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SHORT SERMONS ON THE PSALMS.

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PSALMS LII.—LXXII.

SHORT

Sermons on the Psalms

IN THEIR ORDER.

PREACHED IN A VILLAGE CHURCH.

BY

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VOL. III.

Uniform with Vol. I., Psalms I.—XXV.
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1774

The Third Volume of these Short Sermons on the Psalms is completed with the seventy-second Psalm, which ends the second original division of the Psalter, as still marked at each by the word "Amen."

These Monthly Parts will be discontinued, at least for a time, but I shall be glad to go on so, or in Volumes, should the sale justify me in doing so.

A great work has suddenly fallen upon this Parish, which has no large resident landowner, in the loss of its Tower and Bells; and to this work I would gladly devote any proceeds which can arise from the sale of these Sermons.

Burton Vicarage, Norwich,

May 12th, 1880.

P R E F A C E .

A LONGER period has elapsed than I had originally intended since the Second Volume of these Sermons was published.

I have been repeatedly asked to go on with the series, and I am the more glad to do so now as I have heard from several independent sources (which I had no right to expect), that they have proved useful to some, especially younger Clergy.

I have been advised also to publish them in a cheaper form, so the series will appear in Monthly Parts, uniform however in type and size with the former volumes.

I have endeavoured to adhere to the original plan as stated at first, to name the supposed author of each Psalm, or any special subject alluded to; next, to apply each Psalm to our Lord Jesus Christ as "the

End of the Law," and of all Holy Scripture; thirdly, to make each Sermon of use to Christians in general, especially to those who form the bulk of our country congregations; as the highest commendation of all preaching surely lies in the fact (where it is true), that "the common people heard Him gladly."

I shall be thankful for any advice or criticisms, and still more for any good which may, as I hope, result, if in no other way, should my own plan commend itself to others of having *always* some *course of Sermons* in hand, to avoid the time and trouble so often spent in seeking for a text or a subject at hap-hazard.

BUXTON VICARAGE, NORWICH,

December 9th, 1879.

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SERMON I.

Condemn not, and thou shalt not be condemned.

“Thou hast loved to speak all words that may do hurt, O thou false tongue. Therefore shall God destroy thee for ever: He shall take thee, and pluck thee out of thy dwelling, and root thee out of the land of the living.”—PSALM lii. 5-6.

THERE can scarcely be a stronger contrast between any two Psalms than this Psalm compared with the last. In that most beautiful of all the penitential Psalms—the fifty-first—David condemns *himself*, and prays for renewal and forgiveness. Here we turn from the condemnation of a man's own self to the condemnation of another; and we know that he who most readily and often condemns himself, is least disposed to use at all the same harsh terms towards others. But, here, instead of a prayer for forgiveness and renewal, as in the last Psalm, we find a fierce denouncement of the sure Judgment of God upon the offender to whom this Psalm refers. One question then is, who can the offender be, to whom this Psalm applies? In the Bible version of the Psalms, we are told in the heading that it was Doeg the Edomite. It has, however, been supposed, though without sufficient reason, to refer to Saul.

What Doeg had done is told us in the twenty-first and twenty-second chapters of the First Book of Samuel. In them we read of David's hasty flight, by the advice of Jonathan, to escape from Saul: and he came to Ahimelech the Priest at Nob. This city is said to have been situated on a spur of the Mount of Olives, and thus perhaps is explained to us the allusion in this latter verse of this Psalm, "As for me I am like a *green Olive tree* in the House of God." Here, in David's hunger and distress, Ahimelech gave him the holy bread set apart upon the Altar of God, as our Lord so plainly speaks of his doing (S. Matthew xii. 3), "Have ye not read what David did, when he was an hungered, and they that were with him; how he entered into the House of God and did eat the Shew-bread which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them that were with him, but only for the priests?" But there happened to be present at that moment Doeg, an Edomite, one of the chief herdsmen of Saul, and he went and told Saul what Ahimelech and David had done. Then Saul in his anger sent for Ahimelech and all his father's house, and by the hand of this same Doeg he slew no less than eighty-five members of that one family, thus cruelly punishing Ahimelech for relieving David in his hunger, while he professed to Ahimelech that he had been sent in haste on a distant errand by the king. Nor was this all that Saul did; for we are told,

“And Nob, the city of the priests, smote he with the edge of the sword, both men and women, children and sucklings, oxen and asses, and sheep.” We can well understand the just and righteous indignation David would feel on hearing of such cruel and wholesale murder and suffering, brought upon a whole family and an entire city by the mischievous word of one who happened to be present when David arrived there.

Still, these words would seem much more applicable to those false witnesses who were suborned to give evidence against our Lord Jesus Christ, that on some plea or other He might be condemned to death—“The just for the unjust,”—than only to Doeg, “Thy tongue imagineth wickedness, and with lies thou cuttest like a sharp razor. Thou hast loved unrighteousness more than goodness, and to talk of lies more than righteousness. Thou hast loved to speak all words that may do hurt, O thou false tongue. Therefore shall God destroy thee for ever: He shall take thee, and pluck thee out of thy dwelling, and root thee out of the land of the living.”

For in our eyes Doeg hardly did wrong, so far as we can judge of his motives and conduct, in giving Saul the information which he did. For at the time he was engaged in Saul’s service, and why should he withhold from his master the knowledge of facts which had passed under his own eye? To us it looks more like fidelity to an earthly master than a work of malice

either towards David or Ahimelech. And this *may be* the true light in which we should view Doeg's announcement to Saul. Bishop Hall, however, in his "Contemplations," by no means takes this favourable view I have suggested of Doeg's conduct. He writes of him thus: "Though an Israelite in profession he was an Edomite no less in heart than in blood. Yet he hath some vow on him; and not only comes up to God's house, but abides before the Lord. Hypocrites have equal access to the public places, and means, of God's service. Even He, that knows the heart, yet shuts His door on none: how much less should we exclude any, which can only judge of the heart by the face? If Saul and Doeg be, instead of a pestilence or fever, who can cavil? The Judgments of God are not open, but are always just. He knows how, by one man's sin to punish the sin of another. O Lord, Thou art just when Thou judgest. Keep us from the sentence of death, else in vain shall we labor to keep ourselves from the execution." Such are Bishop Hall's comments upon Doeg's action.

But all this at least shows us this, we never know how far our words may reach, and affect others for their good or evil. In one place the Psalmist calls the tongue "the best member that he had," and so indeed it is, as often as it is employed in God's praise and God's service, and in doing good in any way to any one in soul or in body. Our tongue is then the best member

of the body. And this it is for two reasons. First, the words we utter in truth show the thoughts and intents of the heart. It is "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." According as our hearts are right in the sight of God, is our conversation ruled and directed. "For the same fountain (as the Apostle says) cannot send forth both sweet water and bitter." But, besides this, there is nothing which so powerfully influences others as the tongue. Even our lightest words often take deep root in the hearts of others, and so bring forth, it may be for a generation to come, fruit, be it good or evil.

How many, especially young persons, are every day led into their first great sin and transgression by some word dropped carelessly, or purposely, from the lips of another. And how often on the other hand is a sinner turned from the error of his way and brought back to God, like the Prodigal coming to himself and setting out on his way home, by some word of warning or advice. It is impossible for us to limit the good, or the evil, which the tongue of any of us may work in those around us. Surely, it is no uncommon event in these parliamentary days for a whole nation to be widely influenced, aroused, or directed by the glowing eloquence of a great speaker. And thus it is, brethren, that we write our words, true—upon the air, making less impression there than by our finger on the sands of seashore, which the next wave which comes washes

out. Still they remain, as though graven upon marble, or chiselled on the hardest granite in letters which no time obliterates.

This is why God in His Word lays so great a stress upon the governance of the tongue, because, by it, we may, like Doeg, the supposed subject of this Psalm, be the means of destroying not only a whole family but an entire city; or, with S. Peter, we may by our words convert, though it may not be three thousand souls to believe in God, and to serve Him, and be baptized in one day, yet our proportion, and have our share in that Apostolic promise, "He who converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."

Thus, though no great events affecting in some way many, or the public at large, may ever be brought about by the word of any of us who are here, yet we may do some good or some evil by a right or a wrong use of our powers of speech; I might say we are all *sure* to do so more or less. The gift of tongues was the great manifestation of the coming down of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles at Pentecost. In them this Gift wrought powers of speech in all the then known languages which prevailed in the world. They could go forth everywhere preaching the Word of God, both understanding all tongues and being understood by all that heard them.

And here and there, in one individual or another, it may be that the same gift is possessed in some measure, thus helping on the time when "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." But in a far humbler way, not miraculous but ordinary, we may each, whatever our present lot in life may be, both say, and by saying, *do*, something for the advancement of God's kingdom and the salvation of souls.

It is the secret and silent influence of productive earth which first causes each buried grain to put forth its new powers to blossom, increase, and fructify. And so with us. Each of us has some gift of tongues with which to glorify God and benefit our neighbour. How blessed if we are fully alive to this, and without unduly pressing upon others our own views and opinions, still we do use "the best member that we have" for the best and holiest of purposes. Think of this, brethren, in your own homes and in your daily intercourse with others. Try to drop some silent seed of good into each and every heart. One word only may be better than many; but don't be afraid or ashamed to speak that one word when you can, and especially to those who are younger than yourselves.

Among the eight Beatitudes with which the Sermon on the Mount begins there is this one, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God." And if we know how often one

or other, or it may be a whole family, is made unhappy by a few words dropped from some godless or careless and mischief-making tongue so may come, how sweet the Antidote of such poison from the kind and genial lips of one of whom it is true, "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, Which is given unto us."

It is easy, very easy, to turn the most trifling matters into things of far greater moment, giving them a complexion, which thus affects the welfare or happiness of others. How little do many of us think of these things, I am sure; and yet how inexcusable are those who week by week hear these words, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour." I do not think that we, in this Parish, or any other, have no need to be reminded of these things. It has become a matter of duty and of necessity that we should *not* be too ready to believe much, or even half of what we hear said, one of another. "Charity," writes S. Paul, "thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth." Anyhow, my brethren, this would be a good rule for us to make with ourselves, that if we observe a fault in another *we will not be the first to make that fault known without necessity beyond ourselves.* It is a certain result that to keep our own lips closed from evil words is the best way to close the lips of others. No mischievous tongue talks much or long to a silent listener. And to make

RECORDS WHICH NEVER DIE.

more of our own sins is a sure way of making less of those of others.

To all of us a great part of our daily probation before God lies in the use or abuse which we make of the best member that we have, *i.e.*, of our powers of speech. The tongue marks imperishable records on the eternal dial as surely as the hands of the clock point to the hour at which they stand. Let us daily pray with the Psalmist, "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth, and keep the door of my lips. O let not mine heart be inclined to any evil thing."

SERMON II.

The Restoration of Israel.

“ Oh, that the salvation were given unto Israel out of Sion: oh, that the Lord would deliver His people out of captivity! Then should Jacob rejoice, and Israel should be right glad.”—PSALM liii. 7-8.

IF we turn back to the fourteenth Psalm we shall see that this fifty-third Psalm is a repetition of that Psalm, almost word for word, except for three verses, the fifth, sixth, and seventh, which occur in the fourteenth but do not recur here. It is very clear that when S. Paul quotes certain words from these Psalms in the third chapter of Romans, it is from the fourteenth Psalm and not from this, as the passage contains those three verses which are here omitted. Still, there is a difference in the Hebrew which is not apparent in our translation, and that is in the use of the two names “Jehovah” and “Elohim” for God. The former is (as I have before said) the *Covenant* name of God—the name by which Israel, and Israel alone, were allowed to know, and to speak to, and of God, as being His peculiar people; whereas the latter name, “Elohim,” signifies the God and Creator of *all* men and of *all* things, and belongs to a *lower* relationship to God than Israel enjoyed.

In the fourteenth Psalm “Jehovah” occurs four

times and "Elohim" three times. In this Psalm "Elohim" occurs seven times and "Jehovah" not at all. And though the mixing up of two names, which were perfectly distinct, may tend to represent the *Unity* of the Godhead under a twofold designation, yet, as a rule, the name "Jehovah" implies more grace, and faith, and nearness to God than the other ever does.

In dwelling upon the fourteenth Psalm I have already drawn attention to these two points, First, the true and Scriptural meaning of the term "fool," or "foolish," and "folly," and so of its converse, "wisdom" and "the wise;" and secondly, to the fact that these words, "the fool hath said in his heart there is no God," may equally well be translated, "the fool (or ungodly man) hath said He—(meaning our Lord Jesus Christ)—is not God," thus rejecting (as by prophecy and anticipation) the very Foundation on which all Christian doctrine is built. Thus it is that S. Paul writes of any who would deny the resurrection of the dead, "Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die." And so also, on the other hand, the Psalmist speaks thus of godly persons (Psalm cvii.) "Whoso is *wise* will ponder these things, and they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord." And Daniel says of the future glory of God's people, "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."

Having thus reminded you of the principal points connected with the outline, and especially with the earlier verses of this repeated Psalm, let us turn our attention to these last verses of it more especially: "Oh, that the Salvation were given unto Israel out of Sion: oh, that the Lord would deliver His people out of captivity! then should Jacob rejoice, and Israel should be right glad."

They are words written at a time of great depression. God had seemed to have given up His people of old time; to have allowed them to be scattered and led away captive into other lands. Still the words express a hope of a coming Restoration in God's good time and way. Just as S. Paul says of the Jews in his day, "Hath God cast away His people? God forbid. God hath not cast away His people which He foreknew." "And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again. . . . For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, *until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in*. And so all Israel shall be saved." (Rom. xi.) Now, these latter words of S. Paul do surely confirm the aspiration of the Psalmist with which these two Psalms end. There is still held out to us a future Restoration of Israel to God's favour, reinstated in their own land, and made more glorious and powerful than ever before.

