, friends, you see the drift of the thought and the argument, complete surrender to Jesus as fitness for the kingdom of God. Jesus will not have you carry water on two shoulders; He will not have you bark with the hounds and run with the hare; He will not have you take hold of the plow in His kingdom and there draw a crooked furrow through looking back to the world. It is a choice between Jesus and the world; it is the old call of Elijah on Carmel: Either serve ye the Lord God, or else serve ye Baal. And the time comes in the life of a man when he must make this choice then and there; it will not do to go swaying along between two interests. And why should one? You do not do so in natural things. If a man is in prison and freedom is offered him, will he hesitate? Will he want to go home first and bury his father before he accepts his liberty? If a man should offer you a fine farm in fee simple, would you want to confer with those at home first before you accepted the title? Why then such hesitancy when the salvation of the soul is at stake; when that which the whole world cannot purchase is offered you? Away from the world then and on to Christ and the kingdom of God. Amen.

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

MATTHEW 10: 24-33

The disciple is not above *his* master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more *shall they call* them of his household? Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known. What I tell you in darkness, *that* speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, *that* preach ye upon the housetops. And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore; ye are of more value than many sparrows. Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.

ONE cannot continue long in the kingdom of God without in some way openly confessing the fact. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus were for a while secret disciples of Jesus for fear of the Jews, but that sort of discipleship could not continue long. At the trial of Jesus we find these two men opposing the action of the council to have Jesus put to death, and at His death they came out boldly and begged for the body of Jesus that they might give it proper burial. There is a reason why a disciple of Jesus must soon confess Him. The blessed fact that a man has found his Savior, or better, that he has been found of Him cannot long remain hid. It will soon be proclaimed from the house-top. The thing is too good to keep secret. Like the woman with the piece of silver, one will call in the neighbors to rejoice with him. And not only that, the person will want to praise God; he cannot help it; he would have to condemn himself if he did not openly give glory to God. Then there is this, too, that when one has found his Savior he will want to be telling others about Him so that they, too, may find Him. One of the sure evidences of your own pardon is a strong desire to tell others how they also may get the pardon.

There is therefore a necessity for confessing Christ. It is so necessary that if one does not confess Him, Christ in turn cannot confess such an one before His Father in heaven. In our lesson this morning we have a number of

ENCOURAGEMENTS FOR CONFESSING CHRIST.

Let us ask the Holy Spirit to lead us into the truth of these things so that we may find greater boldness at all times to confess our blessed Savior. — First of all, we are encouraged to confess Christ because:

1. *We belong to Christ's household:* "The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his Lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household." The confessor is here spoken of in a three-fold relation to Christ. First, he is called a disciple of Christ, a learner, a follower, and Jesus is his teacher and leader, for that is the usual meaning of the word "master" when applied to Christ. This relation of discipleship is a most intimate and blessed relation. The disciple loves his teacher and he speaks for him and comes to his defense. The teacher on the other hand loves his pupil and gives his best service to him and protects and defends him. Even among mere human teachers, where discipleship continues only for a time, such pleasant associations are formed and such precious memories remain that they are never forgotten. How much more should we not rejoice in the blessed discipleship of Jesus who will be our master and teacher throughout all eternity!

In the second place, the confessor is here called the servant of Christ. He is not a bond-servant in the ordinary sense of that word. His state is not one of enforced servitude. He is a servant, but free; what he does he does freely, because he is moved by the spirit, and where the Spirit is there is freedom. But this relation of servant is also a blessed relation. The most blessed thing a man can do is to serve God and his fellow-men. "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Jesus came not to be ministered unto

but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many. Shall we now look around for something greater and better to do than what Jesus did? Can we hope to find something that in the end will prove more advantageous to us than following in the footsteps of our Master?

In the third place the confessor is here spoken of as a member of Christ's household. The happiest social circle upon earth is the family. It is therefore used as a type of heavenly society. Paul speaks of all those who are in Christ, both in heaven and on earth, as one family. In a family the members are bound together by the closest ties of friendship and love. They live for one another, share one another's joys and bear one another's sorrows. The object of all is to make one another happy. Who could imagine a more blessed relationship? But human families are weak, there are so many things which they cannot do. The family, however, in which Christ is the head is powerful. There is nothing that He cannot do. Here again then there is cause for rejoicing.

In these relationships to Christ we are to be happy and also content. We cannot hope to be above Him and therefore, too, we cannot hope to escape here upon earth what He did not escape. If they called Him Beelzebub and accused Him of evil-doing and generally persecuted Him, we must not expect to fare better. But the fact that He bore all this for us and that we now belong to Him and shall share in His glory should give us encouragement to confess Him openly.—The second encouragement to confess Christ is that:

2. *The truth which we confess will prevail:* "Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed, and hid, that shall not be known. What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in the light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops." Fear not, says Jesus. This encouragement appears a second time and then a third time in the lesson. Fear does not become the apostles of Christ. Theirs is a great calling; it is bound to stir up great opposition and expose the herald of the Gospel to great dangers. It will not do for him to fear.

He must take coolly the dangers of his vocation just as does the soldier or the sailor. Facing dangers is his profession, and fear must therefore be conquered at the beginning. It is well to note here what courage the apostles developed. How timid and fearful they were before Christ's resurrection. When the enemy appeared they all forsook Jesus and fled. And afterwards they gathered together behind locked doors for fear of the Jews. But notice their boldness after the day of Pentecost. They even rejoiced that they were counted worthy to be imprisoned and scourged for the name of Jesus.

But there is another reason why the heralds of Christ should not fear. Sometimes our fear is not so much for ourselves as for the cause which we represent. We fear it will fail. There is much pessimism in our make-up. We often look into the future through glasses that throw a cloud upon the scene. "The good old times are past and the evil days are upon us." "If things do not improve soon everything will go to sticks." "Children are growing worse and worse." "Nobody can be trusted any more" — except myself. Such are some of the remarks and predictions we hear.

There is, of course, some truth in these mournful phrases. If there were not, there would be not a few false prophets among the supposedly elect. But why fear for the cause itself? or for the truth itself? God's cause shall not fail, neither shall His truth go out in darkness. On the contrary, that truth shall be proclaimed; it shall be made public, every whit of it. At the beginning much was spoken in private, into the ear as it were. The beginnings were obscure. The public was not yet ripe for the full revelation. Jesus said even unto His disciples, I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. After His transfiguration, for example, He said, Do not tell the vision until after My resurrection. But after the day of Pentecost revelations were at once proclaimed. What Paul heard and saw on his way to Damascus he preached to all the world. What Peter saw and heard in his vision on the housetop he at once proclaimed in public. Truth and righteousness shall go on conquering and to conquer; nothing shall hinder

them, not even the power of hades. Not as many will be saved as we may wish. But that does not in the least lessen the real victory, for the victory will appear in its greatness when the whole world of evil and iniquity shall lie humbled and slain at the foot of the cross. — The third encouragement to confess Christ is that:

3. *The most our enemies can do is not very much:* “Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” The antidote of fear is here drawn from a greater fear. There is a worse thing than suffering persecution or even being burned at the stake. The life of the body is not so important, for it must perish anyway sooner or later. And, moreover, some forms of natural death are more painful than some kinds of death at the hands of persecutors. Saint James who was beheaded and Saint Stephen who perished under a shower of stones suffered much less than many an one dying from cancer or certain other maladies. There is, therefore, really not so much to fear from the persecutor. He can inflict little more than we shall have to suffer anyway.

But there is another whom there are very great reasons to fear! He is able to bring upon us everlasting destruction of both body and soul. That is really serious. It is not only pain of the body but also of the soul, which is greater. It is not only suffering for a few moments, but for all eternity. This greater fear therefore and greater danger should drive from us all fear of lesser dangers and enemies. And this the more, since if we fear them who can harm the body only, we are in danger of falling into the power of Him who can ruin us eternally.

But what is the explanation? Who is He that can destroy both soul and body in hell? Some understand this person to be the devil. The devil, however, has no absolute power over men nor over hell; hence he of himself could not destroy us. Yet we certainly need to fear him, for through his wiles and seductions he may occasion our eternal ruin. Some say this person is God. He certainly has the power to destroy both soul and body in hell. But in the very

next verse Jesus speaks of the Father's kindly care, and some think it strange that we should have these two opposite characteristics of God brought together so close. Yet that is nothing unusual. Think of Jesus, for example, weeping over Jerusalem but at the same time foretelling her fearful overthrow. Besides, God destroys only those in hell who prove unfaithful to Him. Others understand by this person the tempter. This makes very good sense. No tempter, not even the devil, has absolute power over us, yet the tempter can occasion our destruction. We are not to fear the persecutor, but we are to fear him who through fear of persecution would buy us off and render us unfaithful to the truth and to our calling. A man with a bribe in his pocket is a more dreadful foe than a man with a lash in his hand. — The fourth encouragement to confess Christ is that:

4. *No harm can befall us except by God's will:* "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered." In all the realm of divine evidences there is no stronger argument than this why the child of God should not fear. Jesus does not say that no evil shall befall us. We are to expect that. It is a part of God's plan. But He does assure us that no evil shall befall us without God's knowledge and consent. God knows what comes to us and He even wants it so. That should satisfy us. "Fear ye not therefore; ye are of more value than many sparrows." There is really no comparison at all between the value of a human being and that of all the sparrows in the world. And yet it is just by such simple comparisons that God's great love and care for us is brought out.

And Christ spoke here not only of sparrows but of still much smaller things, the hairs of your head. Hundreds of those hairs may drop from your head but it does not affect your life in the least. Yet even these have all been numbered, numbered once for all, we can say; and each single one has been noted so that not one of them drops to the ground but by the Father's knowledge and consent.

Oh, what encouragement here to be cheerful and hope-

ful! What abundant reasons why we should not fear! No wonder the Apostle says that perfect love casteth out fear. For to love God means to believe in Him, to trust Him in all the things He has promised. Love makes us sure that He knows all our trials and troubles, all our aches and pains, all our needs and dangers, and then moves us to trust Him in all things. Love means to lean upon our Father's loving care, even as a child nestles in its mother's bosom, with all fears cast out. We are told that precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints. But why should the death of saints be any more precious than their lives? If it means that in the hour of death, when our enemies are trying to do their utmost, the Lord is nearer than ever to watch over us, then we can also say of our life that the greater the danger the nearer is God to protect His own. How quiet and secure our lives would be if only we could take God at His Word and trust Him in childlike simplicity? Our one great concern then would be to do His will, to confess His Word and to do His work. What our enemies and the world might do would not trouble us, for in the end all things will be found working together for our good because we love God. — The fifth encouragement to confess Christ is that:

5. *At last Christ will confess us before His heavenly Father:* "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also **before my Father** which is in heaven." Luke reports Jesus as saying that He will confess us "before the angels of God," while in Revelation Jesus combines the two and says, "I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels." What unheard of, what unspeakable honor is awaiting the faithful! Jesus Christ, the mighty God and the glorious Savior, shall confess them before the Lord of heaven and earth and before all the assembled hosts of heaven. The thought is so great and so overwhelming that we cannot get hold of it at all as we should. And it is not only the honor to be conferred upon us by that act that should appeal to us, but also the satisfaction that in this world we were on the side of God, that we stood for the right, that we battled against the wrong

and that under whatever clouds of tribulations we may have passed, we held out unto the glorious end. What a great satisfaction it is in this life, to have stood through a conflict to the end to know when all is over that we stood for the right. That is always the greater part of victory, for a victory for the wrong will be a defeat in the end. Infinitely greater will be our reward in heaven when we shall stand with all the celestial hosts of righteousness, having stood through the fight and now waving the banners of victory over the fallen foe.