It needs, brethren, we are sure, but the reversal of that unbelief which is so well expressed in these two Psalms: "The fool hath said in his heart He (that is Christ) is not God." When that day shall come, as no doubt it will, that Israel shall turn unto Him Whom they have so obstinately rejected through more than eighteen hundred years, they will be restored to their own land and to God's favour. Our Lord's own words seem to imply this: "Jerusalem (He says) shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, *until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.*" Then, is implied, will the Holy Land be no more oppressed, and inhabited by an alien and unbelieving race. Now this great change, this most glorious Enlargement of the Christian Church, should daily occupy its own place in our prayers to God. As we pray, "Thy kingdom come," and that "Thy way may be known upon earth, Thy saving health among *all* nations," so I would ask, and I would remind, you to give a special remembrance in those prayers, a special word of intercession, on behalf of Israel, God's ancient and most true people; for them whose return to favour would probably be the immediate forerunning sign of the return of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. It may be termed visionary on our part to talk and speak of these things, but it is hardly so with all the promises held out to us, and with all the signs, which to my mind seem to accumulate, that this will come to pass before very

long; and probably when the change begins it will be almost miraculous in the suddenness and completeness of its accomplishment.

It cannot be for nothing that the Jews have been maintained in all lands through these eighteen hundred years of their dispersion a people to themselves, mixing with the peoples of all lands in the world's most crowded cities, and yet they remain everywhere alike, altogether a distinct class and people. If there were no great future in store for them, would they not have been amalgamated long ago with the inhabitants of this land and of that, and so have lost their peculiar distinctness, as much as Saxons, Danes, Celts, and Normans are with us one people? But it is not so.

Then again, the very great attention which is being now bestowed upon the Holy Land, and especially upon Jerusalem itself; the sites of all its ancient cities being one by one discovered and determined by our own Engineers and Ordnance officers;—when we read of the Foundations of Solomon's Temple being once more laid bare, built of stones so large but so beautifully fitted together that no axe or hammer, or other tool of iron, was required on the spot, nor was used, as we know; when Hezekiah's Aqueduct, by which Jerusalem was supplied with water is not only re-discovered, but an offer was lately made by one English lady to supply the city as of old with water at her own expence by means of it; when

Siloam and Bethesda, and the brook Kedron, and Calvary, and the Tomb, and the Mount of Olives with Gethsemane at its foot, are all historically traced on modern maps of the ancient city.—Then, too, look at this. Simultaneously with all this the Jews are more and more inheriting the riches of the Gentiles, while at the same moment the necessities of Turkey, to which the Holy Land at present belongs, render it more and more likely that the rightful possessors of its soil will by degrees, or at once, *by purchase* re-acquire its Hills and its Valleys for their own possession; till it may be almost in a moment that the final change from Turk to Jew and Christian will be accomplished, and on the site of the ancient Temple may rise up, in the re-union of Christendom and the Conversion of Israel to Christ, a glorious Cathedral, bearing the names of the Twelve Apostles, for the worship of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. The Spirit of Prophecy has passed away from us, still, though we cannot define the exact mode of God's accomplishment of His own designs, we should ever look forward to, and help on so far as we can, the Conversion of Israel, and their final Restoration to their own land on their rejection of their old denial of Christ, which has brought upon them so many centuries of dispersion and persecution. Can we not in this way “discern the signs of the times?”

Barren as the Holy Land is pronounced to be, its

ancient marvellous fertility is found still to exist, and to return wherever cultivated; and wherever trees are planted, there the clouds are attracted, and there falls, as of old, "the early and the latter rain," making the soil, as of old, proverbial for its productiveness and fertility—a land flowing with milk and honey. Who would not wish to see not Rome but Jerusalem restored to be once more the heart, as it were, of a re-united Christendom—the city to which all eyes should turn, and all feet of the Saints be directed year by year? "As the hills stand about Jerusalem, even so standeth the Lord round about His people, from this time forth for evermore." "I was glad when they said unto me, we will go into the House of the Lord: our feet shall stand in thy gates, O Jerusalem. Jerusalem is built as a city that is at unity in itself, for thither the tribes go up, even the tribes of the Lord: to testify unto Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord. . . . Oh! pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee."

Amid the distractions of our times, and the hurry and business of these days, it may be well for us sometimes to fix our thoughts upon the Restoration of Israel and the re-edification of Jerusalem. Let us say sometimes, as the Psalmist does in the words of my text, "Oh, that the salvation were given unto Israel out of Zion: oh, that the Lord would deliver His

people out of captivity! Then should Jacob rejoice, and Israel should be right glad." Among the missionary openings of our day perhaps to none is less attention given than to the Recovery and Restoration of Israel, yet to none is there so great a promise, so sure a success, when the day for it shall arrive. In all ages, and under every distinction of race and climate, the rule is that "many are called" but in the end "few are chosen," but if we could ever reach the heart of Israel there would be a more perfect work, a greater success.

We live in an age which hardly admits that impossibilities exist. Sea is joined to sea by canals, space is reduced an hundredfold by steam appliances and by telegraphy, bridges in the air span wide chasms and the broadest rivers, and engineering skill works one triumph after another of mind over matter: valleys are filled up, mountains and hills are brought low. Let us, I would say, view the conversion of Israel as no improbable, no remote, no impossible event, in which we may each, and our land very especially, take our part, and fulfil a large share. We have a collect which teaches us every year to pray to God, on the great day of Atonement commemoration, that He may "have mercy upon all Jews, Turks, infidels, and heretics, take from them all ignorance, hardness of heart, and contempt of His word, and bring them home to His flock, through Jesus Christ our Lord:" to which we may all well say Amen, Amen.

SERMON III.

Sirs, ye are brethren.

“An offering of a free heart will I give Thee, and praise Thy Name, O Lord, because it is so comfortable.—PSALM liv. 6.

THE occasion of this Psalm, according to the heading of it in the Bible version, is recorded in the twenty-third and twenty-sixth chapters of the First Book of Samuel. In the former we read (verse 19) “Then came up the Ziphites to Saul to Gibeah, saying, doth not David hide himself with us in strongholds in the wood Now therefore, O king, come down according to all the desire of thy soul to come down, and our part shall be to deliver him into the king’s hand. And Saul said, blessed be ye of the Lord, for ye have compassion upon me.” Now these Ziphites were a family belonging to the Tribe of Judah, but here, instead of taking part with their great kinsman of the Tribe of Judah, they are ready to betray him into the hands of Saul, who belonged to the Tribe of Benjamin, and sought his life. Thus it was clearly a case of a “house divided against itself,” which is a sure precursor of misfortune and desolation. And as the same fact is recorded again in the second of those chapters I have mentioned above,

it is clear that their support of Saul against David was not a momentary and isolated instance. But how often is that old admonition of Moses to his countrymen, striving against one another, "Sirs, ye are brethren, why do ye wrong one to another?" applicable again and again to this day!

And it is clear from the fact of this Psalm being one of those specially selected for use on Good Friday that the Church applies it to One Who was also of the Tribe of Judah and of the House and lineage of David, but was "betrayed and given over into the hands of wicked men" by those who ought to have been His best and truest friends and supporters. But God always knows how to frustrate the devices of sinful men and to deliver His own people out of trouble and temptation. Thus David was delivered by a sudden invasion of the Philistines into Judæa, which obliged Saul to give up pursuing David in order to defend himself from a far greater danger. This circumstance is no doubt the cause of the verse I have selected in particular for my text, "An offering of a free heart will I give Thee, and praise Thy Name because it is so comfortable."

And so of our Lord Jesus Christ: though His enemies seemed indeed to triumph completely, yet it was but for a very short time indeed, and only in appearance, not in reality. The morning of the Resurrection came after a few hours only of delay.

And now "Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more: death hath no more dominion over Him; for in that He died, He died *unto* sin (or *for* sin, as a sin-offering) once, but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God." And now in Heaven He Who once so freely offered Himself unto God for us, now claims us for His own inheritance by His perpetual intercession for us in Heaven, and God is reminded again and again of His covenant of mercy towards us in Christ Jesus, in *Heaven* by the perpetual memorial of the wounds received on the cross, and on *earth* in and by our perpetual repetition, "until He cometh again," of the Commemoration of His death and Passion in the Bread broken and the Wine poured out before Him.

David speaks in my text of the offering of a *free* heart, and it is only through Jesus Christ, and that great Gift of the Spirit which He obtained for man, that we are free, and are *able* to serve and love God. By nature we are powerless over our own corrupt wills, and are the slaves of sin and vice, as unable, as we should be unwilling, to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. Thus the Apostle bids us "Stand fast in the *liberty* wherewith Christ hath made us *free*." Whereas we *had* no power to subdue sin, we *have* that power now; and though it be ever so true that "many are called but few chosen," yet it is a man's own fault now if he fail, for if called he may now be chosen.

Of this "liberty, wherewith Christ hath made us free," we are day by day reminded, so many of us as observe the Church's order of daily prayer, in that beautiful Second Collect, "O God, Who art the author of peace and lover of concord, in knowledge of Whom standeth our eternal life, *Whose service is perfect freedom.*" And so S. Paul says, "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is *liberty*," and he speaks of the "glorious *liberty* of the children of God." All of which, and others besides, mean that through our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Gift of the Holy Ghost from Him, we have our Free will restored to us. We *can* now serve God if we please, which before we could not. We had no power to give unto God the offering of a free heart, now we have.

And thus, brethren, praise and thanksgiving become very important parts of our public worship. Praise is the Adoration of God for what He is in Himself; Thanksgiving is the acknowledgment of Blessings and Gifts which we have received from Him, and that we have them only from Him. The opposite spirit to thanksgiving is certainly pride. Proud people, whether rich or poor, have little or no *gratitude*; they take all Blessings as a matter of course, and dislike, and often refuse to express, any thankfulness, or to acknowledge any obligation.

Gratitude is by no means a common and universal virtue and grace of these days in which we live; but

are not these days marked by pride of heart in all classes, high and low? All like to think themselves at least as good as, or better than, others, and refuse to own any superiority; and this they try to show in dress, in manner, and in their motives and objects in life, in all and every way. There is but scant reverence and respect shewn in our day towards those who are in any way above us in this world; and how often is it true that to do a man a kindness which we *need* not have done, is the sure way to make that man an enemy, and not a friend. Men are thankless because they are proud, and pride shews itself in an especial manner by disrespect, ingratitude, and thanklessness. We are ready enough to find fault with others, especially if in any way we fail to obtain exactly what we want and aim at; and too often when what we desired is done for us, or some special kindness is shewn us, we take it all as a matter of course, and to express our thanks to another, or to God, perhaps never enters our mind.

Now all this is surely very wrong. Though people who act from right, good, and religious motives do not do so in the least to obtain our thanks, yet surely the least return we can and ought to make for any good turn done to us or ours is to feel some gratitude, and not to be afraid or too proud to express it and shew it. Of all the prayers in our Book of Common Prayer, none surely are more beautiful, or come more home to a

devout heart, than "The General Thanksgiving." If we say it daily to ourselves, there will be seldom, if ever, a day when we might not add in those words which are printed in different type from the rest, and call to mind before God mercies and blessings which we have received from others, or direct from Him.

It will be a sufficient reward for what I am saying if but one, far more if many, of you may from henceforth more devoutly than hitherto say, and that too daily, "Almighty God, Father of all mercies, we Thine unworthy servants do give Thee most humble and hearty thanks for all Thy goodness and loving-kindness to us and to all men (particularly to me for such and such special mercies vouchsafed unto me.) We bless Thee for our Creation, Preservation, and all the Blessings of this life; but above all, for Thine inestimable love in the Redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory." This would be indeed to fall in with the sentiment of my text, "An offering of a free heart will I give Thee, and praise Thy Name because it is so comfortable."

Above all, let us not forget that there is one service specially called "The Eucharist," or Thanksgiving Service, and that is the great and special mode ordained for us to commemorate Christ's Sacrifice of Himself for us, and to show forth our thankfulness to Him for the same. Though Common Prayer and the hearing of God's Word are special objects for Christians to meet

together, yet far the greatest and most necessary of all is the Divine Rite, instituted by Christ Himself, as the great memorial of His death and passion. Thus, S. Paul, when speaking of Christians exercising the gift of tongues, which was bestowed upon the infant Church, speaks thus (1 Cor. xiv. 16) "How shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say the Amen at thy giving of thanks (at thy Eucharist, as it is in the Greek) seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?" This passage very plainly shows that the Holy Communion formed the principal and central object of public worship in the Apostolic days, as we know from other independent sources that it did. But if so, brethren, where is the thankfulness we owe to God for all He has done for us in and through Jesus Christ our Lord, in them who *never* have *thus* expressed their gratitude, nor perhaps, like so many, ever will do so as long as they live? It is true our words may be only as seed sown on the highway, or on stony ground, or amid thorns and briars, still we will continue to sow and sow again, hoping that in God's good time and way some may bring forth some thirtyfold, some sixtyfold, some an hundredfold.

Here, too, is to be found the great bond of unity and love between Christian people. These Ziphites, to whom this Psalm refers, ought, as I have said, to have sided with David, who was of their own Tribe of Judah, but, on the contrary, they sided with Saul,

of the Tribe of Benjamin. And so, too, should all the lost sheep of the House of Israel have followed Him Who came from Heaven, first of all for their sakes, but they refused and rejected Him. The blood of His Crucifixion rests upon them and upon their children above all. They were the Ziphites of the Christian era. Let us take warning from them.

One of the saddest signs of our own times is in the endless divisions which exist among Christians, and in these lie the greatest hindrance of all to the growth and perfection of the Church of Christ. Let us at least try never to add to these separations, but without yielding one iota of the great Deposit of the Faith, let us try to soften down men's differences one from another, and their animosities; let us do as the Apostle bids, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." It is neither right to exalt ourselves nor to depreciate others. But "let each esteem others *better* than themselves;" and in the love of our Lord Jesus Christ "do good unto all men, especially unto them that are of the household of Faith."

SERMON IV.

The Fear of Death.

“ My heart is disquieted within me ; and the fear of death is fallen upon me.”—PSALM lv. 4.

THE double reference which almost every Psalm undoubtedly has, first to David, and afterwards to David's greater Son according to the flesh, our Lord Jesus Christ, in some point of their history, is singularly remarkable in this Psalm. For the passage in David's life to which it clearly refers, we must look to the fifteenth and seventeenth chapters of the Second Book of Samuel, but especially to the thirty-first verse of the fifteenth chapter. David was now old, and it was uncertain which of his many sons would succeed to his throne ; this led to schemes and conspiracies again and again. Here it is Absalom who aimed at accession to the Throne of his father, even by the ruin and ejection of his father during his lifetime. By fair speeches and promises he stole away the hearts of many of the people to support him, and to dethrone his father David, and drive him out of Jerusalem. Amongst those who joined him in this wicked conspiracy was Ahithophel, who had been the

intimate adviser and friend of David. It was a bitter ingredient in his cup of sorrow to hear of his treachery and desertion. We read in that fifteenth chapter, verse thirty-first, which is the key to this Psalm in its relation to David, "And one told David, saying, Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom. And David said, O Lord, I pray Thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness." Here was one of his best friends and most constant and intimate advisers, selected for his prudence and skill, turned into his most bitter and dangerous enemy, offering his services and counsel to David's treacherous and unnatural son, for his (David's) destruction.

If we bear this incident in mind, it explains to us almost every word of this Psalm. It explains to us the beginning of it, "Take heed unto me, and hear me; how I mourn in my prayer and am vexed. The enemy crieth so, and the ungodly cometh on so fast; for they are minded to do me some mischief, so maliciously are they set against me."

Again, it explains to us so well these verses, "Deceit and guile go not out of their streets. For it is not an open enemy that hath done me this dishonour: for then I could have borne it. Neither was it mine adversary that did magnify himself against me, for then would I have hid myself from him. But it was even thou, my companion, my guide, and mine own familiar friend. We took sweet counsel together, and walked in the

house of God as friends." Then it explains to us the assurance of their failure, destruction, and speedy death, which all came to pass almost immediately. God caused the advice of Hushai, David's real friend, to be accepted in preference to that of Ahithophel, by which, humanly speaking, David's life was saved. But "when Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled his ass, and arose, and gat him home to his house, to his city, and put his household in order, and hanged himself, and died, and was buried in the sepulchre of his father."

Now, this end of Ahithophel, sudden, and by his own hand, so immediately after his treachery to David, connects his history, and so this Psalm at once with its parallel under the Gospel. Compare the position, conduct, and end of Aphithophel with that of the traitor Judas, and we have an exact parallel. Judas was one of our Lord's daily companions, hearing His words, seeing His miracles, and having power given to him as to the other eleven, to cast out devils, and to do many wonderful works; but he became the traitor. Knowing our Lord's private habits and hours of devotion, and His frequent resort to the Garden of Gethsemane while others slept, when He was at Jerusalem, Judas there betrayed his Master into the hands of his enemies, but in a moment of fruitless remorse went the very same day and hanged himself, and so departed hopelessly into utter perdition. How exact are the two histories in all their principal

features. On one side there are David, Ahithophel, treachery, and suicide: on the other there are Christ, Judas, treachery, and suicide by the very same means. And so too, as the verse I have specially selected for my text expresses David's feelings at the moment, "My heart is disquieted within me, and the fear of death is fallen upon me," we know how well these words describe that solemn moment in our blessed Lord's life, when He was in His Agony in the garden, when His sweat was drops of blood, forced through His skin by intense mental agony, and He prayed that the bitter cup which was so close at hand, might, if possible, pass away from Him. Yet only, if so it were the Father's will, "Not my will, but Thine be done." "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death."

Some persons we know think it a part of true faith, indeed a sure mark and assurance of their faith, to speak of death in the most careless and confident terms. They speak as though to say with David in my text, "The fear of death is fallen upon me," would rather argue that they had not fully accepted in their hearts the Christian scheme of Salvation. They forget our Lord's fear of death when the hour was come upon Him, and He had to meet it as fully and completely as we each in turn have; and they turn perhaps to such expressions of S. Paul as, "To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain;" "I desire to depart and to be with Christ which is far better;" "I am now ready

to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand, I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the Faith." And then, forgetting that they are no more like S. Paul than at best the shadow of a thing is like the substance and the living reality, they think it right and well to take all S. Paul's words to themselves, and claim to be themselves in this respect like him.

And it is true, my brethren, if we were each a true Paul in heart and in life, giving up all in this life for Christ's sake, labouring more abundantly than any Apostle, daily for years undergoing dangers and hardships by sea and land, sufferings and persecutions again and again, as he did, and if through all we, like S. Paul, were preserved till, like him, we suffered a martyr's death, *then* we, like him, might perhaps speak as confidently of the Crown of righteousness laid up in Heaven for us, as did the great Apostle. But not so in our stunted and imperfect following of Christ compared to his.

My brethren, I think it a good thing and a wholesome thing for a person to have at least sometimes in life, and certainly on his deathbed, a feeling such as my text expresses, "My heart is disquieted within me, and the fear of death is fallen upon me." For does it not argue the greatest possible presumption for persons like ourselves—Christians of these days—to think and to speak of passing out of this visible world into the

world of spirits, laying aside that tabernacle of flesh in which we have so long dwelt to go into the more immediate presence of God, and of Christ our Lord, there to associate only with other departed spirits, and to know that we have each to go through a trial for life before a just and impartial judge, to have then and there recalled to mind all our past life on earth, all our past thoughts, all our forgotten words and deeds? To know all this, then, is it not presumption, or pride, or blindness for anyone to say he has no fear of death ever falling upon him? A humble Christian (and to be high in God's sight we must be humble) alive to his own sins and shortcomings, but one who tries to love God, and to do His will, yet feels that he is continually drawn aside by his own infirmities or besetting sins, he surely will ever feel a trust mingled with fear, an assurance indeed of God's mercy, and protection, and care of him, but with a sense of his own great unworthiness to be the object of so great a love on the part of Almighty God. Such an one will on his dying bed, if not often before, feel what my text expresses, "My heart is disquieted within me, and the fear of death is fallen upon me." There are few of us of any age but must have witnessed a dying bed, or we have read or heard of such. And is it not the result of our own experiences in life that they generally fear death *least* who have most reason to fear death?

Surely, brethren, it is a sign of faith and of grace

when the sinner shrinks from the thoughts of death and fears to appear in the immediate Presence of God, knowing his own unworthiness, and yet has hope, through Christ, that for His sake God will deal mercifully with him at the great Judgment day. Other men, whose sinful lives have glared in full before the world, pass away oftentimes with the hard presumption of a nature callous to all good and holy impressions. Judas courted death instead of fearing it. So did that other traitor—Ahithophel. But let us pray so to live in God's true faith and fear, so to love God and to love one another, that we may have a good hope of Salvation in our last hours of life, that in the humility of our conscious unworthiness we may on our dying bed—in our last estate—not only have a good hope of Salvation, but feel also this, "My heart is disquieted within me, and the fear of death is fallen upon me."

SERMON V.

Thy Word endureth for ever.

“In God’s Word will I rejoice; in the Lord’s Word will I comfort me.”—PSALM lvi. 10.

IN the Bible version of the Psalms, which is, we may remember, a translation from the original Hebrew—(whereas the Prayer-book version, which we know best, is from the Greek, or Septuagint version of the Scriptures)—there is the word “Maschil,” as you may see before the four Psalms which precede this Psalm, but to these five which follow in succession (lvi.—lx.) there is the word “Michtam.” Both words are now *uncertain* as to their exact meaning, but the former word “Maschil” is supposed to mean “meditation” or “consideration,” and so to mean that the Psalms to which this title is given, of which there are thirteen in all, are an instructive composition. But “Michtam,” which is the title given to this fifty-sixth Psalm, and those which follow, up to the sixtieth, is supposed to mean *an Inscription engraved with a sharp*

pointed instrument, and may refer either to these Psalms being engraved on the rocks by David, when he had to live in the wilderness, or upon brass or marble as we now engrave monumental Inscriptions. The only other Psalm besides these five which has this title is the sixteenth, but these five Psalms in succession relate to a remarkable crisis in the life of David during the lifetime of Saul.

Here it is, "when the Philistines took him in Gath," and that he may have been a Prisoner in their hands and would have been put to death if it had not been for Achish, King of Gath, seems borne out by the fact that David is spoken of in 1 Sam. xxi., as feigning to be mad "*in their hands*," as though a prisoner and in their power; and afterwards he is said to have "*escaped to the cave of Adullam*." Thus the *occasion* would seem to bear out the wording of this Psalm. It will be well for us to bear in mind what I have said, that these five Psalms which follow in succession all refer to particular events in David's life while Saul was still king.

This tenth verse is more especially remarkable from the change of name which occurs in it; "God" is here "Elohim," and "the Lord" is here "Jehovah," which titles I have before explained more than once. With our Christian light we might almost say there is here a special reference to the Holy Trinity, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost the Comforter. "In

God's Word will I rejoice ; in the Lord's Word will I *comfort* me." And it is surely instructive to us, that David in his great trouble thus turns to God's Word and finds Strength and Consolation in it. Yet we must surely suppose that the allusion here is to some *special* Promise or Revelation which God made to him personally from time to time. For of the Holy Scriptures which we possess, and treasure as our greatest and best possession on earth, none at this time were in existence beyond the Book of Job, which is the oldest book of all in our Bible, and the Five Books of Moses, the Books of Joshua and of Judges. Nor is it likely in the harassed life which David led, his earliest years having been passed in keeping his father's flocks in the wilderness, and after that during the years of persecution at Saul's hands, that David could at this time have had any very intimate knowledge of them.

No doubt every Jew was instructed as a child in the outline of his national history, especially the deliverance from Egypt, and this would be in an especial degree the circumstance to which, in the hour of danger and trial, the mind of each faithful Israelite would revert, and would find its expression in just such terms as my text : "In God's Word will I rejoice ; in the Lord's Word will I *comfort* me."

No doubt what David knew best was the events of Samuel's life, and the communications of God made to

him, just as most of us read and know best what is taking place every day in our own land and in our own time and neighbourhood, rather than events long ago past and gone. Besides, we are not to suppose by any means that the particulars recorded in our Bible were by any means the only Manifestations of God, or Declarations of His Will, made to Samuel, or David, or others.

This in our Lord's life is most evident, and no doubt it was the same with every eminent Saint in God's earlier dispensation. No doubt Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Samuel, David, Elijah, and Elisha, and many others, saw, and heard, and did many wonderful things, of which we have no record existing now.

The miracles we have in the Gospels are a *mere sample* of all our Lord did. Thus we are told repeatedly, "He healed their sick," or, "He healed all that were brought unto Him." "Now when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with divers diseases, brought them unto Him, and He laid His hand on *every one* of them, and healed them" (S. Luke, iv. 40.) The Gospels are the mere outline of all He did and all that He said, "Who spake as never man spake." When we are told before the Ascension "He spake to them of the things concerning the Kingdom of Heaven," we must suppose that very much of our Church rules and institutions, for which we have no positive Divine authority, but which we know to have

been practised from the first, such as Confirmation and Ordination, were then regulated and ordered, while it was left to our Faith and Love to abide by these things, without having them in writing, as a Law and an Ordinance of Divine regulation. There is certainly one traditional saying of our Lord's, still preserved, which was well known to the early Christians, and handed down by them from father to son, which bears out what I am saying, and it is this (Acts xx. 35), "I have showed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember *the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.*" Just in this way, no doubt, David had words spoken by God to himself, or to Samuel, or Moses, for instance, which were a great stay and consolation to him in all times of trouble, just as he says here, "In God's Word will I rejoice; in the Lord's Word will I comfort me."

But only think, brethren, how much more favoured we are in this respect than was David. We have the whole Word of God, "which (as S. Paul says) is able to make thee wise unto Salvation, through faith, which is in Christ Jesus." And we not only have this Volume of Inspiration, as in earlier days of Christianity when, before the art of printing was discovered, the whole had to be copied by hand word by word. Nor is it with us as in the earliest days after the discovery of printing (the first printing press having

been introduced into England by Archbishop Bourchier in A.D., 1472), when it was thought a great step to have a copy of the Word of God set up in a Cathedral Church, and chained to a desk, which those few who could read might go to, and there read awhile. But we have this blessed gift of God in the hands of every one of us, printed at an incredibly small cost in every species of type, and in every dialect and language existing upon earth, so that no cottage home need be or should be without its family Bible, with the family History entered at its beginning; and each little child may have their own copy to learn from, and read its sacred stories in their own quiet moments.

Let us remember it is S. Paul's testimony that the Holy Scriptures are "able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith, which is in Christ Jesus." It is not that there are not many difficult passages—for there are many such—many which to this day puzzle the most learned men of every generation; But then there is a very large portion of the Bible easy enough for the poorest and least instructed amongst us to understand, and rule himself by, if there be but the willing heart. There is one thing quite certain, and that is, that one key to the right understanding of God's Word is a sincere desire in our hearts to learn of it, and to do as we learn; and the other is, that Christ is "the end of the Law," or, in other words, that the Saviour's coming upon earth, and man's

Redemption through Him is, in one way or other, the best interpretation, the right meaning, and the principal subject of all Revelation from the Creation to the end of the world. He is "the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, which is, and which was, and which is to come."

And if we, my brethren, would be able to say with David, "In God's Word will I rejoice; in the Lord's Word will I comfort me," the best way of all is, to become conversant with it, by an habitual perusal of some portion every day we live. Timothy had known the Holy Scriptures from a child; ought not every one of us to have done so too? In these days of universal instruction, when we hear and talk so much of learning, and schools, let us not forget that the highest and best learning of all is a full knowledge of God's Word; that he is rich in knowledge who knows most of his Bible in his heart, and shows forth most of it in his life; and he is poor indeed, who, though he know all Mysteries and all Philosophy in the world, yet knows nothing of God's Word, and cares for it as little as he knows.

The last Psalm before this spake of the Psalmist's rule of prayer, "in the evening, and morning, and at noon-day." Let us add to such a rule as this the regular observance of reading some portion, however little, of God's most Holy Word every day. Here is the first secret of a holy life. It is laying a sure foundation

on which we may after build. We shall find it to be to us as the hundred and nineteenth Psalm says (the whole subject of which is God's Word), "Thy Word is a lantern unto my feet, and a light unto my paths." He will not go far wrong who treasures up its sacred stores in his heart, learning to rule his life, not by one favourite passage chosen here and there, but by the whole as a whole. He will find "light to rise up in the darkness." He will find in it Consolation in times of trouble, Strength in time of temptation, Comfort in sorrow, and Guidance in all doubts and difficulties. Yea, he who knows his Bible best, and loves it most from his earliest days, will best say and feel what my text expresses, "In God's Word will I rejoice ; in the Lord's Word will I comfort me."

S E R M O N V I .

Easter Exaltation.