However, our greatest rejoicing will be, not in what we have done, but in what God in His love and mercy has done for us. For we shall realize then as we do not realize now, that of ourselves we could do nothing, that the whole work of salvation was a work of grace, that the whole conflict was a conflict of divine love in our behalf. Methinks that we shall altogether forget about the glory bestowed upon us, in our endeavor to give all praise and glory and honor to the Lamb that sitteth upon the throne.

But let us also glance at the dark picture that is here presented: "But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven." Just as great as is the glory of being confessed by Christ before His Father and the holy angels, so great also will be the shame of being denied before the Father and the holy angels. And note well the fact too that Jesus individualizes: "Whosoever," no matter who it may be that was unfaithful to Me here upon earth; no matter where or when he may have lived, I shall then find him, and I shall point him out before all the saints and holy angels as one who was ashamed of Me among men, as one who feared men more than he loved Me. Oh, friends, let us think much about the solemn facts that are here set forth; let us oft picture to ourselves the awful scene that we are bound to face, perhaps much sooner than we expect. The day is coming when Jesus Christ the Judge of all the earth will separate once and forever His confessors from those who denied Him. Watch you and pray that you may be accounted worthy to stand with Him on that day. Amen.

TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

JOHN 10: 23-30

And Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon's porch. Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be Christ, tell us plainly. Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not, the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me. But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep as I said unto you, My sheep hear my voice, and know them and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one.

WE are nearing the end of the church year. Our lessons are plainly indicating the fact. They speak to us very distinctly of the last things. The time of Christ's second advent is approaching. It may yet be many years, even centuries, we know not; but the time is coming when the course of history as we are making it here upon earth will be abruptly cut off. Then we shall write the era of the new world, of the new heaven and the new earth. But that world will be without time; we shall not count days and months and years, but the stream of eternity will move endlessly on. Ah, that stream! We are nearing it rapidly; doubtless long before the second advent of Christ we of the present shall all have launched our vessels thereon. Which shall it be, the river clear as crystal, issuing from the throne of God, washing the streets of the Golden City and verdant with the tree of life? Or that other stream, swept by the blasts of death, rank with the fumes of sulphur and brimstone, bearing the victims on through the unending cycles of Hades?

These stupendous facts and these solemn thoughts should set us to thinking about the last things. There is one question which involves all the rest; it is the question of eternal life. If we have the right answer to that, all is well; if not, all is ill. Our lesson this morning speaks to us concerning that great question. Jesus here declares that

He gives unto His sheep eternal life. This is the one great fact that makes the followers of Jesus happy. We shall accordingly speak to you of

THE BLESSEDNESS OF JESUS' SHEEP.

There are three things that we shall notice: First, that Jesus' sheep are those who hear His voice; secondly, Jesus gives unto His sheep eternal life; thirdly, no one shall pluck Jesus' sheep out of His hand.

1. *Jesus' sheep are those who hear His voice:* Jesus was walking under one of the colonnades of the temple. Whether He was alone or accompanied by some of His disciples is not stated. But certain Jews discovered Him there. These men had wrestled long with a great question. Is this man, this Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ, the promised Messiah or is he not? That was the question. They see here a good opportunity to ask Jesus in the most direct manner and to insist upon a straight answer. All this seemed proper and in order. They had a right to know whether or not Jesus was the Messiah, and why too should Jesus not tell them? That was one of the purposes for which He came, to tell the people who He is that they might know and believe. But why did these men not already know? Were they strangers in Jerusalem, had they only now heard of Jesus for the first time? Jesus had oft been in their city and had taught in the temple; for three years He had gone about in the holy land teaching aloud that all could hear and doing mighty works that all could see. The whole country was full of His fame: all Galilee, Samaria, Perea and Judea knew of Jesus of Nazareth, the mighty Prophet. Why did these men of Jerusalem, these scribes, chief priests and elders, the leaders and teachers of the people, why did they still not know whether Jesus was the Christ or not?

Here is Jesus' answer to that question: "I told you, and ye believed not." That answer was simple and direct. It could not be misunderstood. These men pretended to be very sincere and very much concerned about this question: Dear Master, this question has been making us a lot of trouble, we have not been able to decide whether thou art

the Christ or not and we are very anxious to know and get settled on the matter. And thou hast never told us in so many words that thou art the Christ. Do tell us, tell us plainly so that we may know and that we may go and tell our friends.

Jesus told them, and He told them more than they wanted to know. He told them not only who He was, the Christ, but also who they were, that they were not His sheep because they did not believe. And to show them at the same time how inexcusable they were for this unbelief He added, "The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me." There may always be some reason for not believing a man's words if he has nothing else to accredit his message. But Jesus had an abundance of other testimony. The works that He did especially showed that He was the Son of God. There was therefore no excuse for these men not knowing and believing that Jesus was the Christ.

But there you have one great cause of unbelief; people do not want to see and do not want to believe. There are plenty of people today who, when they have the opportunity, will round up some Christian and say, Here, give me your reason for believing that Jesus is divine, the Son of God and the Savior of men. We have been doing some reading and some observing and some thinking and we can find no reason for believing in your religion and in the Church. What is the best answer for these people? The answer of Philip to Nathanael, "Come and see." Such was practically Jesus' answer here: Look at My works and see what I have done, who but the Son of God and the Messiah could do these works? Tell these quibblers and rationalists what the Gospel has done for the world, for America, for England, for Germany as compared with the wilds of Africa and the jungles of India. Ask them to trace in an honest way to their real source the very best things your country has. Ask them to look at some people whom they know, possibly some near friend or some relative, who was down in the gutter of shame and disgrace, but who through the Gospel and the power of the living Christ was made a man again. You

may of course not convince them. Jesus did not convince these men. They will of course point you to church-members who are worse than heathen. But do not be surprised, this same class of men here called Jesus a wine-bibber and a glutton. They may even become angry at you and abuse you. But never mind that, these men here took up stones to cast at Jesus. You may accomplish little or nothing, but you will then have done your duty and have shown these people where the trouble lies — that the reason of their unbelief is simply that they do not want to see and do not want to believe.

Jesus went on then to give these men still further reasons why they did not believe: “But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you.” Jesus had frequently met these men and their ilk. In fact, He knew them well. He had told them before that they were not His sheep because they did not hear His voice. For that is what Jesus here means. The sense is not that God did not elect them to be saved and therefore they could not believe and could not become Jesus’ sheep, no matter how hard they might try; but that when Jesus spoke to them the Word of truth they did not hear, did not accept it, and that too of their own accord and that therefore they were not Jesus’ sheep. Their unbelief was not the fruit of their not being Jesus’ sheep, their not being Jesus’ sheep was the fruit of their not believing. The fault was their own and not the Lord’s.

“My sheep hear my voice,” says Jesus, “and I know them, and they follow me.” There can be no question here as to what Jesus means. His voice is the Word which He has given us. You have it in the gospels, you have it in the epistles, you have it in the entire Bible. There is not a word or tittle of that Book that Jesus repudiated. Some of it He fulfilled and changed its form or application, but the whole Word of God stands as Jesus’ voice: and no one now may presume upon being a follower of Jesus, who is not willing to hear and heed that Word. We must stand fast on this principle. Without it there is no hope, no sure word of prophecy: there can be no comfort for the sick-bed, no

rod and staff for the valley of the shadow of death, only as you follow the voice of Jesus. These, too, are the people whom Jesus knows as His sheep, just as He knew those Jews to be hypocrites. And He knows all their needs, all their dangers and just how they are to be supplied. — The second thing our lesson shows us is that:

2. *Jesus gives unto His sheep eternal life:* “And I give unto them eternal life.” Jesus always has a word of comfort, of encouragement. To follow Jesus’ voice at all times means much for us: our will must often be broken, our wish denied, there is often hard work to do, there are hard paths to follow, there is often much to suffer, but for it all there is the great reward. I give unto them eternal life. And consider what a great reward this is. **ETERNAL LIFE.** Say it slowly and think. Jesus puts two things together and we have the best that earth and heaven afford. How we all like to live, that is, live in the true sense of the word, be free from care and trouble and sorrow and be perfectly happy. That’s living. What a blessed thing it is, how happy we are! Even this earthly life with all its sorrow — how we cling to it. Not until we have lost all capacity for earthly enjoyment are we ready to go. If this earthly life is already so precious, how much more precious will not that other life be and how shall we not cling to it when we once come to realize in full its blessedness.

Here now is the best that can possibly be given us, the best things of earth and heaven. The experience and schooling of this world and the unspeakable glory and blessedness of the other world are combined in this wonderful thing that is called life. But that is not all, that alone would not satisfy us. When we are having a very pleasant time here upon earth there is always one thing if not many things to spoil it; there is always an end to it, it never lasts. The supreme pleasure continues only for a moment or so, then we are back again in the humdrum of work and worry. Here now Jesus gives us the very best that can be given and then makes it last forever: *eternal life*.

This eternal life is a gift of grace. It is not something that we have earned with our labors nor deserved because

of our good deeds. Let us not forget this fact at the end of the church year. We were oft reminded of it during the year, but it was needful. Jesus expects much of us: He wants us to labor in His vineyard; He wants us to wear His yoke; He wants us to take up our own cross and follow after Him; as branches on the vine He wants us to bear much fruit; He wants us to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick, take in the stranger: He wants us to pick up that man fallen among thieves and care for Him; He wants us to employ well our talents and pounds, that they may be multiplied ten-fold against His coming; He wants us to bless them that curse us, do good to them that despitefully use us and persecute us; and there are many other things that He wants us to do. Yet in the end He wants us to say, We are unprofitable servants, we have only done that which was our duty to do. Eternal life is still a gift, a free gift of grace.

The fact that eternal life is a free gift may not enhance the value of the gift itself in our estimation. Indeed there is a way of looking at the matter by which this life might seem more precious to us if we could say that we earned it, that it is our just due. But we should miss the point entirely if we should look at eternal life in that way; it would become altogether valueless; indeed there would then be no eternal life for us.

When is an object more precious to us as a gift than as a thing earned by our own effort? When it is the gift of a dear friend. What makes it so precious? The love and the friendship of the giver. So also here; eternal life aside from the love and friendship of Christ could mean nothing to us; indeed there would be no such life at all. It is the unspeakable love of God that makes these things precious to us. The element of grace, therefore, in eternal life is itself cause for the greatest rejoicing. For without that grace we could not get eternal life at all; we cannot earn it. And furthermore, it is the very element of grace, the element of the love and friendship of God, that makes eternal life that blessed thing that it is. — The third thing our lesson tells us is that:

3. *No one shall pluck Jesus' sheep out of His hands:* "They shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." Just as the words, I give unto them eternal life, fill us with the greatest possible assurance. These words put us at ease, they make us feel safe. On what a slender thread our hope would hang if our eternal life were in our own hands. We place valuable documents in a safety-deposit box. We feel that they are not safe in our own immediate care and so we place them in the care of others, behind massive steel doors and bars. Of course they are not really safe; nothing is safe here upon earth, nothing except one thing, namely ourselves, our souls, and they are safe only in the hands of Jesus.

But not only while we sojourn in this world are we safe in Jesus' care, but as we pass through the portals of death His everlasting arm will be about us to shield and protect us. While our bodies molder in the dust our souls (and our bodies too) are safe in the arms of Jesus. When in the resurrection Jesus shall come to claim His own He will say to His sheep, "Come ye blessed of My Father." And on through the endless ages of eternity the sheep of Jesus will ever be with their Lord.