“Be Thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: let Thy glory be above all the earth.”—PSALM lvii. 5—11.

THIS Psalm has in the heading of it, in the Bible version, not only the word “Michtam,” which I explained with the last Psalm, but it has also the word “Al-taschith.” Now the meaning of this word, “Al-taschith” is “Destroy not,” and we are told that this particular Psalm is ascribed to David, “When he fled from Saul in the cave,” whether of Adullam, or of Engedi. All these five Psalms, which come together, are attributed to the same period, viz., that while David was being pursued by Saul; therefore this word “Al-taschith” singularly connects itself with this passage in 1 Sam. xxvi. 8-9, “Then said Abishai to David, God hath delivered thine enemy into thine hand this day: now therefore let me smite him, I pray thee, with the spear, even to the earth at once, and I will not

smite him the second time. And David said to Abishai, *Destroy him not* : for who can stretch forth his hand against the Lord's anointed and be guiltless?" And we know how often, if not invariably, in the end, even in this world, God acts towards us as we act towards one another. There is a remarkable instance of this near the close of David's life. For in the twenty-second chapter of the Second Book of Samuel we read, "And when the Angel stretched out his hand upon Jerusalem to *destroy* it, the Lord repented Him of the evil, and said to the Angel that *destroyed* the people, It is enough ; stay now thine hand."

But with us this fifty-seventh Psalm is one of those specially selected for our use on Easter Day, so we may be sure that the interpretation put upon it by the Church of Christ refers it to our Lord's Resurrection from the dead. And I think we may find in it more than one passage which directly connects it with that great event. Besides the verse of my text, which occurs twice in the Psalm, there are these words, "I, myself, will awake right early." And this is exactly what did occur, we know, on Easter Morn. Before the Sun had risen upon the earth, while it was yet dark, the bands of death had been burst, and the Saviour, by His own giant strength, left the tomb. "He did awake right early." It is in this way that some few words here and there in a Psalm connect each Psalm so

directly with our Lord Jesus Christ. There is yet another passage in this Psalm which connects itself with the Resurrection, and it is this, "Awake up my Glory." Now, if we turn back to the sixteenth Psalm, which is thrice quoted in the early part of the Acts of the Apostles, from its connection with the Resurrection, there we find as follows, "Wherefore my heart was glad, and *my Glory* rejoiced ; for why? Thou shalt not leave My soul in Hell, neither shalt Thou suffer Thy Holy One to see corruption."

And if we look attentively at the verse of my text, which occurs twice in this Psalm, we have also in it surely a special reference to the Resurrection of Christ, and His Exaltation which followed. It was after that, that He, speaking (as man as well as God, for that is the sense in which we are to take His words) said, "All power is given unto Me, both in Heaven and in earth." And so also, S. Peter, standing before the Council at Jerusalem, testified, "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree ; Him hath God *exalted* to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins" (Acts v. 30.)

The Resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is the one great central fact of Christianity. Other forms of faith and worship have adopted, with more or less error, this doctrine or that, embodied in our Creed, but no other form of Faith has ever built

itself upon the Resurrection, first of its Head, and in due time of all who shall have ever lived.

Christ is "the first-fruits of them that slept," for though others by His power have been restored to life, such as Lazarus, the Widow's Son, and the Daughter of Jairus, and the Saints at His death on the Cross—yet these all had to undergo death again, and to pass again into the unseen world, while in them, as in all of us, is fulfilled the original sentence passed on man for his disobedience and transgression in the beginning, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." But Christ rose from the dead, never to return to it again. "Death hath no more dominion over Him." "He is alive for evermore." And so no doubt these words, "Be Thou exalted, O God, above the Heavens, and Thy Glory above all the earth," began truly to be fulfilled when the Lord rose from the dead, and soon after ascended into Heaven, and then sent forth his Apostles everywhere to found His Church, which shall never fail until He cometh again.

But though this is the beginning of the fulfilment, it is by no means the whole or the most glorious Exaltation of Christ. That will come when the moment arrives for Christ to ascend once more from this earth, not then alone, as before, but surrounded by all those whom He, by His Cross and Passion, has won from sin and death unto life, who shall share in His glory, and be made like unto Him in His eternal and

glorious Kingdom. And is not this a great consolation for us to fix our hearts upon, day by day?

How many and great are the troubles of the world around us on all sides? It may be we are ourselves for a moment free from such, but our turn will also come to suffer in some way. No home goes on for long without some trial, or some loss, in one or other of its members. Just as "Christ Himself went not up to glory, but first suffered shame," so must it ever be, even with them who most perfectly follow in His steps. We are "made perfect through suffering." Each little child is made conscious of pain in the very earliest stages of life; and the most aged, if to a certain extent they are spared that, are sure to return, more or less, to the mind and ways of childhood. As one writer says, "We see them, for instance, in whom is the gift of righteousness, more or less under what may be called the powers of dissolution. Even the best of men, when they grow old, become credulous and irresolute, and of a weak will, and feeble in self-control, and haunted by false fears, and are sensitive of being remarked upon, resisted, or advised. So it has ever been, and ever will be, with the righteous. They look like other men, they have the same wants, the same toils, the same gains and hopes, the same sicknesses and decays, the same besetting infirmities of a fallen nature. The light of the righteous does indeed 'shine before men,' but not in all its fulness: enough to bespeak the

gift that is in them, but not to unfold its breadth and glory. Men see that they are in some way higher than themselves, just as they can tell that a secret cipher is a written language, though they cannot unravel what it says."

But even in this, are we not very like our Lord before, in, and after His Transfiguration? That was for a moment a Vision of what He was in truth. "His face did shine as the Light, and His raiment became exceeding white and glistening." It was a momentary Revelation of His true self to the astonished eyes of the three chosen Disciples. When the Vision was gone, He returned to be to them as He had been before. And just as that same body of His was so soon after transfixed upon the Cross, and laid in the tomb, even so must the best on earth ever fade away, and pass out of sight, and be in our eyes as though they had never been. But not so. "Be Thou exalted, O God, above the Heavens, and Thy Glory above all the earth." We wait and look for our great change; we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now, but they await but the Manifestation of the Sons of God. That will be the true moment when the Glory of God will be exalted above the earth, above all *on* the earth. It is a blessed thought for us to ponder over, and keep alive in us, that we shall one day pass beyond all that now hinders and harrasses us, all that now chains us down to earth; a day will come when

all sins and faults, and weakness, and ignorance, all those clouds which now rest upon us will have passed away; and as our Lord rose, and ascended, and is in glory, so shall we who in our degree follow Him during our earthly course, rise, ascend, and be in glory. If the Transfiguration, for a few hours at most, was so wondrous a sight that the Apostle prayed it might never depart or change, what will it be to each one who has loved Christ on earth, and been made like unto Him, to see Him shine in His own Glory: many that are first now, last then, the last now, first then? It is this that we need to keep before us. "As one Star differeth from another Star in glory, so also is the Resurrection of the dead."

It was a great day which dawned upon the earth when, in the Beginning, God said, "Light be, and light was;" but what was this to the Beginning of the New Creation, when each who has followed Christ shall shine in Christ's own glory, and shine each in his own ray of inextinguishable light? For this is the world making ready and drawing nigh. While evil men are waxing worse and worse, there are hidden Saints treasuring up in themselves the seed of an unclouded glory—a glory brighter than the sun—but like the light of the moon, borrowed altogether from Him who is the Sun of Righteousness. For this let us hope, let us seek, let us strive after, that it may be ours, "It is good for us to be here," here in God's House,

and in His more especial Presence, that we may be reminded of such things. "Good for us also to be here," to fulfil our work and time in this world, and to seek perfection in the way we spend and pass our days on earth, still to look forward to the day and hour "When Thou, O God, shall be exalted above the Heavens, and Thy glory above all the earth."

S E R M O N V I I .

Eternal Reward.

“ So that a man shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily He is a God that judgeth in the earth.”—PSALM lvi. 11.

IN this Psalm there are three special divisions. Firstly, it describes the wickedness of sinful men in a variety of ways. Next, it declares under six different emblems the destruction of all who wilfully live on in sin and the transgression of God's laws. Thirdly, in the last two verses it expresses not only the Salvation of God's people but their surprise at the greatness of their own salvation and the entire destruction of the wicked. Sinners are here described as unrighteous, mischievous, and wicked: as froward or headstrong, as false and venomous, and as wilfully closing their ears and their hearts to the truth. Then follows a description of their sure and complete de-

struction, though they be strong as lions their teeth shall be broken; or, they shall be like a Reservoir of water which is let go and runneth away; or, they are like a broken Arrow which when shot from the bow falleth to the ground; or, they shall be like a snail perishing in the sun; or, like an untimely birth; or, as dry thorns, consuming in the fire, are scattered in a moment by the fierce and sudden wind of the desert. But through all troubles and trials in life, they who are faithful to God shall be preserved and in the end saved for ever. They shall even wonder at the greatness of their own Salvation, so far beyond all that they expected or looked for. It is really a great Gospel truth which the Psalmist had arrived at when he wrote the verse of my text, "verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily He is a God that judgeth in the earth."

There is no truth more clearly revealed in the Gospels, or more often dwelt upon, in one way or other, than this. It lies at the root of many of our Lord's parables; and it forms the subject of much of His other teaching. It is repeated again and again in the Apostolic Epistles, and it forms the great hope of God's people in the future that Jesus Christ, Who once came to save us, will come again at the last day to judge the world and set all things right. So taught S. Paul, "But now God calleth upon all men everywhere to repent, because He hath appointed a day in the

which He will judge the world by that Man, Jesus Christ, Whom He hath ordained, whereof He hath given assurance unto all men in that He hath raised Him from the dead." So we read in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, "For we must all appear before the Judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in His body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or whether it be evil."

In the same way this subject, which is so well expressed in my text, lies at the root of a great many of our Lord's Parables: *e.g.*, the first Parable of all, the Sower Sowing the Seeds which fell into very different soils, three parts failing, one only ripening to the harvest; and that next one to it, the Parable of the Tares sown in after the wheat and both growing up together until the harvest hour comes—that harvest which is the end of the world, when the reapers will be the Angels, when the wicked will be bound in bundles for the everlasting fire, but "the righteous shall shine forth as the Sun in the Kingdom of their Father."

But my text seems, as it were, to express a certain amount of surprise as at an event unexpected and beyond all calculation and forethought. But is not this exactly what our Lord describes will happen in the particulars He has Himself given us of the last great day. Thus He speaks to all, "When the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy

Angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory, and before Him shall be gathered all nations, and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats; and He shall set the sheep on His Right Hand, but the goats on the *left*. Then shall the King say unto them on His Right Hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. Then shall the righteous answer unto Him (as in surprise) Lord, when saw we Thee an hungred and fed Thee, or thirsty and gave Thee drink? When saw we Thee a stranger and took Thee in, or naked and clothed Thee? Or when saw we Thee sick or in prison and came unto Thee?" Then "many that are first shall be last, and the last first."

You see at once, my brethren, how true the words of my text are to the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is His coming again in Glory which is to terminate all evils and miseries under the Sun, and to set all things right; which is to reward all that deserve rewarding, and to recompense to every one of us exactly as our life has been, when weighed in the true and just balance of the righteous God. If it were not for this hope and expectation, how beyond all explanation would be many things which happen every day in this world, and pass in the minds of some men, as though God, because He does not *at once*

interfere, had ceased to interest Himself altogether in man's affairs and man's ways.

Herein lies the explanation of all untimely accidents as they seem to us; of all success which sometimes seems to attend a course of sin, of all hard trials unjustly borne, of all sorrows upon sorrows, which seem to afflict families or individuals—all these things, and the doers and sufferers alike, pass on into the great ocean of the world beyond this; and though we have waited, and still wait, for the explanation of them, it will not be so for ever. The great day for setting all things right, for redressing all wrongs, for healing all sorrows meekly and quietly borne, *will* come at last. "For yet a little while, and He That shall come will come, and will not tarry." This is a great truth to be continually borne in mind by us. We are apt very often to prejudge and to misjudge men and things, and often to look on with unnecessary fear, or with presumptuous hope, to future times. What we want more of in our hearts is a quiet and assured confidence in God—patience to abide His time, and a ready will to submit ourselves, our ways, and our wishes, all to Him, His wisdom and Providence. And I do not know anything that is more likely to give us this than the assurance that a day will come when all men will be obliged to confess that "Verily, there is a reward for the righteous: verily, He is a God which judgeth the earth."

God's purposes in nations and in individuals are seldom quickly accomplished. It is we whose sayings and doings last but for a day, or years at most, who act hastily and rashly. God's ways are long in coming to pass, but they last for ever. Thus it was that Noah builded the Ark, and worked on and waited for a hundred and twenty years, but in the end was saved. Thus it was that Moses passed through forty years of temptation in the King's Court in Egypt, and for forty more lived as an Exile in a distant land, before God called him to lead Israel forth out of Egypt. Thus it was that Israel wandered for forty years in the desert, but at length were settled in the Holy Land, a land whose abundance is expressed by the words, "a land flowing with milk and honey." Thus it was that Joseph passed through the sorrows of his youth, and his early temptation, and his unjust imprisonment, but in the end ruled over all the land of Egypt, and saved the lives of all the people of the East.

And such, my brethren, is the nature of our own probation, and of that of the whole Church, which has already lasted for these eighteen hundred years and more. God will bring to pass His own ends in His own time. We may well look on and mourn over the divided state of Christ's Church, which we see separated into a thousand forms and sects of them who still claim to belong to Him, and to His

Body, of which one special note is its unity and oneness. As S. Paul writes, (Ephesians iv. 4) "There is one Spirit and one Body, one Faith, one Lord, one Baptism, one God, Father of all men." And then, as a necessary consequence of this state of division in which we live in our day, as our Lord foretold it would be, is, that love waxes cold as sin abounds, and good works are paralyzed by the powers of evil and the spirit of division which is rife amongst us. We have to be like the Jews when rebuilding the Temple after the Captivity, with one hand they builded, but with the other they held their weapons, ever ready to defend themselves against their enemies.

Indeed, brethren, it is a sad and melancholy thing to see to what an extent, on all points touching on faith and religion, every man's hand is against every man in our day, but it is our phase of trial. We have to try and keep ourselves from being turned aside either to the right hand or the left. We must try never to break the bonds of charity. We have but to follow the old paths marked out for us from the Word of God by our mother the Church of England. We must try to be men of prayer, devout, patient, desiring of God that He will increase our Faith, and make our Love abound yet more and more one toward another. As a rule, it is that the few do so; but it is, remember, but the few who will be saved out of the many that are called. If we but play our part as good,

PSALM LVIII.

sincere, honest Christian men and women, happen what may in the world, or to ourselves, there will come a time at last when we shall all be led to express this truth, each with his own lips, "Verily, there is a reward for the righteous, verily He is a God which judgeth the earth."

SERMON VIII.

A universal Truth.

“ God sheweth me His goodness plenteously.”—PSALM lix. 10.

THE event in David's life out of which this Psalm arose, is said to be that escape for his life from Saul which is related in the nineteenth chapter of the First Book of Samuel. It explains to us several of the references contained in this Psalm; as you may see by comparing it with these words, “The evil spirit from the Lord was upon Saul, as he sat in his house with his javelin in his hand: and David played with his hand. And Saul sought to smite David even to the wall with the javelin; but he slipped away out of Saul's presence, and he smote the javelin into the wall: and David fled, and escaped that night. Saul also sent messengers unto David's house, to watch him, and to slay him in the morning: and Michal, David's wife, told him, saying, If thou save not thy life to-night, to-morrow thou shalt be slain. So Michal let

David down through a window ; and he went, and fled, and escaped. . . . And when Saul sent messengers to take David, she said, He is sick. . . . So David fled, and escaped, and came to Samuel to Ramah, and told him all that Saul had done to him.”

From this we can at once understand David's prayer to God in this Psalm, to be delivered from his enemies, and to be saved from bloodthirsty men ; “for lo ! they lie waiting for my soul, (that is my life) : the mighty men are gathered against me, without any offence or fault of me, O Lord. They go to and fro in the evening.”

After this, as in many Psalms, the tone of fear and sorrow is dropped ; and there is a sense of hope, and deliverance, and thankfulness, when he says, “My strength will I ascribe unto Thee ; for Thou art the God of my refuge. God sheweth me His goodness plenteously ; and God shall let me see my desire upon mine enemies. . . . As for me, I will sing of Thy power, and will praise Thy mercy betimes in the morning ; for Thou hast been my defence and refuge in the day of my trouble. Unto Thee, O my strength, will I sing, for Thou hast been my refuge, and my merciful God.”

But from David we turn in every Psalm to “David's greater Son,” our Lord Jesus Christ, as all the Psalms, in some way or other, have their truest and fullest meaning in Him. We know, in the short account of

the Saviour's life which we possess, how continually He was surrounded by enemies, seeking occasion against Him; trying to catch something out of His mouth, that they might accuse Him to the rulers: bringing to Him hard questions, of which they sought the solution from Him only to bring Him into disrepute with the people, or to accuse Him to the Roman Governor. We know how at last He was seized by night, by a band of armed men breaking in upon His hour of solemn prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. Still, we all know how in the end God frustrated all their designs, and turned their evil intentions into good. True, He submitted to death, but by His own death He conquered death. In Him death found its spell for ever broken, and was turned into sleep; for He raised Himself to life, as He will raise us up at the last day, never again to return to corruption. Thus, just as David escaped from the malice of Saul, so Christ triumphed over the malice of the Jews. "He raised Himself to life again, because it was not possible that He should be holden of death." "I AM the Resurrection and the Life: he that believeth in Me, though He were dead, yet shall he live: and whoso liveth and beliveth in Me shall never die."

But of all the verses of this Psalm, I have more especially selected these few beautiful words, "God showeth me His goodness plenteously:" for this surely,

my brethren, is the true experience we all have when we come eventually, if not at first, to look back on past years, and to view things in their right light, some more so and some less, just as some men love God so much more than others do. And are not we ourselves as a rule drawn most to those who show most love to us: and is it not "to them who love God, that God makes all things work together for their good."

Our Lord reminds us of God's universal goodness to man when He says, "He maketh His Sun to rise on the evil and on the good; and sendeth rain upon the just, and upon the unjust." There is no one alive in the world but he is day by day a proof, though he may know it not, nor think about it, that God sheweth His goodness to him plenteously. For what has any one that he has not received, and does not every day receive, from God? Who is there that has food and clothing, a home of his own, kind friends, and a Christian education, and the means of grace and of knowing God, if he will; daily preservations too from many accidents and troubles which befall others; health continued to him, it may be, through many years; a strong arm to work, and a heart to act the right part in life, as a child to its parent, or as a brother or sister, or as wife or husband, or as parent, or master, or as servant; but does not see and feel that all these are, each in themselves, God's good gifts,

bestowed in some measure alike on the good and on the evil, on the thankful and on the unthankful ?

The pious mind of each of us will more and more be glad to feel, and to say, and to think, " God sheweth, to me at least, His goodness plenteously ; " He hath not rewarded me according to my works ; He hath not dealt with me hitherto as I deserved. We should try, my friends, more and more to see instances and proofs of God's goodness towards us : how He has watched over us when we watched not for ourselves ; how he has often shielded us in the hour of temptation, or when we have fallen has brought the memory of our sins to our mind with shame and sorrow, thus bringing us back to Himself. It does us good, as often as we can, to recount the mercies of God we have received ; to look back and reflect upon the years we have as yet lived ; to see His Fatherly hand ever shielding us, or helping us, making light to arise upon us in the hour of darkness ; or turning our evil into good, frustrating the devices of evil men, or of our great adversary the devil, against us ; and so leading us on by a thread, as it were, so fine that we have not yet noticed it, yet so strong that now we see it we would not let go of it for worlds. Even our sorrows are often turned into joy, and many have been the experiences like S. Paul's, " I rejoice in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of

God is shed abroad abundantly in our hearts by the Holy Ghost Which is given us." Yes, dear brethren, the more we each really look back upon our life and time passed in this world, the more truly shall we all, sooner or later, I am sure, be able to say with David in my text, "God sheweth me His goodness plenteously."

Think what a blessed institution is this, to all men, of the Lord's Day in every week. Where should we be if Sunday were a working-day to every one of us, as it might be, like all the other six days in the week? Think how it brings rest to the working man and the labourer in the fields, how much sooner he would be worn out and good for nothing, if no Sunday came round in each week to stop the strain upon his thews and sinews. And to the mind of the busy man: think how the man whose brain and mind are at work early and late, all the week long, for himself or for others, must ever welcome the return of God's Day, claimed from the world, its cares, and its service, for rest and devotion.

If it were not for Sunday, how soon should we all lose all thought and impression of higher and better things, and live only for this world, and never for what is greater, holier, and better. He who best spends his Sunday is sure to be happiest in all the days of the week. The very thought and service of God from the heart makes all toil light, and sweetens all sorrows, for it reminds us how "God sheweth us His goodness

plenteously," and will at last bring us safe "into the haven where we would be,"—His own Presence and kingdom in Heaven.

Here, too, we have this dear old Parish Church to meet together in, and join in Christian offices, prayers, and sacraments. It has been provided for us without trouble, or merit of our own, by the piety of others; and here God has come to our forefathers, and comes amongst us still, blessing us with all spiritual blessings in Christ; filling our hearts with love to Him, and to one another; teaching us how to fulfil our duties in this world, so as in and by them to win Heaven at last, and turn our temporal duties and callings into blessings for ever and ever. These old walls have vibrated for hundreds of years past with the tidings of God's grace to all men. One generation after another has arisen, and here been baptized, and then watched over "through all the changing scenes of life, in trouble and in joy," and at last laid to rest in the faith of Christ, and the hope of a Resurrection to Eternal Life at the last day; and each and all would say now, if they thought not of it before, "God sheweth me His goodness plenteously."

I trust many of us can feel and say that this is true to them now, in the weekly Celebration which we now enjoy, of the Holy Mysteries by which Christ feeds the souls and bodies of His faithful people, with the bread of Heaven,—His own Body and Blood,—unto Eternal Life Man does here eat Angels' food.

If our means of grace be as they are, our greatest blessings in life, and this holy Sacrament be, as it is, the highest and most blessed of all means of Grace to the soul, then brethren, some of you will, I am sure, say with me, in this way above all others, “ God sheweth me His goodness plenteously.”

SERMON IX.

Going forth to battle.

“ O be Thou our help in trouble: for vain is the help of man.”

PSALM LX. II.

THERE is a remarkable resemblance, and yet a remarkable difference, between this Psalm and the hundred and eighth Psalm. From the fifth or sixth verse up to the end, the two are almost word for word identical, the only difference is in the first five or six verses. This Psalm begins in a tone of fear and sorrow, whereas the hundred and eighth begins in a jubilant strain of praise and thanksgiving to God. By comparing the two together we may reasonably come to this conclusion, that these Psalms were *battle* songs of David's army, and that this Psalm (sixtieth) was used *before* going into battle, but the hundred and eighth when the battle was *over*.

This will at once give a meaning to these verses in this Psalm, “Thou hast given a token (or ‘banner’)

for such as fear Thee to rally under, that they may triumph because of the truth. Hast not Thou cast us out, O God: and wilt not Thou, O God, go forth with our hosts? O be Thou our help in trouble: for vain is the help of man. Through God we shall do great acts, and it is He that shall tread down our enemies." The sixth verse seems to refer to a passage in 2 Samuel, iii. 18. There it is said, "The Lord hath spoken of David, saying, By the hand of My servant David I will save My people Israel out of the hand of the Philistines, and out of the hand of all their enemies." Here it is said, "God hath spoken in His holiness, I will rejoice and divide Sichem and mete out the Valley of Succoth." Then David goes on to rejoice in the union of all Israel under him, having ceased from their divisions and dissensions. Thus he says here, "Gilead (*i.e.*, Gad) is mine, and Manasses is mine; Ephraim is the strength of my head; Judah is my lawgiver." This union, we know from 2 Samuel, ii. 8, took place upon the death of Ishbosheth, the son of Saul, whom Abner had set over them. Then were all the tribes of Israel united under one head, even David; but this was far from all. The heathen nations by which Israel was surrounded were, one by one, conquered by David. Thus all his life long David was engaged in war with one or other nation. It was true in him, as S. Paul says of Christ, the true son of David, "He must reign

till he hath put all enemies under his feet." David's reign ended with war, and the wars of Israel ended with David. For many years after that Solomon, the Peaceable, succeeded to his father's throne, Israel had peace on all sides.

Now these victories over one or other of the neighbouring nations is the subject of the next verses of this Psalm, in which it is said, "Moab is my washpot; over Edom will I cast out my shoe; Philistia be thou glad of me. Who will lead me into the strong city? Who will bring me into Edom?" These first expressions describe the abject subjection of Edom and Moab. The simile is taken probably from the custom in those Eastern lands for great people to be waited upon by servants, one of whom was accustomed to pour water over his master's hands, while another loosened or carried his shoes. This last custom is referred to very plainly in the New Testament, when S. John the Baptist describes his own inferiority to Christ by saying, "Whose shoe's latchets I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose." And when David thus is contemplating the conquest of Edom, with its strong fortress of Bozrah, considered to be impregnable, his trust and his hope turn to the real source of all strength, and he says, "Wilt not Thou, O God, go out with our hosts? O be Thou our help in trouble, for vain is the help of man."

This, then, my brethren, may be taken as a simple

explanation of the original meaning and references of this Psalm, the more worthy to be observed because the very same words occur again in the hundred and eighth Psalm. It is a war song for Israel to use, this Psalm *before* a battle, that (hundred and eighth) *after*. In it is celebrated the union of all Israel under David, and the assurance of the heathen—Moab, Edom, and Philistia—being one by one brought into subjection to the same great king.

But as every Psalm, in one way or other, refers to David's great Descendant, our Lord Jesus Christ, so we may be sure that here is described the spiritual contests and conquests of Christ and His Gospel over all lands. The Gospel was first preached in Jerusalem. Gad and Manasses, Ephraim and Judah were the first called to be Disciples of Christ the Lord from Heaven. "Tarry at Jerusalem (said the Lord in His last words to the Apostles) until ye be endued with Power from on High." "For salvation is of the Jews," He had proclaimed at the beginning of His ministry, and so to the Jews, and to the Jews only, was the Word of this Salvation sent for ten or fifteen years. We all know how the call of the Gentiles to turn unto Christ began with Cornelius at Cæsaræa, but it required a special Vision from Heaven to S. Peter before he, a Jew, could believe that the Gentiles should indeed be fellow heirs and partakers of all the promises of God in the Gospel. Then it was that "Moab, and Edom, and

Philistia" turned unto Christ. As S. Paul says, "But now God calleth upon *all* men, *everywhere*, to repent, because He hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man Whom He hath ordained, of which He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead." "All kings shall fall down before Him; all nations shall do Him service." "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me." (S. John xii. 32.) Thus this Psalm may be taken as a prophetic History of the spread of the Gospel. Christ, as it were, proclaims His Kingdom as embracing all men, Jew and Gentile, as open to all believers, as often as we repeat the words, "Gilead (or Gad) is mine, and Manasses is mine; Ephraim also is the strength of my head; Judah is my lawgiver; Moab is my washpot; over Edom will I cast out my shoe; Philistia, be thou glad of me."

Let us look at the words of my text in this light, that is, as a prayer to God to enlarge the Kingdom of Christ on earth by the Power of His Spirit. "Christ has set up His token, or banner, for such as fear Him, that they may triumph because of the Truth." His banner is the Cross; and so the Church says in each generation, with S. Paul, "God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." Then this word "banner" may remind us that we all, by our Baptism, are made and become soldiers of

Christ, and are bound to fight manfully under His banner against sin, the world, and the devil. And as every soldier fights not for his own good or safety only, but for that of others, for his home and native land, so the certainty of our love to Christ is shewn chiefly by our love for our brethren who are in this world, because they, like us, belong to Christ, or, that they may become His. This should be the secret power of all our prayers and efforts. To deny ourselves for others' sake is a first Principle in every true Christian's heart and life. Our Master gave Himself for us, and we must each, in some way, give ourselves, give up, or give away, for His sake and their sakes. Thus our Lord says, "Except a man take up His Cross daily and follow Me he cannot be My disciple." This is the great subject which is brought before us, year by year, during the season of Lent. Our own sins should continually draw us afresh to the Cross of Christ, and that sense of sin and desire of doing better should especially manifest itself in doing good to others. "Through God we may all do great acts." The poorest person has by prayer the same power with God as the greatest and highest in the land.