Even in this life, where we know that the devil is very active and powerful, there is no danger of our being plucked out of His hand, so long as we hear Jesus' voice. There is danger, but the danger is in us, not in Jesus; not that Jesus is not able to hold us, but that we might tire of hearing His voice and begin going our own way. There lies the dangerous ground; there is where sheep stray away and are lost and devoured. Therefore we must come back again, with all the emphasis at our command, to what Jesus said above, "My sheep hear my voice." Heeding that voice and submitting ourselves to the guidance of the Holy Spirit there is no danger; for if God be for us, who may be against us. There is no danger in life, there is no danger in death, there is no danger at the judgment and there can be no danger throughout all eternity. For the thing that holds us safe in the hand of Jesus is love, the everlasting love of God. Therefore we are ready to say with Paul, "For I am per-

suaded, that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

But Jesus does not stop with himself. In His great desire to win His enemies as His sheep He gives them, if possible, still greater assurance: "My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." We shall not try to explain what Jesus meant by saying that His Father is greater than all; suffice it to say that here is the highest and greatest authority and power in heaven and on earth, the authority and power of the Father. No one now can pluck us out of that hand. And in that hand we are, as well as in the hand of Jesus, for "I and my Father are one."

We close much as we began: Here are great questions, the things that pertain to eternal life. Let us fill ourselves with the expectation and assurance which the lesson offers us. Let us lay fast hold upon the promised eternal life and pass cheerfully on to the end of the church year and to the consideration of the last things. Amen.

TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

JOHN 5: 19-29

Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son, likewise. For the Father loveth the Son, and showeth him all things that himself doeth: and he will show him greater works than these, that ye may marvel. For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son; That all *men* should honor the Son,, even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son, honoreth not the Father which hath sent him. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the son of man. Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.

THE gift of eternal life. That was the great subject of last Sunday. We saw that Christ is the giver of that life, that He gives it to those who hear His voice and that these are safe in His hand forevermore. These thoughts fill us with hope and comfort as we near the end of the church year. Throughout the entire year the great subject was salvation from sin and eternal life. Here now we are assured of both. The year's work was therefore not in vain. Today our lesson leads us to look at that wonderful person who gives us eternal life, that we may see what His mighty powers are and what glorious things He will do at His second coming. We shall accordingly speak of

THE GREAT WORKS OF CHRIST.

We shall notice in the first place:

1. *Why Jesus has such great power:* When we see some one exercising great power we ask, Whence has he

that power? When the Jews heard the teaching of Jesus in the temple and saw His works they asked, "By what authority doest thou these things and who gave thee this authority?" Jesus has done great things, He is still doing great things and He shall do even greater things; we too want to know whence He has this power and authority.

We have Jesus' answer to that question here in our text: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself." Jesus means that He does nothing of His own will, independently of the Father and without reference to the Father's will. Your son may do something without your knowledge, without consulting you, something even contrary to your will, but he does it of his own will, for he happens to have a will of his own. Jesus never does anything thus. He does not even decide to do something of His own accord and then seek the consent of His Father, as our children often do; that too would be showing a will of His own. But the Son acts only as the Father acts; "but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise." As the Father's heart beats, so beats the heart of the Son; as the Father's will acts, so acts the will of the Son. The activity of the Son is not the Son working alone, but the Father working in the Son. Thus spoke the Son on another occasion: "The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works."

Let us stop here a moment and learn a twofold lesson in obedience. The one lesson is this that here we see what true obedience is. It is not simply to do something that has been commanded, not simply to comply with the request or obey the command of a superior; but it is to act in perfect harmony with the will of the superior, as though that will were our own will moving us on to action. The other lesson in obedience that we should here learn is that we see how woefully disobedient we mortals are. Sit down once and analyze your own conduct, not your sins, for as a matter of course they are acts of disobedience; but look at those acts which you think well of, and see how far they are from true obedience, how unwillingly you do the things. You

remember when you were yet a child, how, when you were at play and your father or mother asked you to leave your play and run some errand or do something else that was not to your liking, with what a scowl and pout you went about it. You are rendering the same kind of obedience today toward your heavenly Father. Your face may not look so crooked but your heart is all twisted. Why is it so difficult to attend to religious duties, or let me rather say, privileges? Why so hard to get the work of the Church done and the needs of the church properly met? Why are we so slow to make diligent use of our Bibles and to get to our knees in communion with God? The Lord wants these things, there can be no question as to that; His will is acting, why does not our will act in union? Ah, disobedience, that's the thing. That childish pout, that face all awry, that heart all a-twist — there's the trouble. These things show us too how sinful we still are, how far from perfection. Still we find some people saying with a holy whine that they have attained to perfection. The poor sinners do not know that they still have a will of their own and that it is all out of plumb with the will of God. Friend, you dare have no will of your own over against God: your will must be completely fused into God's will; or rather, God's will must completely dissolve your own will and take its place.

But we have here not simply a lesson in obedience, but at the same time an explanation in part of the wonderful authority and power of Jesus. He had no will of His own; the Father's will was His will, and therefore He could say as He said in last Sunday's lesson, "I and my Father are one." But if He is one with the Father, how then should He not have authority? How should He not have all power in heaven and on earth? If Paul could say, I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me, how much more cannot Jesus do all things, who is not only strengthened by the Father, but who has the Father dwelling and working in Him?

We have here also an explanation in part of the Father's love to the Son: "For the Father loveth the Son, and showeth him all things that himself doeth." If you have a son

who is perfectly obedient to your will, do you not love that son? Will you not confide in him, open your mind to him and confer power upon him? So does God the Father toward His Son. When Jesus was baptized, a voice was heard from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased." That voice was repeated on the mount of Transfiguration. Why was the Father so well pleased in His Son? Not only because He was His Son, but because He was such an obedient Son. "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" That is the kind of son that a father must love.

We should also remember that Jesus is here speaking especially with reference to His human nature. It is the man Jesus who does nothing of His own will; it is the man Jesus who is one with the Father; it is the man Jesus whom the Father loves; it is to the man Jesus that the Father gives great works to do, to quicken the spiritually dead, to raise the bodily dead, to execute judgment; all these Jesus Christ is and does not only as the Son of God, but also as the Son of man. These Jews would not believe that Jesus was divine, the Son of God; He therefore declares to them that all these powers, all this might, all this glory and honor, are given Him as man, but that for that very reason He is more than man, even the Son of God. There are many people at the present day who do not believe that Jesus is divine and the Son of God. These same people must deny the claim that Jesus here makes for Himself; they must deny His works likewise just as these Jews did. So we find them doing; Jesus did no miracles, they say; He did not arise from the dead; He was not conceived by the Holy Ghost. They make all these denials to try to satisfy their miserable reason, which dreams that Jesus was only a man.

We, on the contrary, accept the Word of Jesus. We believe that He is the Son of God, that all this authority and all this power belong to Him and that they are His, not only as the Son of God, but also as the Son of man. That makes things sure for us; that gives us rock-bottom to stand on. The Psalmist said that the Lord brought him up out of the miry clay, out of an horrible pit, and set his

feet on the solid rock and established his going. That is the way we feel. We have a mighty Savior; no foe is too great, no power too strong. And because what Jesus did was not of His own doing, but the will and work of His Father, therefore we know that there can be no conflict here. We need not fear that when we approach the Father with the price of Jesus' blood in our hand, we shall be met with the remark, Ah, but I did not tell my Son to do that; I cannot accept your price. No, here all is sure, for the Son and the Father are one. Therefore hath the Lord put a new song in our mouth, even praise unto our God. — In the second place let us consider:

2. *What the great powers of Jesus are:* Some of these works shall be greater than any that He has yet done: "and he shall show him greater works than these that ye may marvel." Jesus had done great works: He had healed the sick, cleansed the lepers, subdued the elements, raised the dead. These were all mighty works and the land was full of His fame and all people marvelled. That was one of His designs in doing these works, that the people should be astonished and amazed; not to gratify vanity on the part of Jesus, not at all, for He had no vanity; but that men might be led to see in Him the Christ and the Son of God. This fact shows what a sin it is to pass the miracles of Jesus by as of little interest, as not worthy of any particular study, and as no arguments by which we should be led to see in Jesus the Savior of the world. Much greater, however, is the sin of those who make light of these miracles and deny them and then proceed to deny the divinity of Christ. Unconsciously almost we are moved to utter the words of the Baptist to the proud Pharisees, "How can ye escape the damnation of hell?"

But in speaking of the great power of Jesus, or the works that His Father gave Him to do, there are especially three that are indicated here. The first is the power to quicken: "For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will." These words doubtless refer to the quickening both of the body and of the soul; but as the resurrection of the body

is spoken of more expressly farther on, we shall speak here only of the spiritual resurrection. The Scriptures clearly teach that by nature all men are spiritually dead. To the Ephesians Paul said after their conversion, "And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." What was true of the Ephesians in their state of nature is true of all men, even as Paul in the same letter includes himself with others when he says, "Even when we were dead in sins," hath He quickened us with Christ. What the Lord God said at the beginning, The day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die, actually came to pass, so that all men died through sin; for "as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."

Jesus now came to give us back our life, to quicken us again. The whole redemptive work was necessary to that end. The Son of God had to become man; He had to come into the world and take the sinner's place under the law; He had to assume all the world's sin; he had to die and make atonement for it upon the cross. That was the bitter cup from which He prayed in the garden to be relieved; but it could not be. No life was possible except through His death: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." When Jesus therefore says here that the Father hath given Him power to quicken, to give life, we are not to think of some external giving, the mere transfer of some power or gift, much as you might give a dollar to some person to be used for some benevolent purpose. No, this power is Jesus' own through virtue of being the everlasting Son of God but who in time became man and wrought out the redemption of the human race. And this quickening of which Jesus speaks is none other than the bestowal of life and salvation upon those who believe, even as He here declares, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life." Jesus is not telling us anything really new here.

It is the same thing that He said upon other occasions, though sometimes in other words and phrases. The whole thing is simply this that the Word of God is preached to us; through that Word God offers us His grace and Holy Spirit; if we now accept that Word, believe it and turn from our evil ways, then we are quickened with the new life; we are no longer counted as dead in trespasses and sin, but as living by the Spirit of God; we have become Jesus' sheep and have passed from death unto life. That is the great power Jesus has to quicken, and that is the process by which it is done.

Nor is there any arbitrary choice exercised here, as though the Son did not want to quicken all, but made a selection of certain ones and passed all the rest by to perish in their sins. Jesus indeed quickeneth only those whom He will, but they are always and only those who accept and believe His Word. The impenitent He does not want to quicken; nor can they be quickened, for they do not accept the salvation offered. You cannot force a gift upon a person, if he does not accept it; neither can you make a wise man of a fool if he will not learn. All men are dead, but they all have the opportunity to hear the voice of Jesus: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God." The spiritually dead are here meant; they hear the voice of Christ; His Word is preached to them. But Jesus now adds, "And they that hear shall live"; that is, they who hearing this Word accept it, repent and believe — they shall live.

The second great work which the Father shows the Son is the power to raise up the bodily dead: "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." Jesus elsewhere says that He is the resurrection and the life. As the Son of God Jesus Christ has life in Himself, "for as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself." Just as He quickens the spiritually dead because He is the Son of God who has re-

deemed men from sin and the power of Satan, so also will He quicken our dead bodies, because He is the Son of God who has triumphed over death and the grave.

What a wonderful work that is! Our bodies and the bodies of all men, returned to dust, dissolved into the elements of earth, air and water, or taken up again it may be into a hundred other organic bodies — these shall be raised up again, glorious to behold and with the bloom and vigor of undying youth, and shall be reunited again each to the spirit with which it sojourned in this life, to mingle in blessed union forevermore. What marvelous things! Were it not well if we should oft reflect on these things, not so much to try to fathom out their meaning, for we cannot do that, but simply to impress ourselves with the greatness of the end for which the Lord made us. That alone should fill us with such great respect for ourselves as to move us to keep from sin and to walk worthy of the Lord who has called us.

We should also consider here why there is a difference in the resurrection, why for some it is the resurrection of life, and for others the resurrection of damnation. The reason given is that some have done good and some have done evil. Does our salvation then depend upon our doing, our works? Yes, but you must be sure to make that doing begin with repentance and faith in Christ Jesus. There is no new doctrine here, no salvation by works. Above Christ said, "He that believeth on him that sent me hath everlasting life." It is the same here, only that He here speaks of the life of the person in its entirety and calls it all a doing. The unbelieving, therefore, are the evil-doers whose resurrection will be unto damnation. They may have done much in life that was nice and noble, at least in the eyes of men; but their life as a whole was wrong because it lacked faith and the love of God, and hence the end is ruin forevermore.