We little know how greatly the spread of truth and of the knowledge of God may depend upon one or two poor persons saying, again and again, with true devotion and earnestness of heart, "Lord, Thy Kingdom come." We know not how much the spread of

true Religion may be due to their so saying on their knees, again and again, "Hallowed be Thy Name, O Lord;" or, once more, how many wants may be supplied, how many sorrows healed over, how many troubles warded off or ended, by each poor person's earnest prayer, "Give us day by day our daily bread." Let us learn, my friends, more and more to turn our hearts to the wants, and feelings, and sins of others. It is the very essence of Christianity to take us out of ourselves, to seek each other's good, and so to glorify God: "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."

Let us each see if we cannot find out new ways of doing this. True this is one special call of Lent, but it is good for us at all times to humble ourselves before God for our many past transgressions, and to renew our vows and our efforts after holiness, and to do good. It is the work of God in us, but it comes of our own will being set to co-operate with His will. Then is He never wanting to us, if we are not wanting to ourselves. "Look not every one on his own things, but every one also on the things of others," *i.e.*, in the good of others seek ye your own chief good; in the happiness of others seek ye your own surest happiness in life; in turning others from sin to righteousness, whether by word or by prayer, or by your own good example, ye shall have your own sins forgiven of God, for "Charity shall cover a multitude

of sins." "Through God we may all do great acts" for other men, for the world, and so for God. "Wherefore (as S. Peter says), wherefore, the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things ye shall never fail."

S E R M O N X .

Christmas Day.

“Thou shalt grant the King a long life, that his years may endure throughout all generations. He shall dwell before God for ever.”—

PSALM lxi. 6-7.

THIS is the Birthday of the Lord from Heaven. Every birthday is, or should be, in some way a matter of rejoicing. The mother, at the first moment, “no more remembereth the anguish for joy that a man is born into the world.” And as years go by and slip away, whatever form that child takes, whatever part it plays in after life, there is no one year but it has for itself, and those in whom it has most interest have for it some, or rather many, causes for joy and thankfulness, as each Anniversary of its birth returns. We are all of us constantly receiving, and are surrounded by, unnumbered and unnoticed blessings, of which every life is full. Some may seem less than they once were, but even that difference, however perceptible it may be, has its Blessing to those who can from their hearts say, “Lord, Thy will be done,” and who know when troubles

come that they are sent on us in some way for our good, and what is, is better in some way than what might have been, and might have befallen us.

But here is the great Birthday of all come round again once more. Who could have looked upon that little Child, born and lying in the stable at Bethlehem, and seen in it the King of kings, the Maker and Creator of all things, or have perceived that to it beyond and above all else belong these words of my text to-day, "Thou shalt grant the King a long life, that His years may endure throughout all generations. He shall dwell before God for ever?"

This Psalm has, however, like most, a long antecedent history. It is supposed to have special reference to David's banishment from Jerusalem during the rebellion of Absalom. The fourth verse appears to have a direct reference to the Holy of Holies, which preceded Solomon's Temple, with the winged Cherubim overshadowing the Mercy Seat; and it is a vow on the Psalmist's part of continual acts of worship and devotion there when it says, "I will dwell in Thy tabernacle for ever, and my trust shall be under the covering of Thy Wings." Thus these words fix the date of this Psalm very distinctly as being prior to the building of the Temple, while David was king, but in trouble. They contain an assurance of his Preservation and restoration to his Throne for years to come; and not only this, but we must remember that by David is often

meant his lineal descendants, his sons and grandsons, from one generation to another. Just as S. Paul says, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, "Levi also paid tithes in Abraham, for he was yet in the loins of his father Abraham when Melchisedec met him;" so, very often the descendants of David are called "David," as in our own times the sons of many generations past take their rank, and eminence, and position, from the original Founder of some great name. In this way the eighty-ninth Psalm speaks of David, "My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of My lips: I have sworn once by My holiness that I will not fail David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his seat is like as the Sun before me. He shall stand fast evermore, as the moon, and as the faithful witness, in Heaven."

Now, all these great promises to David's house were summed up and centered in the Event of this day. Here was the true King of Israel come amongst us. Here was the true Jacob's ladder set up on earth, and reaching to Heaven. Here was the true Tabernacle of God, in which God dwelt visibly before the eyes of men. Here was the Stone cut out without hands, which should become a Mountain. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us." And thus the Angel spake at the Annunciation to the Blessed Virgin, "Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found favour with God. And behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb and bring forth a Son,

and shalt call His name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest, and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His Father David, and He shall reign over the House of Jacob for ever : and of His kingdom there shall be no end." This was the true and best fulfilment of the statement in my text: yet how contrary to all that we should have supposed, how different was that fulfilment to anything which we should ourselves have imagined.

What was the life, as seen on earth, of the Royal Infant of to-day but this? Scarcely admitted into the number of God's people, by the outward rite of Circumcision, before He became an Exile by the hasty flight into Egypt, only that He might thus escape the sword of Herod, who slew, it is said, fourteen thousand children in Bethlehem and the country around, of two years' old and under. Then for thirty years an obscure life in a small, far off, and despised town of Galilee, with one gleam of light let in upon that life, at twelve years of age, to show it unto us. Then the three years or so of ministerial life followed, a life with no settled home—"The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head,"—a life of scant food, of dependence upon others for the very necessaries of life; of weary journeys and sleepless nights; of persecution, rejection, and contradiction of sinners; all summed up in the final Consummation of the Cross, when to all mere

human eyes all hope, and promise, and influence, seemed at an end.

Suppose some one to see the true significance of these words of my text, and then to see and know all that the human life of Christ was on earth, and no more, and what an utter failure would they seem to be. But not so, God forbid! This was God's way of working out the full and perfect fulfilment of the Promise, "Thou shalt grant the King a long life, that His years may endure throughout all generations. He shall dwell before God for ever."

The very same body which had submitted to death on the Cross, pierced in hands and feet by the nails, and in the side by the soldier's spear, that Body which was born to-day, now is risen and is exalted to God's Right Hand in Heaven, and liveth for evermore. True God and still man, identified for ever by the memorial wounds of the Cross, "I am He that liveth and was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of hell and of death."

It is well, brethren, that we should for ever keep in mind the great Event of to-day, "The Beginning, as it is, of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." Even in Heaven, the Angels who needed not Redemption rejoiced in this supremest instance of God's love to man, and on this night "There was with the Angel a multitude of the Heavenly Host praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good

will to man." How much more may and ought we to rejoice that God hath not left us in our sins, but on this day has sent His everlasting Son from Heaven, that we might live through Him. "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice." Days of sadness come often enough, and soon enough, upon most of us in every life, as even in the Great Life the thoughts and sounds of Christmas have hardly died away when Lent, and then Holy Week begin. But let us be glad, and rejoice unto God for the Birth of Christ. And I would that every Birthday from this were more religiously observed than I suppose it is by all or most of us. Our birthday is like a milestone along our road of life: It should ever remind us how, as years slip silently away, we have passed through one stage after another, and we never know, even for a day, what remains of them to come to us. A birthday should be to every one of us a day of special prayer to God. There is so much in every year for which we have to be thankful, and we all need so much God's guidance, providence, and protection through the time to come. If we are not mindful and thankful for past mercies, how can we hope or ask for mercies to come? I would say to all of you, Let us not only observe this festival joyfully, thankfully, and religiously, as the Birthday of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, but let us think more than we may have done of our own birthday, as often as its Anniversary returns.

I am quite sure that a due sense of God's goodness and mercy to us is the best assurance of a continuance of it to us for the time to come. As the Psalmist says, "Whoso offereth Me thanks and praise, he honoureth Me; and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the Salvation of God." Let us try to be more sensible than we are of the little Blessings of every day, little because so regular and continuous, but not really little, as we so often find when once they have been taken from us. This is the best way for each to become as is said of the Infant of to-day, "Jesus increased in Wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man." As we grow in years let us pray that we may proportionately grow in grace; that as life advances with us to its truest perfection in this world, so our treasure in Heaven, which faileth not, may as silently and surely grow; and at length, when age overtakes us, or if ours be, as to so many, an earlier and more premature passage out of this life, we may inherit a life which shall endure throughout all generations, and we may dwell each of us before God for ever.

SERMON XI.

Justification and Reward.

“Thou, Lord, art merciful: for Thou rewardest every man according to his work.”—PSALM lxxii. 12.

THIS Psalm is an illustration how imperfect and inaccurate in many words and phrases, beautiful English as it is, is our present Translation of the Bible. In some places where the same word is used in the original, our translators appear to have supposed it would be an improvement to vary from the use of the same word each time. In this Psalm there is one little Hebrew word which is best translated, “only,” and if once, it should be so each time that it occurs; whereas in this first verse it is rendered “truly,” “my soul *truly* waiteth still upon God.” In the next verse it is rendered “verily,” “He *verily* is my Strength and my Salvation.” In the fourth verse it stands as “only,” “their desire is *only* how

to put him out"; but in the fifth and sixth it is again varied, "My soul wait thou *still* upon Him"; "He *truly* is my Strength and my Salvation." The present divisions also of our Bible into Chapters is another misfortune in some instances, though this has been in part remedied in the New Calendar of Daily Lessons, by adhering to the sense and paragraph, and not so strictly as formerly to the arbitrary division into Chapters. Yet, though these two facts are the case, we may well be thankful that hardly in one case is any important truth or doctrine affected, as might have been.

There are several very beautiful expressions in this Psalm, and such as specially connect themselves with our Lord in His days on earth, and when He stood alone, forsaken of all, and felt at last almost as though forsaken of God. When it says, "My soul, wait thou only upon God, for My hope is in Him. The rock of My might and My hope is in Him." "O put your trust in Him alway, ye people, pour out your hearts before Him, for God is our hope."

But let us attend especially to this last verse of all, "Thou, Lord, art merciful: for Thou rewardest every man according to his work." Such words seem to ally themselves very closely with the last verse of a preceding Psalm (fifty-eighth): "So that a man shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily He is a God that judgeth the earth," "A judgment

according to works." What an immensely important point for every one to bear in mind ! It teaches us that nothing is lost that is done for God, and that every sin, in some way, mars the future happiness of each of us. Surely there is nothing more plainly taught us in Holy Scriptures than this—the very words are used over and over again—as when our Lord says (S. Matt. xvi. 27), "For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father, with His Angels; and then He shall reward every man according to his works." So S. Paul says (Romans ii. 6-7), God, "Who will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life." And so, not to multiply a number of instances, one of the last verses of all in our Bible is this (Rev. xxii. 12) "And behold, I come quickly: and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be." The only difficulty which such declarations present to some minds, which do earnestly desire to know the truth, is, how to reconcile a judgment according to works, with an equally important doctrine, viz., Justification by Faith. They present no difficulty to my mind, though I can quite sympathise with those who feel differently; for in the first place, Faith must come before works acceptable to God, for "Without faith it is impossible to please God," says the Apostle; while "He who cometh to God must believe that He

is, (that is, that God exists), and that He is a Rewarder of all them that diligently seek Him." Faith is the condition which God requires on our part, but it does not merit our forgiveness or justification before God, any more than our works, for that alone is the efficacy of Christ's Redemption of sin; but justification is bestowed upon us by and on our faith. Then, being made free from condemnation and death, we are bidden, and we are able, to work for God so as to please Him more and more. Illustrate this statement by this. Suppose a master to go forth to hire labourers to do some particular work by what we call piece-work, say the cultivation in some way of a certain piece of land by the acre. We must all know that a young, active, skilled, and industrious man may do in the same time half as much again as another who is old, or unskilled, or idles away his time; yet both work in the faith of a payment. And though the difference is that God never wants our work, which may be a necessity in earthly occupations (there the analogy is at fault), yet it would not be right and just, would it, any more for Him to reward both labourers alike, the young, active, skilled, and industrious man, as the old, unskilled, and idle man? So it is, and so will it be, with our Heavenly reward.

I remember reading, many years ago, in a book which then was well-known, a remark to this effect, for I do not remember the exact words. The objection was supposed that there could be but little difference

between the worst man who shall hereafter be admitted into Heaven, and the best man, who shall be shut out for ever, and the reply was quite to the point, how do we know but that there will be as little to choose between the state and condition of the one and of the other? It is a very wrong thing, a great mistake, for people to think of Heaven as one vast hall, where all shall be alike, where there can be no differences, no higher state for one than for another, and so on. No wonder then if people get into a way of thinking it matters little how they live, so that in the end, just before life is past, which is a certainty to no one of us, even for a day, if by a few last prayers and thoughts they make their peace, as they think they will, with God. I cannot help thinking that this lies at the root of many a sinful life, of many a sinner's going on, or at least beginning, a course of vice and wickedness. When he has far progressed in it, then, we know that the conscience becomes dull, if not dead; and the Holy Spirit, which is the one and only source of all good we ever do, or desire to do, ceases to plead and influence that man's heart. So let us try to remember at all times that there is nothing more plainly, or more often told us in one way or other, than, as this Psalm says, "Thou Lord, rewardest every man according to his works." It may be that David meant and referred, in saying this, only to this life. We know the higher application of the words, and that they reach beyond death to the

Judgment, and after the Judgment to the Heavenly Life with God for ever and ever.

My brethren, had such a truth not been told us, as plainly as it is, I do not see how God, who is infinitely just, could deal justly with every man by any other rule. To treat all alike hereafter, however differently they have lived and done on earth, would not be justice, but the very reverse. And so we are told such words as these, "Well done, good and faithful servant, be thou ruler over ten cities." To another, "Be thou ruler over five cities."

We are told in that great revelation chapter of the Resurrection, "There is one Glory of the Sun, and another Glory of the Moon, and another Glory of the Stars: for one Star differeth from another Star in Glory, so also is the Resurrection of the dead." So the Apostles were promised twelve thrones, where, as Assessors to the great Judge, they shall judge the twelve Tribes of Israel. And so on the other hand, that we may not suppose that all in the place of torment will be alike there, our Lord has said, "Woe unto thee, Chorazin; woe unto thee, Bethsaida. It shall be more tolerable, in the Day of Judgment, for Tyre and Sidon than for you."