The third great work of which the Son speaks here is the authority to execute judgement: "And hath given him authority to execute judgement also, because he is the Son of man." Above Jesus said that "the Father judgeth no

man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." Judgment, and the final judgment in particular, is a necessary result of the great redemptive work and is a step in the plan of salvation. The Son became man and by His atoning death redeemed all men; this redemption with all its blessed fruits is now through Word and Sacrament offered to all men. Those who accept the offer, repent and believe, get forgiveness of sins, life and salvation. They are saved. Those who do not accept that offer continue in their sins and in the power of death. It stands to reason that God will at some time bring about a complete separation of these two classes, the good and the evil; the wheat and the tares shall not continue together forever. That separation is the judgment, or rather at this separation sentence will be passed upon the impenitent and wicked, and that is the judgment in the strict sense of the word. Of the righteous Jesus says, therefore, that they shall not come into condemnation, that is judgment, but are passed from death unto life. This judgment the Son shall execute, and this He shall do not only as the Son of God, but especially as the Son of man, "because he is the Son of man." Consider well this fact. He who is our brother, flesh and bone of our flesh and bone, the loving Savior, He who dies to save us — He it is who shall also execute judgment upon all the unbelieving and wicked. If His love therefore does not draw us, His fear should drive us to the foot of the cross. Amen.

TWENTY-SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

LUKE 19:11-27

And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear. He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country, to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this *man* to reign over us. And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds. And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities. And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds. And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities. And another came, saying, Lord, behold, *here is* thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin: For I feared thee, because thou art an *austere* man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow. And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, *thou* wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury? And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give *it* to him that hath ten pounds. (And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.) For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him. But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay *them* before me.

OUR lesson last Sunday called our attention to the final judgment. Jesus Himself, our Savior, will be the judge on that great day. His great love and compassion will not prevent Him from executing righteous judgment upon all the impenitent. This fact should set us to thinking. We should seek to make our calling and election sure. If you bargain for a piece of real estate you are careful to secure a perfect title. You will pay no money until that is satisfactory. How much more should we not

seek a perfect title to our inheritance in heaven. For we want to spend eternity there. That means infinitely more than residing three or four decades on the finest street of any earthly city. The Judge Himself wants us to be sure of these things. He does not want us to miss the final great reward. He therefore admonishes us to be faithful. The parable of our lesson this morning contains such an admonition. It says, Keep at work, continue the fight, keep on bearing the cross, continue faithful unto the end. All these ideas we may sum up in the striking words of our Savior:

OCCUPY TILL I COME.

There are three leading thoughts here that I shall seek to impress upon your minds: First, the pounds; secondly, the trading; thirdly, the reward. May the Holy Spirit lead us to say those things that will build us up in the faith and make us strong to do the work of the Lord.

1. *The Pounds:* Jesus was nearing the end of His earthly ministry. He was now on His way to Jerusalem for the last time. He had just passed through Jericho, distant about ten miles from the holy city. Many people were with Him. During His ministry Jesus had said much about the kingdom of God, that it was at hand and had even come. The people were looking for this kingdom. They had taken Jesus at His word. But they were expecting that kingdom to appear suddenly, outwardly, like an earthly monarch taking possession of a city, or possibly through some heavenly demonstration. That, of course, was their mistake. Jesus had never promised a kingdom of earthly glory, nor had He said that there would be any heavenly demonstration soon. That would come, but not till later. But the people were expectant, and now that they were nearing the Holy City for the great feast of the passover, they were thinking that the great event might occur. As the text says, "They thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear."

Jesus sought to correct this error as best He could. He declared to them the Parable of the Pounds. He wanted them to understand that the kingdom was not yet coming in

the manner in which they were expecting it. He himself must first go away into a far country. Such an occurrence was possible in the East. At the death of Herod the Great his son Archelaus went to Rome to receive the kingdom of his father at the hand of the Roman emperor. Not only that, but some of the citizens sent a deputation after him to Cæsar, praying him that he might not confirm Archelaus as king. He was not acceptable to some of the people. "We will not have this man to reign over us." So it was necessary for Jesus to leave His people here upon earth and go back to His Father in heaven and receive from Him the kingdom. Then after all things have been fulfilled, after all the work here upon earth has been accomplished, after the Gospel has been preached to all nations and all the sheep have been gathered into the fold — then will He come again to claim for himself the kingdom in all its power and glory.

But Jesus did not only want the people to know that the kingdom of glory would not come yet, but He also wanted them to see that there was something for them to do in the meantime. Indeed that is the most important point in the lesson. They are not to spend their years in idleness, gazing up at the clouds waiting for the kingdom to come, but they are to be at work. The kingdom of God means work: My Father worketh hitherto; and I work, said Jesus upon another occasion; and He expects His disciples to work likewise, for they are to be like Him. But Jesus is very considerate and generous. He did not leave us to ourselves to find ways and means for our employment, but He provided the means: "He called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come."

What are these pounds? We should be clear on this point. The pound is what we are to work with. If you are given certain tools or instruments to work with, you need to know what they are and how they are to be used. This pound, furthermore, means just the same thing for us as it did for the people in Jesus' day. Men are the same, Jesus is the same, the means of grace are the same, the gifts of the Spirit are the same, the work to be done is the same, the enemies to fight are the same. The manner of our work in

the kingdom of God today is therefore the same as it was when Jesus said, Occupy till I come. Conditions have changed somewhat and methods change, but in its real character the work does not change.

This pound cannot mean one's natural talents, whether original or acquired. For those citizens who did not want that man to reign over them also had natural talents; but they did not receive the pound, that was given only to the man's servants; that is, speaking of spiritual things, the pound is given only to the professed followers of Jesus, not to His enemies. By this, however, we do not mean to exclude the use of our natural gifts in the kingdom of God. On the contrary if you have learning, wisdom, skill, strength, health, money, power, influence, you are to use them. God has given them for a purpose and He will want to know on the last day whether you have employed them to the very best advantage, for they have been given not for ministry in things earthly only, but also for things heavenly.

Some make the question about the pound easy by saying that it is the Word of God, the means of grace; that is the instrument with which the work of God must be done. It is certainly true that in doing the work of the kingdom we must make use of the Word of God. You cannot build yourself up in knowledge and faith except as you make use of the Word of God. You cannot rightly comfort and cheer another except with that Word. You cannot bring a man to a knowledge of the truth and to conviction except by means of the Word. What could the Church do if it did not have the Word? What could the missionary do? The apostles were sent out with the Gospel to bring the world to the foot of the cross. But it is not satisfactory to stop with the simple statement that the Word of God is the pound. This appears already from the fact that the one man gained ten pounds. But the Word of God cannot be multiplied, neither can it be lessened. Our knowledge of it and our love for it can be multiplied, but not the Word itself.

By this pound we are to understand the gifts of grace, the gifts of the Spirit. Jesus had been bestowing these gifts upon His followers, leading them into knowledge, faith,

love. At Pentecost these gifts were bestowed upon the first believers more abundantly. Up to that time they were not to go forth to preach, for they were not yet prepared. But what they received on the day of Pentecost was not an additional Word of God but additional power of the Spirit. These gifts of grace were bestowed upon the new converts as they were brought to Christ. Paul told Timothy not to neglect the gift that was in him, "which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery." Paul again speaks of the various gifts of the Spirit, such as the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, faith, gifts of healing, tongues, interpretation of tongues. Some of these were special gifts of the Spirit, knowledge, faith, love, patience, hope and the like. Without these gifts of the Spirit we can do nothing, and that is another reason why the Word of God alone cannot be the pound. You may have the Bible in your hand, or even in part in your head, but if you do not have these gifts of the Spirit you will do nothing with that Bible for the kingdom of God. Nor should the fact make us any trouble that each servant received one pound, though the gifts of the Spirit in individuals vary, one having more, another less; one, more of this kind, another, more of that kind. The pound represents the sum total of his gifts just as the penny in the Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard represents the sum total of salvation; and just as here too the number ten represents completeness, the total of the servants. The pound then is the various gifts of the Spirit by which we are enabled to labor in the kingdom of God, as Jesus elsewhere tells us that without Him we can do nothing. — In the second place:

2. *The trading*: Occupy till I come. That's the command of Jesus. We do well to dwell for a moment upon the fact that Jesus demands work. We are in danger of seeking to make the way to glory too easy. There is no warrant at all for doing so, but rather the contrary: Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, is the startling admonition of one who put on the full armor of God, but who nevertheless had to fight till the last minute that the crown of righteousness might not be taken from him. God's abounding

grace at times only seems to strengthen us in the idea that there is not much to do to gain salvation. God assures us that salvation is a free gift, that we can merit nothing with our works, and so we proceed to take it easy. The fact that salvation is free should have the opposite effect. If God has done so much for me, surely I should be ready to do much for Him. Can we not get down to that sort of reasoning? It is correct and it would do us good. It would make life in this world much pleasanter. When there is work for us to do — not work for ourselves, but work for somebody else, work for the Lord, for the Church, work too that may make us some trouble and put us to some inconvenience, work that may not be to our taste — when we have such work to do, let us first sit down for a moment and consider what God has done for us, what Jesus has done for us, and not think only of our own ease and interest. And let us see whether we shall not experience a greater readiness to do the work. Oh, if we were only more willing to do these things, they would be so easy. We should be surprised to find how easy Jesus' yoke is.

When work is given us to do we should look upon it not as a task, but as a pleasure, an opportunity, as a privilege to do something for our Savior. When some titled person from Europe comes to New York, what a desire on the part of the people to entertain him, and what a lavish expenditure of money to do him honor! We would be just like the rest if we were there and had the means and the social standing. But when the Lord Jesus comes in some humble person and calls upon us for some service, or when He comes in some work to be done or in some offering to be made, are we always quite ready for it? Is there strife among us as to who shall do this work? Is there not usually hesitation? Is there not often considerable argument and persuasion necessary before the thing is done at all? What does all this show? It shows that we are not using our pound as we should. We may be very busy — indeed that is often the reason why we do so little for Jesus, we are so busy doing things for ourselves. But Jesus said, Use the pound I gave you and use it for Me.

That's the very first thought then in this matter of trading, Jesus wants us to be busy. Occupy till I come.

But to be more definite, what about this occupation? What am I to do? For one thing there is work to do with reference to yourself. Jesus wants you to employ these gifts of the Spirit for your own personal good. You have some knowledge of God's Word, of the way of life. Are you satisfied with it? Do you not find it to be a good thing and do you not want more of it? Men get money, find that it is a good thing to have and then want more. Is it really so that you can tell the value of gold and silver but do you not know the value of God's Word? You have some faith as a gift of grace; you have assurance of God's forgiveness, of peace, you know that Jesus is your Savior, that you are a child of God, that the devil cannot harm you; are these not good things to have? and are you satisfied with what you have? Would it not add to your happiness and to your power for good if you had more of that faith? Or you have some love; do you not feel that love is a good thing to have? Do you not feel much better when you have a kindly feeling toward all men than when you hate some one and know too that you are hated in turn? Is it not worth while to try to increase that love? to get a glow in the heart and melt away the barriers of ice? to reflect on the love of God to you and then practice love towards others? That is making use of the pound, and if you can gain two pounds here where before you had only one, it will be the better for you. Or you have patience, some patience under the yoke. Is patience not plainly a good thing to have when you are vexed by daily cares, or troubled by your neighbor and is it not worth while to try to get more patience? Will you not be happier? will the stream of life not run more smoothly? There are still many other ways to employ the gifts of grace you already have, but let this suffice to show how you are to use the pound for your own personal good.