"In my Father's house there are many mansions." And so the Apostle says, "He that soweth plenteously, shall reap also plenteously: and he that soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly." There is a harvest

of glory to come of all works of love done for Christ here, done in faith, done for God, so particular, so minute, so exact, a regard for all such in all of us, that, on the one hand, the cup of cold water given in Christ's name to a little child shall have its reward, while for every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof at the Day of Judgment.

And now, I think, I have given you proofs enough of the great Truth contained in the concluding verse of this Psalm we have reached to-day, "Thou, Lord, rewardest every man according to his work." Think what an incentive to good is thus presented to our minds. Nothing is lost, nothing will be forgotten, nothing will go unrewarded, which is really and faithfully done unto God. I know of nothing which can so encourage us to go on under disappointments and trials in life as this. What we do aright we do for no temporal reward in this life only. "Though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved," yet would not Paul give up his love, but go on in it to the last, knowing that "There is laid up for me," as he says, "A crown of glory, which the Lord, the Righteous Judge, shall give me at that day." It gives a steadiness of character to keep this truth impressed ever on the mind. Day by day, though few or none notice us, we may be, indeed are, sowing seeds which will produce a sure Harvest in us and for us; we may go on laying up our treasure in Heaven, "where neither rust nor moth

doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through or steal." And if the heart be set on God, ways are never wanting, of His providing, in which to serve Him, so as to win His favour, and to be high in His love. Though nothing that we can do is of necessity to Him, still He accepts it as though it were, and He regards us for having done what if done in us at all, is really the Work in us of His own most Holy Spirit. Where we are is His placing and ordering for us. When it is best that we should change, or that our great change overtake us, He will order that as is altogether happiest and best for us. Only where we are let us do those duties which lie upon us day by day, faithfully, patiently, earnestly, and religiously, "Not slothful in business, but serving the Lord." Not neglecting calls, work, occupation of heart and mind, of brain or of body, which come upon us, and seem to be our rightful occupation, for the moment at least, in this life, but making time for God every day we live. Then He will make time for these things; and he who gives most to God, will somehow be sure to find that he has still done most and best in the common duties of this life.

We have been thinking lately of that manger cradle at Bethlehem on Christmas night, and for days after, as we know of the visit of the Wise Men of the East, yet what went on there was the theme of the song of a multitude of the Heavenly Host. Why should not our own homes be so too; or rather, are they not so regarded from

above, day by day and hour by hour? Let us try to live more in the recollection of these things, how God watches over us, and sends His Angels to minister in one way or other for one and all of us, whatever our home or our lot in life may be. "I am the Vine, ye are the branches. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the Vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in Me." "It is God that worketh in you both to will and to do, of His good pleasure."

SERMON XII.

The Soul's Thirst for God.

“O God, Thou art my God: early will I seek Thee. My soul thirsteth for Thee, my soul also longeth after Thee in a barren and dry land where no water is. Have I not remembered Thee in my bed, and thought upon Thee when I was waking?”—PSALM lxxiii. 1-2.

AMONGST the Psalms there are some which seem to contain in themselves the essence of all the rest. An old English Divine, Dr. Donne, once Dean of S. Paul's, says, “Some Psalms are Imperial Psalms, that command over all affections, and spread themselves over all occasions; universal Psalms that apply themselves to all necessities. This sixty-third Psalm is one of these: for of those constitutions which are called Apostolic one is that the Church should meet every day to sing this Psalm. And so S. Chrysostom tell us, “It was decreed and ordained by the primitive Fathers that no day should pass without the public singing of the sixty-third Psalm.” Its first words remind us of those other words of David's, “Like as the hart desireth the waterbrooks, so longeth my soul after Thee, O God. My soul is athirst for God, yea, even for the living God;” and these words of our

Lord's, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after Righteousness for they shall be filled." "Who-soever shall drink 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."

This Psalm, like the eighty-fourth, is a special manual of Devotion for those who are debarred by sickness, or other cause, from the privilege of Public Worship and the Divine Service—an act of spiritual Communion with God when the reception of the holy elements is impossible. It consists of two principal parts. The first eight verses describe the longing of the Heart set on God, and the joy of such in Communion with Him; and the latter verses describe the destruction of David's enemies, and his own triumph in consequence. The date being the same with the two preceding Psalms, it seems to have a special connection with these words in 2 Sam. xv. 25, where David, parting with the Ark of God, says, "Carry back the Ark of God into the city: if I shall find favour in the sight of the Lord, He will bring me again, and show me both it and His Habitation."

How exact is this description of the true spirit of prayer—the aspiration of the devout soul toward God and Heaven—like the bodily longing for water of the weary traveller in the dry and barren deserts of the East when parched by their scorching sun.

Let us remark, then, this determination of the

Psalmist's will, "Early will I seek Thee." All of us have more or less power over our own will, to direct it to whatever end we please, and like every other habit or qualification, we may have more and more power to do this. Is it not a common proverb amongst all of us, "Where there's a will there's a way"? And this is true as regards heavenly things quite as much as about earthly things. Many have done and gained things which to some would have been impossible, only from the steadiness and determination of their own will to carry out some particular course they have marked out for themselves, or to aim at some particular end or object in life. By undeviating perseverance they have accomplished all, and more than all in the end, that they ever intended. It is more this simple patience, determination, and perseverance, than great Genius or great Talents, which leave their mark behind them. The world is full of such instances. Such was the elder Stephenson, the father of that railway system which we may say has brought all the world together, and changed the face of every land. From his own lips, as my own guest once for a night in College, and during some hours' journey in the old time and mode of travelling, I heard from his own lips how by perseverance and determination of will, not daunted by one failure or another, but returning to his life's design, like the spider to entrapping his victim, though it escape again and again, he carried his work through to its successful end, till, as he told me, from beginning

life as a humble Watchmaker, he had lived to be the guest of Kings and Queens. So, too, of that still more recent work of one man, which has turned the Continent of Africa into an Island, and has given us a passage by sea from England to India and Australia, it was a determination of will to persevere under any amount of disappointment, and over all difficulties, which rendered his success certain in the end.

Now this fixity of purpose, this persistence of will, is just as necessary to obtain Heavenly things as it is to obtain success in this world. Here is the secret of so many failures, of the early promise of a life ending in disappointment, as so often happens—of so much of the form of Godliness without the power thereof. There is so often no thirsting, no longing desire of the soul to seek God through all difficulties, under all trials, and to win Heaven as our home, let all other things perish, if need be. What we all want is some portion of that supreme and perfect effort after God's will which our Lord expresses in Himself by the words, "My Meat is to do the Will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work." It is the subordinating all and everything else to this one object in life. It is the seeking first and before all else the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. Then all other things fall into their proper place, and he who is rich toward God finds that all else that is best for him abounds towards him and his.

But there is one word in this first verse, and there

is the concluding sentence of the latter verse of my text, which remind us how we must go to work in order to arrive at anything of this kind. The first may refer, in one sense at least, only to some amongst us now, but the latter to all of us every day we live. The first says, "*Early* will I seek Thee." Yes, early. Early, that is, (best of all) in life. Early in our fresh young days and intercourse with the world. The boy is what the child was, and the man becomes what his first opening years in life have trained him to be, as surely, as generally though it may not be (and God forbid that it should be) as invariably, as the old and spreading tree has perpetuated the figure and shape for the most part, which it began to take in the first decade of its Century of growth. This is the rule; the exceptions are like the change which sometimes makes itself at once apparent on transplanting a tree to a new soil or a more sheltered spot. So changes come over the man in later life which he has partly caused and partly brought about in and for himself; but as a rule the idle lad developes into the idle man. So with the diligent and holy, serious or trifling, devout and truthful, or irreverent and false character. Youth is the shadow, man is the substance. For grace, or faults, of character will ever harden in most hearts, just as the thorn on the rose bush hardens from its green and soft state, into its hard, brown, and cruel old age.

What do we learn from this better than the lesson Solomon has left us near the close of the saddest book

of all he ever wrote, in the Retrospect of his own past life? "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy Youth, while the evil days come not, nor the days wherein thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them." God has said, "They who seek me early shall find Me." And such is the record which is left us of all the most prominent lives in the Book of Books. Look through it all, and the same story is told from first to last. Righteous Abel, Enoch, who "walked with God, and God took him" to Himself earlier than any of the other original Founders of our race, Abraham, Joseph, Samuel, David, Daniel, and S. John, the youngest of the Twelve Apostles, all loved God, and trained themselves up in His laws, early in life, and there their lives stand out in the world's memory, and will never fade away.

The only sure way of holiness, and of finding what the Apostle says, that God's "commandments are not grievous," lies in trying to form habits of devotion, love, purity, and truth, *in ourselves* early in life, never too soon; the sooner—the easier, the better, and happier for us. This is the best end for all schools and teaching to keep in view. Secular learning may prove a curse and not a blessing, but "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the Life that now is, and of that which is to come." Nothing can replace to us the misspent hours, or eradicate without a life-long struggle evil habits early acquired, and allowed to run wild. The sure way in this life is to

follow from the first the narrow path of Heaven. Yes, "Early will I seek Thee." So let us each say, for ourselves if young, and if not young ourselves, still, so far as lies in us, in and for our own children or others around us, "Early will I seek Thee."

And this, too, we may all do, and all should do, in another way pointed out to us in the latter verse of my text, "Have I not remembered Thee in my bed, and thought upon Thee when I was waking?" Thus did the Psalmist begin and close each day with prayer and attendance upon God. And, though it is well for us that our devotions,—we on whom the Spirit of God rests,—we so need His grace and influence, and must seek it, if we would have it,—though it is well that our devotions should not be altogether confined to the first moment of our rising up and lying down to rest, still those are moments which must be given to God as an unfailling and invariable rule by all of us.

To do so our Lord Himself had to "rise up a great while before it was yet day, and go out into some solitary place, and there pray;" and His is the great pattern life, of which a glimpse is here and there afforded us, that they who will may follow Him. The daily blessings of every life demand some special office of Thanksgiving, as well as some special prayers for their continuance. Sleepless nights, when they come, teach us, if we have never learnt before, what a blessing our nightly rest is. How true it is that sleep is "nature's gentle nurse," recruiting wasted powers which have been exercised

to exhaustion, and renewing each of us in mind and body for the work and duties of each new day. But so is every blessing, of which each life amongst us is full, if we would view that life in each particular aright. How many, I suppose, never bestow one thought upon the blessings and mercies of one day, much less of every day throughout a long life. Happily for us all God makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, "and sendeth His rain upon the just and upon the unjust."

Still, amongst the lost treasures of a life that is past, none will prove greater than this, that any of us should have given no time daily to God, Who gives every day in its full measure to us. "O God, Thou art my God; early will I seek Thee." Yes, early let it be in life, if that be in our power now; but if that be past, done, or undone, still, early in each day let us give some time upon our knees to God, with hearts, and hands, and voice, and eyes lifted up to Him Who giveth all. Let us be able to say of ourselves, "Have I not remembered Thee in my bed, and thought upon Thee when I was waking?" Have I not found the truth of these Apostolic words, "Draw nigh unto God, and He will draw nigh unto Thee?" Yes, "Thou hast been my Helper, therefore under Thy wings will I rejoice: my soul hangeth upon Thee: Thy right hand hath upholden me."

S E R M O N X I I I .

God's care of us.

“And all men that see it shall say, This hath God done, for they shall perceive that it is His work.”—PSALM lxiv. 9.

THIS is another of those Psalms which follow one another, and are all attributed to David, during that period of his life while he was being persecuted by Saul—hunted, as it is said, like a partridge on the mountains.

There is a great resemblance in many particulars between this Psalm and the seventh, which is also attributed to David in the earlier period of his life, before he became king ; and there is an old tradition among the Jews, that this Psalm was not only prophetic of Daniel, but that it formed his special prayer to God when cast into the lions' den at Babylon ; and remembering how, as the Apostle says, “Our great Adversary the Devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour ;” it is remarkable that its words are interwoven into both the Second Collects in our Order

of Morning and Evening Prayer. In the first we pray, "Defend us, Thy humble servants, in all assaults of our enemies, that we, surely trusting in Thy defence, may not *fear* the power of any adversary;" and in the latter Collect we pray, "That both our hearts may be set to obey Thy commandments, and also that by Thee we being defended from the FEAR of our enemies may pass our time in rest and quietness."

Such was David's desire that Saul might relent, and that his heart being turned towards him, as in earlier and happier years, he might be allowed to live in peace. It is a noble saying of David's son (Proverbs xxv. 21), which S. Paul has woven into that beautiful chapter on Christian perfection (Romans xii.), "If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink, for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head." But Saul, if he relented at all for a moment, that was all; till, like the progress of Judas in later times, from sin to sin, he fell among his slaughtered people on the mountains of Gilboa. So in years before, while Pharaoh was hardening his heart against all conviction or remorse, God was moulding Moses and the people for the great event of their deliverance from Egypt. He did the same in and for David.

These Psalms, which follow in succession, show how often and how earnestly David lifted up his heart and his voice in prayer to God, and in due time was delivered out of all his trouble. But what is this

but the history of all the great lives which stand out in God's Word for our example and imitation? It is as we say, week by week, "O God, we have heard with our ears, and our fathers have declared unto us the noble works which Thou didst in their days, and in the old time before them." Thus was righteous Noah saved from the otherwise universal destruction, and made heir of all things, and was sent forth to repeople the drowned world. So was Abraham called out of his native heathen land, and preserved through all dangers, to become the Father of the Faithful, the Father of Israel, as numerous as the Stars of Heaven for multitude, and the Progenitor of our Lord Jesus Christ according to the flesh. So it was with Jacob, so with Joseph, so with Moses, first preserved from drowning and starvation when cast out upon the river, then saved from Pharaoh's wrath, and again, in forty years' time, from another Pharaoh, who again and again refused to let the people go. And, not to name more, so was it with Daniel, whose name is, as I have said, especially connected with this sixty-fourth Psalm, when, for God's sake, he was cast into the den of hungry lions at Babylon; but their mouths were shut that they should not hurt God's faithful prophet.