But that is not all, Jesus expects more of you. He said of His followers that they are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. You are to season your surroundings, give things in life a better taste, put more sweetness into life

for others. He wants you to be a light in your home, among your companions, in your community. He wants to see others find the way a little more readily because of your presence among them. You have knowledge of God's Word; there are others who have no such knowledge. Can you not teach them? and might they not be willing to hear the word at your lips? Or you have learned patience; here now is a friend, a brother or a sister, or even a stranger who has much to suffer. The hand of the Lord is heavy upon him as it was upon Naomi. You can go to him and show him how tribulation worketh patience and patience hope and hope maketh not ashamed. Or here is one who seems friendless; you know what friendship means, how we all need some one to love us. Can you not go to him and show yourself a friend? Here too is your church; here there are many things to do, many more things to do than people to do them; not only going to church, supporting the church, looking after the poor, visiting the sick, teaching in the Sunday-school, singing in the choir, helping the young people, serving on the flower committee, but many other things. David said that he would rather be a door-keeper in the house of the Lord than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. All these things are different ways of using the pound the Lord has given you.

There is another use for this pound that we must not overlook. It is the work of missions. Jesus certainly wants us to use our gifts of grace in that direction. He died to save all men, but they can be finally saved only as the Gospel is brought them. Oh, how slow we are at this work; how many are famishing because of our neglect. Making disciples of the pagan world is slow work; there are many discouragements. But that is no reason why we should not bring them the Word of life. The great Judge will at the last day require this also at our hand.

Here now is the place to say a word in particular about the slothful servant. He tied up his pound in a napkin, literally, in his sweat-cloth. Quite significant it is, for as he did not do any work, he did not need his sweat-cloth. His excuse was: "I feared thee, because thou art an austere

man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow." He thinks the Lord a hard man, asks too much, demands the impossible. The man therefore wraps up the pound, lays it away and does not use it at all. The application is not difficult. We excuse ourselves for not doing these things on the ground that they are too hard to do; "it can't be done," "no use trying." Here are young men and young women; they have unclean thoughts, imaginations, desires, dreams; these come in the day and they come at night. They say, They are natural, we cannot help it, we cannot drive them away. Or they say, They are mighty temptations of the devil, we cannot resist them; God is asking too much that we should be pure in our thoughts, words and deeds. Or here is a man tempted with covetousness; I am made that way, he says, I cannot help myself. But these are all vain excuses. Luther said that you cannot prevent the birds flying over your heads, but you can keep them from making nests in your hair. Impure thoughts will come, but you can keep them from lodging in your heart and making a slave of you. But do not look to yourself for strength, but to Jesus and keep on using the pound. Look at Mary Magdalene and see what was done for her. Behold Saul of Tarsus. What the Lord did for them He can do for you, only keep using the pound.

And relative to church-work the slothful servant says: It is too much to bring the Gospel to the heathen; too much to gather our own scattered brethren in the West, North, South and East and in every large city; too much to engage in Inner mission work; too much to share my hard earnings with the poor and helpless; too much to inconvenience myself a little for the purpose of welcoming the stranger at church or to make it pleasant for others at social gatherings. The Lord is asking too much. No, my friend, He is not asking too much nor anything too hard. All this belongs to the Christian life and the Lord requires it at your hands: Occupy till I come. — In conclusion:

3. *The reward*: Only a word is necessary here. The reward is of three kinds: for the faithful, for the slothful, for the wicked. Of the first servant the Lord said, "Well,

thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities." The number ten signifies completeness. This servant did all that could be reasonably expected. He accordingly represents the highest class of the faithful. To the second which had gained five pounds the Lord said, "Be thou also over five cities." Possibly he was not so faithful as the first, yet no reproach is uttered. Possibly natural gifts and opportunities had something to do with the reduced gain. But the chief thing is faithfulness. It is required of a steward that he be found faithful, the glory in heaven is in proportion to faithfulness, though we need always to remember that salvation is a free gift and is not merited, no matter how much we do.

The slothful servant excused his sloth by the supposed severity of his lord. But the excuse would not stand: "Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant." He well knew that his lord would demand a strict account, for that very reason he should have put forth great efforts to satisfy his master. Note well these two things: He is called wicked, not because he committed great crimes, but because he did nothing. You do not need to commit great sins in order to expose yourself to God's wrath. He has given you gifts of grace; if you do not use them, that alone will work your ruin. The other thing you should note is this that the pound was taken from him. If you do not use God's gifts of grace, they will be taken from you and you yourself will be lost. If you do not use your eyes your sense of sight will disappear. There are people all about you who once possessed gifts of grace, but have lost them as this man did.

The third class, the enemies who would not have the man reign over them — these he simply had slain. They are lost just like the slothful servant, but with a more terrible and speedy destruction. Take the warning to heart and occupy till He comes. Amen.

TWENTY-SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

LUKE 12: 35-40

Let your loins be girded about, and *your* lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that, when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed *are* those servants, whom the lord, when he cometh, shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find *them* so, blessed are those servants. And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not. Then Peter said unto him, Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all? And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom *his* lord shall make ruler over his household, to give *them their* portion of meat in due season? Blessed *is* that servant, whom his lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing.

JESUS' admonition in last Sunday's lesson was, Occupy until I come; make use of the gifts bestowed, keep on in the service, continue the fight, remain patient under trials till I come. His admonition today is,

BE YE READY;

watch ye and be ye prepared for My return. The admonition of last Sunday urged us on to continuous faithfulness; today it aims to bring us face to face with the second coming of our Lord, that we may be fully prepared to appear before Him and give an account of our stewardship.

The parable itself in our lesson this morning is very simple. Excepting one or two points, any one reading it will readily get the sense. We shall proceed therefore at once to a fuller explanation and application of the lesson contained. We shall do so with reference to two points: First, the things over which we are to watch; secondly, the watching itself. In the first place:

1. *The things over which we are to watch:* What are these things? That they are spiritual things is evident. In

the verses preceding Jesus told His followers that they should not lay up for themselves treasures where thieves break through and steal and where moth and rust corrupt, but to provide themselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in heaven that faileth not. He told them to take no thought about meat and drink for the morrow, but to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. He had also put the question, What would it profit a man if he gained the whole world but lost his own soul. If He here now admonishes His followers to be watchful, to be ready for His second coming, He can mean nothing else than that they should keep close watch over these spiritual possessions until the end.

If you want to know more in particular what these spiritual things are, then we say that they are the pound which according to last Sunday's lesson have been entrusted to your keeping, plus what you have added to them in trading. If you have laid that pound away in a napkin without having used it and therefore have added nothing to it, then that is all the spiritual treasure you have. No, that is not correct. You do not have even that one pound, for we saw last Sunday that when the Lord returned he took from the slothful servant his pound, just because he did not use it and had gained nothing with it. The man had nothing left but his empty sweat-cloth. In the case of spiritual treasures, you really have only what you use. You can place a lot of gold in the bank and take a certificate and you can claim that gold as your own; and it is your own even if you are making no use of it, even not getting a penny in interest. No one may take that sum of gold from you. But you cannot do that with these spiritual treasures of knowledge, faith, love, hope and the like; they are yours only as you use them; what you do not use, you do not have. You cannot speak of a faith deposited in a safety-box, nor of knowledge hid away in a book, nor of living churchmembership written out on a certificate, tied with a blue ribbon or neatly framed and hung upon the wall. Those are not the things that Jesus will look for when He comes the second time. He will look for living things, not dead ones. He will look for living

active powers of grace — powers engaged in building yourself up in the saving faith and in helping to build up others in the same saving faith.

You do well therefore to ask yourselves, What have I added to my pound during the church year which is now closing? During this year about all the precious doctrines of God's Word and about all kinds of service to God and work in the Church have been spoken of and commended to you. You have been urged to take them up and weave them into your life both to enrich yourself and others. If you have been faithful during the year in the use of the means of grace; if you have availed yourself of the opportunities which you had and your church has afforded you for building yourself up in your most holy faith, then you have added not a little to the pound with which you began the year. If you have added nothing, then ask whose fault it is. Your church, your minister and others may not have been faultlessly faithful toward you. Such was probably the case too with the slothful servant of last Sunday's lesson. But not a word does the Lord say about such things, and not a trace of excuse along that line does the servant himself venture in self-defense. It is just so in your case. Others may be partly at fault, but the Lord is going to hold *you* responsible if there has been no addition to the pound.

But it is well for you to take a still broader inventory of your stock in trade. What have you accumulated during your life-time? Some of you have been at this business for many years; some of you are nearing the night when no man can work; the twilight is upon you, your eyesight is failing, your ears are dull, your memory uncertain, your understanding weak; the Lord will soon be at your door. What have you gained? You should have ten pounds. How many have you? Some of you are not so old, but you also have been in the Lord's service a goodly number of years. How many pounds have you? You should have five or more, how many have you? And if you have been in the Lord's service but a year or two, take an inventory today, for you know not what hour your Lord cometh. Take an inventory and see what you have that is really worth watch-

ing. Merchants in taking an inventory of their stock often find material that is no longer salable; it is worthless as stock and they dare not count it in; if they did, they would not get a true and honest representation of their stock. Be likewise careful in taking your inventory of spiritual things. There is much that looks good, but it is nothing but filthy rags. Take only that which will stand the test of the great Judge; nothing else is worth keeping and watching. Wood, hay, stubble, will all burn up; only precious stones and precious metals will endure the fiery trial.

There is another thing here that we should notice. In this parable Jesus is not speaking of pounds and talents that have been entrusted to you. He speaks of them in other parables but not here. Yet he speaks here also of watching, and especially, of being ready for His return. What is it then over which you are to watch, what are you to keep in readiness? It is yourself. He is here commending the servant who keeps himself in readiness, whose life and conduct are such as he needs not be ashamed of in the presence of his master. We have already shown that these gifts of grace and salvation are your own only as you make use of them. Here then it is not a question simply of what you have, but of what you are and of what you are doing. But this brings us to the second part of our lesson, the part too that is especially emphasized, namely:

2. *The watching itself*: What is this watching, how shall we keep ourselves in readiness? Certainly not by sitting down as though everything has been done, everything needful acquired and that there is nothing more to do than quietly wait until the Lord comes. We can say that of people who have grown old in the service, whose physical and mental strength are about gone. In visiting such people I tell them that there is little for them to do but to wait until the good Lord comes to take them home. Paul seemed to feel that way when he said, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appear-

ing." He felt that his work was done and he was just waiting. But note well what he had done during all his years of activity, how he had fought, how he had run, how he had held fast to the faith. And just that is what the Lord is expecting of us so long as we have strength and time.

Jesus here tells us that earthly treasures are exposed to two kinds of dangers; thieves may break through and steal and moth and rust may corrupt. We find that heavenly treasures are exposed to two similar dangers. The devil and the world may steal these things away just as he picks up the good seed that is sown in the heart; or what amounts to the same thing, they may steal your heart away from these spiritual things so that you lose interest in them. The other danger is that through inactivity and through non-usage of your spiritual powers these heavenly treasures become moth-eaten and corrode. When you look for them they are no longer there, you no longer have them. Here is a person who at one time had a fair knowledge of the plan of salvation, of the Christian catechism. Now that knowledge has all but disappeared; he cannot get hold of things any more, he cannot defend himself against the enemy of his faith, he is not even sure whether Jacob lived before or after Christ, whether Pilate was a Jew or a Gentile; much less is he able to talk intelligently about the great doctrines of salvation, the atonement through Christ, justification by faith, the new birth and the like. At one time this man had considerable interest in Christ, in his soul's welfare, in the work of the Church; now his interest in these things is gone. The thief has done his work, moth and rust have used their teeth. One thing is quite certain that there is always much more danger of our rusting out than of wearing out. As long as the farmer uses his scythe it keeps bright and the edge is keen, but if he hangs it away under some tree, the blade is soon covered with rust and the edge disappears. It is better for a house to be occupied than to stand vacant. Paul tells us that we are temples of the living God. It is better for that temple that the Holy Spirit should dwell here and make use of it, than that it should stand vacant, though swept and garnished. For, as a matter of fact, it will not be vacant

long. The devil who was driven out, will soon return with seven other demons worse even than himself. Do you know what a certain artist did to picture a dead congregation? He simply drew a cobweb over the collection plate for Foreign Missions. He believed that if a congregation, especially in this age of both Home and Foreign missions, did nothing to bring the Gospel to the heathen, it ought to be considered as having about reached the dead line. That may be putting it a little strong, for there are other ways of working than in the mission field. But suppose the spider has woven his web over all the collection plates, over the church door and window, over your closet door and over the Bible itself, what shall we say then of your state of preparedness?

There is another thing that needs to be said here. One will say, I am very busy; from morning till night every minute of my time is occupied. I must be busy, in order to support myself and those dependent upon me. Very well, we say in reply; next to the fear and love of God there is nothing so good for a man as work. You are doing the thing to which the Lord has called you. He wants you to work in order to earn your own bread, and He has given you a wife and children and possibly also an aged parent to support. But remember that all this work pertains only to earthly things, and that in this nothing is being done for your soul and for the souls of those dependent upon you. If you give seven days a week and twenty-four hours each day to work and sleep and earthly things, what is going to become of your soul and the souls of your wife and children? God has not given you all the time of the week to cultivate the soil, to drive nails, to sell groceries, to practice medicine or to occupy the class room. Nor is this necessary. God has so arranged matters that you can do the one and not neglect the other. Watchfulness demands of you that you keep the proper proportion; and in getting at that proportion you will need to keep before you that remarkable admonition of Jesus, Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you. It may not be very clear to you, but depend upon it that under that rule neither

you nor your wife and children will need to suffer for want of things to eat and drink.

And if you now ask, Just what must I do to hold myself in readiness? then we make reply in the words of the Lord in last Sunday's lesson, Occupy till I come. Make constant use of the gifts of grace which you have received of the Lord. God has given you faith. You believe that Jesus Christ is your Savior, that it is alone through His shed blood that you can get remission of sins and become just before God. Are you aware that there are thieves prowling about who are trying to steal that precious truth out of your heart? Here are people who say that Christ is not divine, that He was only a man; or they say that His death was nothing and that no atonement was made for your sins; they say that you must save yourself by putting away what is evil and bringing out what is best in you; that this is all that is needed. There are many others who are trying to steal away the truth. Some of them are sneak thieves, trying to create doubt in your mind. The only thing for you to do is to keep occupied, to make constant use of your gifts of grace. That will keep you in the right way. That will keep the blade and the edge keen.

It is well in this connection to glance at what Jesus said further on. He is telling about the servant that failed to watch. Mark carefully what that servant did; he said, My lord delayeth his coming, and then he began "to beat the men-servants and the maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken." Do you see how things go? This man ceased attending to the duties that had been assigned him, that is, he no longer made use of the gifts of grace that had been bestowed upon him and at once you find him over the fence on forbidden ground engaged in evil things, practicing cruelty, indulging the flesh, giving the rein to his lusts and degrading appetites. Here is a solemn warning. If you will not continue actively in the way of righteousness, in the service of your Lord and Savior, then the devil will soon have you over on the broad way of the world, either cursing with the cruel or shouting with the sensual and licentious.

There is a special admonition here for ministers. Peter wanted to know whether this parable was meant for the twelve in particular: "Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all?" Possibly he was thinking especially of the honor that he thought was coming to them for having left all to follow Jesus. In His reply Jesus did not seem to answer Peter's question directly, yet it was a direct answer, for He said, "Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season?" Peter and his fellow-apostles are compared with stewards. They have received not only personal gifts of grace for their own salvation, but they have been instructed with gifts and with the means of grace for others, and they are to see that the household of faith is regularly supplied with spiritual meat. We all have a twofold duty in relation to these spiritual things: to look after our own spiritual welfare and to do something for the spiritual good of others. This second duty rests heavily especially upon ministers. If they are not faithful in this, they are altogether unfaithful to their Lord.

In conclusion, let us not forget that Jesus is speaking here of spiritual things and He means that we should be engaged in spiritual things. Do we keep that fact sufficiently before us? Paul said to the Corinthians that they were carnal and not spiritual. But we know that these same Corinthians were honored with many special gifts of the Spirit and that they made use of them, yet Paul says that they were carnal and not spiritual. Are we careful to emphasize the spiritual element as we should? I speak to all, but especially to ministers and prospective ministers. Our work will go for little or nothing, if it is not spiritual, the fruit and work of the Spirit and not the product of the carnal mind. Do we apply that test to our life and work as we should? When we confirm children and older persons, we apply various tests; intellectual, confessional, moral. Do we apply the spiritual test as we should? We ordain young men to the ministry or colloquize such as have already been ordained, and we apply various tests, intellectual and confessional especially. Do we apply the spiritual test as we

should? The young men of this institution are being carefully trained for the work of the ministry. Is this training as spiritual as it should be? When Jesus restored Peter to the apostleship He did not ask what his knowledge of the Master was, he did not ask about his faith, but only, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me? Are we as Christians also applying this test to our lives as we should? We cannot help but feel that the servants who are commended in the lesson loved their master, that their heart and soul was in the work they were doing for him. It must be so with us. We cannot otherwise expect our Lord's commendation at His return. Some may say that it is difficult to apply this spiritual test. It is difficult for one to apply it to another, for we cannot see into another man's heart. But it should not be difficult for each one to apply it to himself, and that is the chief thing. The Lord himself will apply it to others; let us apply it to ourselves and so keep ourselves in readiness for His great coming. Amen.

HARVEST HOME

JOHN 6: 26-29

Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled. Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed. Then said they unto him, What shall we do that we may work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.

THERE is a difference between a Harvest-home service and our national Thanksgiving service. The latter is national in its character, the former more local; in the one we give thanks for blessings in general, in the other more especially for the fruits of the earth. It is perfectly proper therefore to observe both festivals. There are special reasons why we at this time should give thanks to the Lord for the fruits of field and orchard. The high cost of living, brought on in part, it seems, by a shortage in certain products of the earth, and the back-to-the-farm cry that we hear so much, impress upon us very strongly the fact that we all live off the fruits of the earth. Why should we not therefore in a special service dwell on this fact and give thanks for the summer's harvest?

Our theme is

HARVEST HOME.

But whether it be Harvest-home or Thanksgiving the Church cannot confine herself to the material side of things; she must go on to higher matters. Our text gives us a fine opportunity to speak of both the material and the spiritual sides of life. There are two things upon which we shall dwell more particularly, first:

1. *We should thank the Lord for the fruits of the earth:* On the day preceding that upon which the words of our text were spoken Jesus had fed the multitude with a few

loaves of bread and a few small fishes. He had done that deed cheerfully, for the people were in need. We may assume that the people were thankful, for they could not help but see the meal was purely a gift of Jesus' goodness. They even looked further than at the mere gratification of their present hunger; they took this miracle as a sign that Jesus was the Messiah, and they sought to take Him by force and make Him their king.

We may assume too that Jesus was not disappointed when the people came to Him the next day for more bread; especially if they had again been in need would He have cheerfully supplied their wants. He fed the multitude not only here, but also upon another occasion. At the marriage at Cana He even turned water into wine for the comfort and pleasure of the guests. Jesus indeed has said that we are to take no thought for the morrow, what we shall eat. He has also said that man lives not by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. But all these statements imply that bread is needed; that is the divine arrangement. We must have bread to eat and water to drink. Hence we pray, Give us this day our daily bread. Therefore too the Lord crowns the year with fatness. We behold the fields rich with golden grain; we see how the meadows and the hillsides are covered with flocks and herds; we pluck the rosy apple from the tree and the luscious grape from the vine, all because God has so ordered things and because He gives His constant blessing.

It is plain then that we should be thankful. There are two special reasons why we should be thankful. One is our demerit. We are so willful and so disobedient that the Lord would be fully justified in cutting us off without a bite to eat or a drop of water to cool our parched tongue, just as he did the rich man in the place of torment. When we are asked to help some family, one of the first things we want to know is, Are they worthy? If we are told that they are hardly worthy of being helped we are very slow to do anything for them. Do you apply that to yourself in your relation to God? Do you consider how prodigal you have perhaps been with the things God gave you? or how you have withheld

them from their proper use and with them ministered to the things of the flesh? Do you also consider how little in real service you have done for the Lord, in return for all His goodness to you? Yet the Lord has not withheld His blessing from your work and you have had enough and to spare.

The other reason why we should be thankful is because these things are given us in return for our work. There may be a veiled rebuke here because these people perhaps thought, Here is a man who will give us all the bread we need without the labor of our own hands. He is the man we want. We shall make him our king. Jesus has only rebuke for all such notions. He often gives us much that we do not work for, especially if we are disabled. But ordinarily He does not bring these things to us in baskets, we need to go after them; and what is more, we should thank Him for that arrangement. One of the most helpful things in the making of a man's character and in keeping him from evil ways is an abundance of work; while idleness on the other hand is one of the greatest curses. If you have had to work this year, and even work hard, then thank the Lord for it; for there is a blessing in it. We have all seen men in life climb up in material and spiritual things through hard work. Indeed this is the only way to gain real ascendancy. These too are the people whom we delight to honor. But we have also seen those whose nests were well feathered by other hands, become homeless and heartless through prodigality and idleness. In thanking the Lord, then, for what He has done for us during this year, let us not forget the labor which He required at our hands. Yet we say that it was all the Lord's doing, not our own work nor merit, but the unspeakable goodness of the Lord.

There was one thing, however, in the case of the people of our lesson with which Jesus was not pleased, namely, that they did not see the real design of the miracles of the previous day. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled." What they rejoiced at especially was that they were filled. Jesus had wrought that miracle

not simply to feed their bodies, but especially to lead them to seek in Him higher and nobler food. Now He was disappointed that the miracle had failed of its purpose. The people were very much of the earth. They were little better than the Roman pagans who cried to their emperors "Give us bread and amusements." Even their notion of the Messiah whom they expected was but little higher. They wanted to make Jesus king because He had filled their bodies with bread, not because the miracle showed Him to be the Son of God who could give them the bread of life.

There is much of this spirit today. The church is being sharply criticised because she spends most of her time and strength in telling people how to get to heaven, and does not make a specialty of feeding and clothing the body. People say that they prefer to have some of the good things in this life instead of leaving them all for the world to come. Such criticisms find willing ears and the arguments presented are received with applause. But it would seem that where six days of the week in which the state, the school and about every other institution among men are given to the care of the body and of this life, people ought to accord to the Church the privilege of looking more especially after the needs of the soul. But no, the cry here too is, Give us bread, give us amusements. You hear more or less of Socialism. The leading idea of Socialism is to have all things in common, and so to do away with the great inequalities among men. These people think that their system would solve about all the problems of present-day social conditions. Of course it would not, and chiefly, because the more fully Socialism would realize its object, the farther people would get away from Christ and the kingdom of God. Their chief cry is, Give us bread and give us amusements. Because of that spirit Jesus was disappointed in these people and because of that same spirit He is disappointed in Socialists. Suppose that every family in the land had an ample supply of food and clothing with a good measure of amusements thrown in, would that condition render them all happy? You have the comforts of life and at least some of its luxuries; are you happy because of that fact alone? Can you go from house

to house among the well-to-do of the land and say: This is a happy family, and this is a happy family — and this — and this? You know very well that you cannot. Only God knows of the sorrows and the anguish lurking in the palaces of the rich. And why is it? Because there are other things necessary for true happiness besides bread and amusements, things, too, which gold and silver cannot buy. They are the things which Christ, the divine Savior, alone can give, which the Church offers, and which it is the Church's duty to offer, no matter how much she may be faulted by men of a carnal mind. Christ was sadly disappointed in these people because they did not seek these higher things; may He not be disappointed in us. May the good things of field and orchard of the year lead us to look to Jesus for higher things. — This brings us to the second part of our discourse, namely:

2. *We should seek the meat that endureth forever:* "Labor not for the meat that perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life." The meat of the earth fits only for the things of the earth. By them you will not get any further, you will never get away from the dining-room; indeed if you keep only at these things you will finally get so far that you have no desire at all for spiritual and higher things. You will get to be like the mole that finally loses its sight because of its constant burrowing about in the earth. Men forget that they were made for higher things, that they were created in the image of God, and that they should grow more like Him from day to day. They see only the clay from mother earth, which is dust and must return to dust. They forget to look up and live.

If you now ask what this higher meat is, you have Jesus' answer, The meat which the Son of man shall give unto you. Notice that it is meat which the Son of man gives; that is important. It is a better kind of meat, for "him hath God the Father sealed." The almighty and everlasting God has set His seal upon Jesus that He might give us these higher things of the soul, without which there can be no real happiness, not even in this world, much less in the world to come. Have you ever fully considered the fact that everything that Jesus does is higher and better than anything that the greatest

of men have done? We have great physicians and surgeons, but Jesus with a word raised the dead to life and set the paralytic on his feet in perfect soundness. We have great farmers and chemists, but Jesus with a touch multiplied a few loaves to feed thousands and by the mere energy of His will imparted to limpid water the qualities of the best of wine. There are great writers among men, but in the whole world of literature there is nothing equal to one of the simple parables of Jesus. There are great teachers, but we have the testimony that never man spoke as this man. Solomon was renowned in his day and reputed to be the wisest of men, but a greater than Solomon is here. All along everything that Jesus did, even in mere natural things, is in a class by itself, higher and better than that of the best of men, absolutely perfect and matchless. And what should this fact lead us to see? It should lead us to believe that Jesus can give us the higher things of the soul. He that is absolute master in the things of this world must be from another, a higher world. Men will never be perfect masters of this world because they are of it. But because Christ is from above with the Father's seal upon Him, therefore can He give us the meat that endures unto everlasting life.

But what is this meat? It is divine grace. We shall not stop here to explain in detail what is meant, for that is the constant burden of our preaching. But this divine grace, this meat from heaven, takes away sin and all its consequences; it restores man again to the image of his Maker and fits him again for full and blessed communion with God and the holy angels. Earthly bread fits only for earthly enjoyment; Jesus' bread fits for heavenly enjoyment. If we were destined to live forever on this earth, then bread and amusements might suffice, but thousands upon thousands of witnesses in marble over in Green Lawn Cemetery cry out that we were not made for this world alone, and that our pilgrimage in this life is short.

But how shall we get this bread? Jesus says, Labor for it. The people of the text showed great zeal in going after Jesus for earthly bread. Jesus said, Show the same zeal now in seeking better bread. Oh, people, show the same zeal

now in seeking the better bread. Oh, people! if only we could do that, how rich we should become; not rich perhaps in money and lands, though there is abundant promise of all of those things that we need — but rich in the things of the soul. We have no right to expect earthly blessings if we do not labor for them; he that will not work, neither shall he eat; and it is the vineyard of the slothful that is overrun with thorns and weeds. But neither can we expect the better bread of the soul unless we labor for it and look for it. And one way to look for it is to see it reflected already in the fruits of the earth. Jesus reproved these people because they did not see more in the miracle of the preceding day than loaves and fishes. He is displeased with us today, if we do not see more in the harvest of the present year than so much grain or cold cash. Jesus spoke of His miracles not simply as wonders, but as signs — signs of better and higher things, proofs that He is the Messiah and the Savior of men. No miracles were performed for us in our daily tasks during the present year, yet the fruits of our labor are the blessings of the Lord, and they should remind us daily of the fact that God has better things to give. If we fail so see these things, then we are not celebrating this Harvest-home festival as we should.

But there is more here; we must go farther than simply to see these things. The people asked Jesus, "What shall we do that we might work the works of God?" That was a good question, and Jesus gave a good answer. The question was in accordance with the Jewish idea that one must do some work to gain the kingdom of heaven. Thus the rich young ruler asked, What good think must I do? Jesus lets the question stand. Indeed He had suggested it, for He said, Labor for the meat that does not perish. But He points them to a different kind of work from anything that they thought of. It is the work of faith: "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." There is where they must begin — with believing. There is no other right beginning and without the right beginning no real progress can be made. The practice of moral virtues, doing works of benevolence and such like are all good in their

place; they must appear in our lives, but they are not the things to begin with. They are the fruits and not the tree itself. Jesus starts us right. You cannot build a house by beginning with the roof. You cannot pluck grapes until you have planted the vine and nourished it.

Notice too just what kind of faith He calls for and just what the object of this faith is; namely, to believe in Him whom God hath sent, to believe in Jesus himself as the Savior of men. Here then we are again brought to the great truth and fact that Jesus Christ is the Savior from sin and death. It is the old truth from which we cannot get away in our preaching of the Gospel and from which we do not want to get away, for there is life and salvation in none other. The world has made great progress in farming, but there are a few old things from which it has not got away and one of these is that if we want wheat we must grow it in the soil. So too if you want salvation you must find it in Christ Jesus; the wheat of salvation grows nowhere else. Let us not forget this great fact on this festival day; and let us bring Christ and our harvests together; it will insure the one and we shall not lose the other. Amen.

THE REFORMATION FESTIVAL

JOHN 2: 13-17

And the Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem, and found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting: And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables; And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise. And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.

WE today celebrate an event which had its beginning on the thirty-first of October three hundred and ninety-four years ago. It is called the Reformation of the Sixteenth Century. It was a religious movement. The actual beginnings reached back of the above date, but history has fixed the day upon which Martin Luther nailed his Ninety-five Theses upon the door of the Castle Church at Wittenberg as the point of time when the reformatory movement began to assume visible and definite form. The sale of indulgences by John Tetzel may be given as the immediate occasion. Luther had come to know from the Word of God and from his own experience that the only way to get forgiveness of sin was through true repentance and faith in Christ Jesus; and that forgiveness was purely a gift of grace and in no sense the reward of any penance or work that a man might do. Rome teaches that there is a great store of merit, procured partly by Christ's own superabundant merit — for He is assumed to have merited more by His suffering and death than was necessary to save men — partly by the superfluous merit of saints who merited more than they needed for their own salvation, and that this merit may now be given to others who have not enough of their own and who fulfill the conditions of its reception. One way of having this merit applied by way of an indulgence was by doing works of penance. Another way was by paying a stipulated price, dependent upon the nature of the sin. John

Tetzel preached this doctrine and offered his indulgences much as an auctioneer might sell his wares. Luther saw that the whole system was wrong and unscriptural, and in the confessional he discovered that it was leading to fearful abuses and to scandalous living. He therefore drew up his ninety-five propositions and nailed them up in public as a solemn protest against such unholy traffic in the merits of Christ and in the forgiveness of sins.

In our lesson we are told how Jesus cleansed the holy temple at Jerusalem. He called the temple His Father's house, and at a second cleaning He called it the house of prayer; but the Jews, He declared, had made of it a house of merchandise and a den of thieves. On the basis of these thoughts and in keeping with the festival occasion of the day we shall consider

GOD'S HOUSE AS THE HOUSE OF PRAYER.

We shall note in the first place that:

1. *God's house is not a house of merchandise:* Let us first notice the real difference between a house of prayer and a house of merchandise. We go to the house of prayer, which is the house of God, to get things which we absolutely need and which we cannot get elsewhere. We need a correct knowledge of God, of Christ, of the way of life. Do you go to the public schools for such knowledge, or to the legislative chambers, or to the court room? No, you go to the house of prayer, where God's Word is taught. You want the forgiveness of sins. Will you go to some department store, to some shop or factory? No, you go to the house of prayer where through Word and Sacrament forgiveness of sins is offered and imparted. You want divine comfort and strength for life. Will you go to some opera, or lecture, or other entertainment? No, you again go to the house of prayer where God has promised you His Spirit and every grace for all the toils and trials of life. These are some of the things which you cannot get elsewhere, and yet you must have them if you are to have life and peace.

But the chief thing here is this that you cannot get these things by paying for them; God will accept no price. "Thy

money perish with thee," was the fearful rebuke of Peter when Simon Magus wanted to purchase the gift of the Spirit with money. Neither can you get them on the basis of any merit on your part, on the ground that you are a good man, virtuous or even holy, that you have done many good deeds and that you therefore deserve these things, that God owes them to you. No, God owes you nothing. He recognizes no claim on your part, for there is no merit or worthiness in your deeds, and all your righteousnesses are as filthy rags.

Reflect a moment on the character of your prayers and see whether they are based upon any such bargaining. Even if you ask for only daily bread — and you are aware that you are expected to work for it — yet you know that it comes from God as a free gift and that you have done nothing to deserve it. Especially do you feel this when you ask for spiritual blessings as repentance, faith, forgiveness of sins, the gift of the Holy Ghost. You know that no one can give you these things but God, that you have absolutely no claim upon Him for them, and that you have nothing to offer in exchange but a sinful, though penitent heart. You may in your praying make promises to God, just as Jacob at Bethel made a vow to the Lord if his prayer should be heard, yet you feel that whatever vow you may make and keep, it is not a price of the answered prayer but only a manifestation of your love and gratitude. That then is what we mean here by a house of prayer.

What is a house of merchandise? It is also a place to get things, but you go there with the price in your hand. If you have not the price, you can get nothing. It is a place of business, a place to exchange things supposed to be of equal value. No matter what you may get, you are no richer when you come away than when you went there, and most generally poorer.

Jesus here tells us now that the Jews had made a house of merchandise of the temple. In the court surrounding the temple, called the Court of the Gentiles, animals were kept for the offering required in the temple service. This was a convenience for people who came from a distance to worship and who could not well bring their offerings with them. It

was also a convenience to have money-changers there, who were prepared to exchange the sacred coin in which the temple tribute had to be paid, for any foreign coin that worshippers might present. But the sin was this that these things were done within the sacred precincts of the temple and that dishonesty and extortion were practiced. Thus they not only made God's house a place of merchandise, but also a den of thieves. God's house of prayer where His people were to assemble and bless His name for His goodness and mercy, and where, especially, they were to receive His gifts of grace and salvation — this house was converted into an emporium of trade and a haunt of dishonesty.

But there was another kind of merchandise practiced. The above was purely a matter of business and should have had no direct connection with the house of God. The other kind of merchandise has to do with spiritual things and rightly belongs in the house of God. But we have in mind not the people in general, for there were among those at the temple many sincere worshippers; we are thinking of the leaders and teachers among the people, the Scribes, the priests, the Levites and the like. These men made merchandise of spiritual things. They came to the temple, not to get gifts of grace from God, but to tell Him what they themselves had done. They came with their offerings: I give tithes of all that I possess, said the Pharisee. They came with their virtues; Lord, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are. They came with their religious forms, their long prayers, their still longer faces, their broad phylacteries. With these things in their hands they came and demanded recognition of God as His people, as children of Abraham, and therefore as children of the kingdom. They thought the kingdom of God was theirs, not as a free gift of God's grace, but because they were the children of Abraham according to the flesh and because of their fitness. Such was their use of God's house of prayer. It was a strange contrast to the mind of the publican who stood afar off and would not so much as lift up his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his heart, saying, "God, be merciful to me a sinner."

We find something very much like this when we turn to the state of the Church at the beginning of the Reformation. It was a mercantile transaction when indulgences were sold; on the part of the priests, for the promised forgiveness for a certain amount of money; on the part of the layman who was deceived into believing that he could get forgiveness of sins in exchange for his coins. And even though the indulgence promised pardon only of the temporal punishment of sin it was nevertheless an attempt to deal with God on the basis of money, and to secure His mercy for a piece of silver. It is a mercantile idea when it is taught that although Christ's merits are more than enough for the pardon of all sins among men, yet this merit cannot be applied in its fulness unless a person makes satisfaction by doing penance, by fasting, by doing good works, by paying for the reading of mass and such like things.

The deliverance from purgatory of which the Bible knows nothing likewise rests upon a mercantile basis. Very few souls, it is taught, go direct to heaven at death. They must first spend some time in purgatory where they are purged from their sins; or to be more specific, where through divinely-imposed suffering they make satisfaction for the venial sins committed in life, and for whose temporal guilt they did not make satisfaction in this world. But if such a person makes provisions before his death to have mass said for him, or if some friend makes such provision — and the chief requisite to have such mass said is a round sum of money — then will his soul be the more speedily released from those purging fires.

The idea that men may add something to what God has already done or given plays a part too in the Romish conception of divine revelation. It is taught that the Bible alone is not the full revelation of God necessary unto salvation. Not only do they add the apocryphal writings, which the Christian Church never accepted as inspired, but they also accept the decrees of the great church councils and the pronouncements of the pope, who has been declared infallible in his official utterances, as of equal authority with the inspired Word of God.

We find the same idea relative to the Lord's Supper or the mass, as the Romish Church calls it. This is looked upon as a renewed offering of Christ, an unbloody offering, which the priest presents before God; it is something which man does for God, not something which God does for man, a sacrament through which He imparts forgiveness of sins, life and salvation. Hence it is that by saying mass souls can be got out of purgatory.

The mercantile idea appears especially in their act of canonization. A person who has lived a holy life and has done much for the Church, may, after a period of years, especially if by means of any relic of his some miracles are claimed to have been performed, be placed on the calendar of saints and is then entitled to be honored as a saint. This act must of course be performed by the pope, and he demands a handsome sum of money for so doing. The Bible knows nothing of such nonsense. The only way the Bible has of making saints is to make them white in the blood of the Lamb. Said one of the twenty-four elders to Saint John on the Isle of Patmos: "What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And the reply was, "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." He who has not washed in that fountain will find no relief in any canonization of popes; and he who has been so washed and whom Christ has declared holy knows that no canonization can add a whit to the whiteness of his robe or to the glory of his crown.

The Reformation has taught us to get away from all these things in which there is the notion of merit in anything that we can do or offer to God in exchange for the great gift of salvation. The Reformation has taught us on the other hand that:

2. *God's house is the house of free grace for all men.* This was true already of the temple of the Jews. God indeed required the people to bring various kinds of offerings, but those offerings were either types of Christ who would offer himself for the salvation of the world, or else they were thankofferings for mercies received. None of them

were a price in the hand of the worshipper for the blessings sought in that house. The very persons who looked upon their works as meritorious, the Scribes and Pharisees, were denounced as hypocrites and as not belonging to God's people, whereas the publican who had no offering except a penitent cry for mercy was pronounced a citizen of the kingdom of heaven. Salvation was a free gift then as it is a free gift today.

Right here is where the Reformation did its great work. It has declared that God's house is and ever must be a house of prayer, a house of free grace for all men; the house where are stored all the treasures of knowledge and wisdom, of life and salvation, and that these things are offered to us in Christ Jesus without money and without price. Here is the Word of God, a sufficient guide for all things pertaining to faith or doctrine and life. No church council, no pope or other church dignitary, can add anything to this Word, neither can human philosophy or science. Men are needed to teach and interpret the Word of God and to apply it to varying conditions among men, but no additional revelation is needed for the way of life, either for right living or for right dying. No possible question as to what you need to believe and do to be saved can arise, whose answer is not found in the Bible. Some questions may not be so easy to answer, for some, you may not even find a fully satisfactory answer; but this is certain that if the Bible does not answer your question no other source of information will. This too is certain that the Bible will always give you all the answer that you need, though possibly not all that your curiosity may wish.

In this house of free grace you find full forgiveness of sin. We do not find the Bible teaching that Christ did more than enough to merit for us forgiveness of sins, but we are given the assurance that He has done all that is necessary and that nothing has been left for us to do by way of making satisfaction, either for the temporal or eternal punishment of sin. Nor is there anything left for a purgatory to purge away, for there is no such place, no mid-way clearing house for guilty souls. It is either to heaven or to hell at once. Whatever work, whatever offering, whatever service we are

able to render unto God, possesses no merit, nor do we expect any merit. It is the free-will offering of a thankful heart.

Here then is complete justification in the sight of God. We come to this house as did the publican to the temple with all our sins; we plead for mercy as he did and we go away justified as he did. We continue to be sinners still, but God no longer charges our sins against us. The account is settled and He looks upon us as without sin, as having fulfilled all His holy Law. And though we daily sin much, yet there is also daily forgiveness; our names are not blotted out from the Book of life.

In this house we also find the gifts of grace to sustain us in life. Salvation is free, yet there is something for us to do, a faith to keep, a life to live, an enemy to fight, a race to win, a work to do. Of ourselves we are not sufficient for any of these things; our sufficiency must be from God. But He has promised that He will never leave us nor forsake us. We must, however, seek Him, in His house, in His Word and Sacraments. The right use of these will keep us from falling in the day of temptation. God cannot do more for you. In nature He has taught the mother bird to put the morsel in the nestling's mouth. He will do that for you in spiritual things, but you must do as much as the nestling, you must open your mouth. "Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it," is His wonderful promise.

In this house of prayer we also find the sanctification of life. God wants us to grow in holiness of life, to make progress in knowledge and faith and in every Christian virtue and work. He wants the tree He has planted to bring forth abundant fruit, and the more fruit it bears the greater is His glory. But God's Spirit must dwell in us if we would be fruitful and it is only as we dwell in His house of prayer that the Holy Spirit can come to us and sanctify us in body, soul and Spirit.

Nor is that all. Here we also find glorification. The pope dreams that he can get his people out of purgatory and that of some very good people he can make saints. We have no such uncertain methods. We know that whom God hath

redeemed and chosen, them He hath also justified; and whom He hath justified, them He will also glorify. We know that the blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sins. We know that when Christ comes again He will raise us up from the dead and will take us to himself where we shall behold His glory. That will be the beatific vision; then shall we be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

Now all these things of God's house of prayer are for all people. That is another glorious feature of the Lord's temple. It is a select company, but for all nations, tongues and people. There is John the Baptist and Peter the fisherman, Matthew the publican and Nicodemus the ruler; Mary also who sat at Jesus' feet and Mary Magdalene out of whom went seven devils; the woman of Canaan and Lydia the seller of purple, Cornelius the centurion and the Ethiopian eunuch. You find them all in God's house of prayer, the house glorious above.

There is another matter which we must not overlook. We call God's house a house of prayer. We say that the Reformation restored that house again as a house of prayer. Dwell upon that word prayer. Consider well what it means. The chief thing in prayer is that we ask of God. In our prayers we of course thank and praise God for the blessings received, yet the main thing is petition. In the Lord's Prayer are nine parts, and seven of them are petitions. All the blessings of which we have spoken are to be had from God, but He give them only in answer to prayer. We are to be a praying people. Faith and prayer go together; they cannot be separated. The Lutheran Church makes much of faith, therefore she must make much of prayer. Faith is dependence upon God to save us, and when we depend upon a friend for help we keep asking him for help. If we are conscious of our dependence upon God to get us out of our trouble of sin and death, then we are going to keep on asking Him for deliverance. We will give Him rest neither day nor night, until He has rescued us. And when we are sure of our deliverance, then we shall still keep on asking Him so that the devil may not get us again. We want to stay delivered. Prayer is so important that we simply cannot get

along without it; and if we are trying to get along without it we may take that as an indication that we are slipping back again into the gutter. We may even have a good outfit of creed and doctrine and confession and correct church practice and yet we may be slowly drifting away from God. A man may have a very good boat and oars, but if he does not make good use of them and pull in the right direction he will drift on towards the rapids of destruction.

In this matter of prayer the Reformers set us a good example. Luther spent hours in prayer every day. Luther saw what a great work he was engaged in and he felt that he and all his co-workers could simply not do that work without incessant prayer. They were, of course, also men of faith. They believed that they were engaged in the Lord's work and that He would carry it through to a successful issue. But their great faith produced great prayer. At one time when the outlook was not so encouraging and Luther and others were together consulting about the work, Melanchthon had occasion to go into another room. There he heard their wives and children engaged in fervent prayer for the cause, and Melanchthon at once returned and said, The cause is won! The women and children are praying for it.

Are we keeping up the reputation of our fathers in this matter of prayer? We delight to speak of the great work which they did; we boast of being their children; we rejoice in the riches of our inheritance; we are quick to defend their teachings as the Word of God; we seek to be worthy followers in these things. But how about this matter of prayer? Are we proving ourselves worthy of bearing their name? We often complain of a lack of vitality in the Church today, a want of spirituality; there is not the consecration of self and of goods to the service of Christ that we should like to see. For example, there are church-bodies which give as high as four and five or even six dollars a member per year for Foreign missions alone, and we must still count our contributions for that cause by the pennies. All our institutions are suffering for the want of pounds. We do not have men enough for our mission field, nor money enough properly to

support those who are in the work. We believe that the real trouble is a lack of spirituality, a shortage in vital religion. Is it possible — I hesitate to say it — but is it possible that we may be very good Lutherans but only ordinary Christians? Of course a full collection plate is not always a sign of great spirituality, but much less is an empty one. And we are sure of this too that there is a close connection between spirituality and prayer. A spiritual life is constant communion with God; “Enoch walked with God.” And prayer is communion with God.

But there is one more thing and we are through. Jesus cleansed the temple and He meant that it should stay cleansed. But that was not done. About three years after He had to do the work over.

During the Reformation the Church was cleansed; the Gospel was restored, the Sacraments replaced according to divine command and intent; various abuses were put away and the church service again rendered spiritual; life among the clergy was purged so that scandal and priesthood were no longer synonymous terms. Has the Church remained clean? Almost four centuries have passed since that day. Many changes have taken place and not all for the better. But what about the present, especially in our own land? I am sure the Lutheran Church of America can say that she is nearer the ideal of the Reformation today than ever before. This is especially true of church doctrine. The preaching and teaching of our church in this country is a glorious testimony to the inspiration of the Bible, to the power of the pure and simple Gospel, to the true doctrine and use of the Sacraments and to all the great teachings of God’s Word as confessed by the Reformers. We can say, too, that in church-practice there is a more general effort than ever before to bring church government and church discipline into full harmony with the Word of God and the teachings of our Confessions. It is certain too that in church work, in educational work, in missions, in benevolence, there is a constant increase of activity, an unremitting endeavor to reach out farther and to bring the Church’s influence to bear upon a greater portion of unsaved humanity about us.

All this is hopeful, yet in view of a lack of prayer, in view of a want of spirituality, we may well ask, Are we keeping clean house as we should? In the case of the Jews it was chiefly covetousness, the lust for material gain, that profaned the house. May not the same sin be a prime evil today? We aim to keep business and church apart, but are we not in danger of having all business and no church? We keep our flock and exchange tables out of the sacred court, but are we not in danger of keeping our hearts out likewise? We are keeping business and church separate, but are we sure that our business is not swallowing up our souls? Even among ministers there is so much talk about higher salaries that people may wonder whether it is souls or dollars that we are after. When the spirit of covetousness gets into the heart, the Spirit of holiness gets out, no matter whether we do our business within the courts of the temple or outside. It runs into thievery, no matter where it takes place. This is not the only danger point that we need to watch, but it is one; and it is one where the flood is apt to break through the levee at the present day.

Let us see to our hearts then. First of all let the heart be the closet where we pray in secret to our heavenly Father. Then, too, will the house of God be to us a true house of prayer. May God grant it. Amen.