In looking back upon the lives of each and all of these great names of old, we may well say, in the words of my text from this Psalm, "This hath God done: this is His work." But the greatest life of all

is the truest fulfilment of all of these words. For that life in all that it accomplished, especially at last in the triumph of the Cross, and Resurrection, Ascension, and Mission of the Holy Ghost, was not done by God intermediately, as we may say, in what He does to and for us at any time, but it was done by God *Himself*, in the very Person of the Eternal Son—"Thou art Christ, the Son of the Living God." This is the keystone of the Christian arch. This is the Foundation on which all other Christian truths are built; this the Rock on which the Church is built, which can never fail in any land while it is held to fast and faithfully; no man only, though truly man, but the Eternal Son, the very Word of God, and Creator of all things, "By Whom all things were made, and without Whom was not anything made that was made." And though the history of that greatest life of all is the most true fulfilment of all, in what it did and accomplished of these words, "All men shall say, This hath God done, for they shall perceive that it is His work." Yet, my brethren, in all the great events of our own day and times, which come upon one nation or another so rapidly and continuously, and no less in the little and unimportant features and events of our own individual life, in them all is my text no less true than it was in those years long gone by in which this Psalm was written.

When our Lord says to us, "Take heed that ye

despise not one of these little ones, for verily, I say unto you, that in Heaven their Angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in Heaven," what does He mean but this? that the life and heart, and all that affects the good and happiness of the youngest child amongst us, is every day and every hour a concern to the Angels of Heaven. How much more must this be the case, as we are sure it is in the everyday history of the life of every one of us, who, having come to years of maturity, have to fulfil our duties in this life, have to play our separate parts, and must in some way or other touch and influence the hearts and lives of others around us, and go forth to our work and to our labour until the evening? In the good that we receive, and in the evils which we escape, in the first awakening of our hearts to any earnest love of God, in all opportunities of doing or receiving good from others, as well as in greater events which now and then occur in the life of all of us, tinging and altering our whole after life in some way or other, in one and all alike of such things, we should say, if we could see all things aright, in very truth, "This hath God done," we shall perceive that "it is His work."

And thus it is, that as often as we are called to minister by the bedside of the sick man, in each case we are bidden to remind the sufferer in these words, "Dearly beloved, know this, that Almighty God is the Lord of life and death. and of all things to them

pertaining, as youth, strength, health, age, weakness, and sickness : wherefore, whatsoever your sickness is, know you certainly that it is God's visitation." Afterwards we are directed to remind each Christian sufferer in his hour of trial, "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth : yea, it is for our profit that we may be partakers of His Holiness." But, not only in this way, but in all outward things which we receive in this life, and enjoy—our food and clothing, light and air, the early and the latter rain in their seasons, the day's strength for our work, and our night's rest and restitution—all these alike are God's free gift to us. And though they be, as I fear is so often the case, received by many of us, and it may be for years, and perhaps through the greater part of a long life, without any thought or acknowledgment that they come to us from God, yet is it most true, "This hath God done, let us perceive and say, it is His work."

In thought of this, let us not, I would say to you, wait for some greater event which stirs our hearts and brings about some turning point in our life, like the Prodigal Son, when he awoke to a true sense of his present fallen condition and his former but lost blessings and happiness at home ; but let us refer the everyday blessings of the humblest life amongst us to the goodness of Him, Who is "the Author and Giver of all good things." And this thought should prompt us

to more devout thankfulness for our daily blessings than is always expressed or always felt. Nothing so raises us and will support us when the hour of trial comes upon us, as come it must, as a habit of this kind of referring all to God, little things as well as great, this lively sense of His good Providence over each of us, of his love and care for the least and poorest amongst us, nay, even for the birds of the air, and all the world of animate nature by which we are surrounded, as our Lord has taught us. This is one of the striking characteristics of the Psalms. If one Psalm says, "I laid me down and slept, and rose up again, for the Lord sustained me;" another says, "I have been young and now am old, and yet saw I never the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging their bread;" and another, "Lord, Thou hast covered my head in the day of battle;" and another, "He forsaketh not His that be godly, but they are preserved for ever."

My brethren, events pass and repass so rapidly in our day, that we can hardly fail to gather from the signs of the times that "the coming of the Lord draweth near," and "the end of all things is at hand." Each of the greater events in the history of the world have come to pass at the end of two thousand years; and "as one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day," so these six thousand years, when they will now soon have passed, answer to

the number of the days, which may have been a thousand years in length, in which this world was created in the Beginning, and were followed by the Sabbath of rest. To-day is now no assurance of what to-morrow will be. Let us accustom our hearts to say and feel, whatever happens, "This hath God done : this is His work." And thus shall we learn more and more to feel that all is right and for the best, and shall be able to rest our hearts calmly on these words of Christ, "Take no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself."

SERMON XIV.

New Year, (1877.)

“Thou wilt shew us wonderful things in Thy righteousness, O God of our Salvation, Thou That art the Hope of all the ends of the earth, and of them that remain in the broad sea . . . Who stilleth the raging of the sea, and the noise of his waves, and the madness of the people. Thou crownest the year with Thy goodness.”—PSALM lxxv. 5, 7, 12.

THIS very beautiful Psalm has three principal divisions in it, viz., the first four verses, which describe the thoughts and feelings with which all people should approach God. Next, the fifth to eighth verses, which refer to God's mighty acts and Providence in the world of nature and of men; and, thirdly, the verses after the eighth are a special thanksgiving to God for sending an abundant rain in a dry season, and making the land to abound in corn and cattle.

The occasion of this Psalm appears to have been the close of some year of great trouble, scarcity, and

war. Some great national convulsions had taken place, and great distress by sea and land, which were all now happily ended, and peace, and plenty, and prosperity were restored to Israel.

We may conclude from the second verse, "Thou That hearest prayer, unto Thee shall all flesh come," that these troubles and dangers had been the subject of special prayer with many in Israel. And now, when those prayers were heard and answered, this Psalm was their tribute of Praise to God for the restoration of peace, safety, and an abundant harvest.

It is a matter of doubt when exactly to place the date of this Psalm. If it is rightly attributed to David, we may suppose the occasion to be the year in which the land was released from the three years' famine sent upon Israel in punishment for Saul's cruelty to the Gibeonites, as told us in 2 Sam. xxi. We are told there that "David enquired of the Lord, and the Lord answered him;" which gives a meaning at once to those words, "Thou That hearest prayer."

But by some the date of this Psalm is placed later by three hundred years, and is attributed to the reign of Hezekiah, when Sennacherib's army was destroyed in one night, and Jerusalem was delivered, and an abundant Harvest was promised to the land, as Isaiah describes (chap. xxxvii. v. 30.) The fulfilment of that promise would be an exact occasion for the use of all the latter part of this Psalm. But

whichever date may be the true one—David's reign or Hezekiah's—the Psalm is a memorable instance of what we should especially notice in almost all Psalms, viz., how it attributes every event which happens, little as well as great, by sea or by land, to God's Providence and ordering.

It is this which so much makes the whole Book of Psalms so precious to us all. They are a tribute from man to the goodness and care of God over all His works: as when it says, "What is man that Thou art mindful of him: or the son of man that Thou so regardest him?" "Who is like unto the Lord our God, That hath His dwelling so high, yet humbleth Himself to behold the things that are in Heaven and earth."

In the Bible version God is here called in beautiful language, "the *confidence* of all the ends of the earth, and of them that are far off upon the sea"—"Which stilleth the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the people." "Thou crownest the year with Thy goodness."

These words lead us easily to think of the little boat on the lake of Gennesaret, when the great and sudden storm arose, and the waves beat over it, and it was in jeopardy, but Christ lay asleep in the hinder part of the vessel, tired out with the work, and teaching, and strain upon mind and body of the day now past and over. But at one word from Him the

waves dropped and the wind ceased, and "there was a great calm."

And surely, my brethren, these words of my text do come home to us at this moment, especially these last, "Thou crownest the Year with Thy Goodness." We have lately parted, as it were, with an old friend, and have to associate ourselves with a new one—with the future rather than the past. The threshold is crossed, and the door closed behind us.

How full is last year, and every year, if we would but view all things aright, with blessings to us all. So few of us realise all, and even much of what we have to be thankful for, until it is lost. Who thinks much of his daily health, of his daily food, of his home and his friends, the peace and quiet and safety we enjoy by night and by day, and of all the thousand little incidents of happiness, and of immunity from ills which surround us day after day? It is a great blessing that we at least end the old year and begin the new at peace with all nations. Amid all the wars and rumours of wars which have filled our minds and our ears for so many months past, let us bless God that hitherto we have not been called upon either to defend our own land from hostile attack, or to take active part in a distant and threatening quarrel. Nor have we had disturbances at home. How much have we heard of the sufferings of others far from our own happy land? Why should they suffer so much and

we be spared? Why should [other] lands be visited with sword and tumults while we escape? If we know anything of the sins, vices, and wickedness which are so common in our land—in our own parish: when I hear, as I have done from an eye-witness, from one who was in the terrible railway collision only ten days ago, that numbers of those who escaped were smoking, drinking, and swearing in the very same room where the dead and dying and injured were lying, without one thought of God's goodness in having spared them both life and injury, nor concern for others than themselves, why should it be, that it is still true to us and our land "Thou crownest the year with Thy goodness?" Is it that God deals with us as He promised Abraham that He would deal with the guilty cities of Sodom and Gomorrah? "If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes." (Genesis xviii. 26.) If it be so, let such a thought stir us up to try to become holier and better Christians than we are. "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another."

We can place, brethren, no limit upon the fact, how far the welfare of most depends upon the few who really give themselves to God in heart and life. Has not God made it an actual law in His dealings with our world, "that He will visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth

generation of them that hate Him, but will show mercy unto *thousands*—thousands—in them that love Him and keep His commandments.”

This is a great incentive to a holy life. It is not only that we ourselves have a special blessing to hope for and look for from it, but there is this also, and it is our greatest happiness in life, that we never know how far or how widely we may affect and promote the good and the happiness of others. If there is one thing which may and should make life dear to all of us, it is surely this, that we be allowed to do some good in our generation, and that others who know us not, nor have ever, it may be, heard our name, may rise up and call us blessed. Thus it is true that our own good is best of all promoted by our regard for others—in doing, or at least trying to do, good to others—in forgetting self in the interests and welfare of others. Let us not be discouraged by any apparent failure in this. It is S. Paul who says of himself, “Though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved.” Let us look for our reward not here but in a higher and better world. Nothing will so astonish God’s people in the Day of Judgment, as to find how God has noted and remembered every little thing that we have ever done for one another. The commonest events of our humble, obscure, every-day life—the cup of cold water only—the one kind word—the forgetfulness of self in and for others’ sakes—these are our

treasures, going before us to Heaven, let the world regard them as they may. And so I would ask you, from the first verse of my text and from this season of wintry storms and tempests of which we nowadays read so often and so much, in your daily prayers to remember "all who travel by sea or land," especially those who "are afar off upon the seas," as the Psalm words it.

We are a maritime nation above all people. It is that little silver streak of twenty miles of sea which is our country's first and special protection, and saves us at this moment from a military conscription, which would otherwise be enforced. Our ships traverse all seas, they are scattered all over the world; the number of shipwrecks which are registered are never less, and often far exceed in one year, an average of three for every day all the year round. It was but a few years since that the finest and newest vessel in the Royal Navy suddenly turned keel uppermost and sank to the bottom with some five hundred and sixty souls on board; since that another of those same great iron vessels upon which the protection of our country, humanly speaking, so much depends, sank from a collision with a sister ship off the coast of Ireland. And day by day, especially when great storms arise, of which we so often read, one vessel after another is lost with all, or most, on board. Let us then not forget to commend all persons and property at sea to God's care and goodness in our daily prayers.

One Psalm teaches us so beautifully that it is He "Who bringeth them unto the Haven where they would be," and in the words of my text, God is addressed thus, "O Thou that art the Hope of all the ends of the earth, and of them that remain in the broad sea." I would commend to your prayers and thoughts the thousands of brave men, whether sailors, merchants, or travellers, both men and women, whose lives are every day exposed to storms and tempests at sea. We begin this year peacefully at home, let us think of them who are afar off upon the seas. Let us remember in our prayers those who are at strife and war, or in suffering of any kind. Let us remember the widows, the fatherless, and the desolate at home. We begin this new Year in many ways happily and thankfully, let us try to live throughout its every day that we may hope to say once more at its close, O Lord, "Thou crownest the year with Thy goodness."

SERMON XV.

Easter.

“O come hither, and behold the works of God: how wonderful He is in His doing toward the children of men. He turned the sea into dry land, so that they went through the water on foot; there did we rejoice thereof.” “O come hither, and hearken, all ye that fear God, and I will tell you what He hath done for my soul.”—

PSALM lxvi. 4, 5, and 14.

THIS sixty-sixth Psalm is ascribed almost unanimously among commentators to the time, if not to the pen, of Hezekiah. It seems to have been composed just before or just after some great deliverance of Israel, and no doubt, if we are right in attributing it to the reign of Hezekiah, it refers to the great deliverance of Jerusalem from the army of Sennacherib, which melted away in one night. The reference which it makes to the passage of the Red Sea, and forty years afterwards of the Jordan, as on dry land, gives it a special application to the Paschal season which we are

again approaching. When as Israel emerged from the Red Sea on its opposite shore in safety, seeing their enemies drowned in the waters which threatened to be their destruction, so our Lord Jesus Christ rose from the grave, after His passage of the Red Sea of His own blood, and became victorious over death and the grave. It is to this that special reference is made at every baptism, when we say, "Almighty and Everlasting God, Who of Thy great mercy didst save Noah and his family in the Ark from perishing by water; and didst safely lead the children of Israel, Thy people, through the Red Sea, figuring thereby Thy Holy Baptism."

There is one thing peculiar in this Psalm, and that is, the sudden change it makes at and after the thirteenth verse from the plural to the singular number. After that verse it is "we" and "us;" but at and after the thirteenth verse it speaks only of one person. Thus the two parts of my text begin with the same words, "O come hither," but the first says, "and behold the works of God: how wonderful He is in His doings towards the children of men." The latter verse says, "O come hither and hearken, I will tell you what He (God) hath done for my soul." The explanation of this has been thought to be this, that the first twelve verses were to be sung in chorus, the latter only by a single voice; still I should rather regard them as, first, the expression of the devout thankfulness of Israel for their national and sudden deliverance from the

Assyrians, and secondly, as Hezekiah's *own* and *personal* acknowledgment to God for what He had done for him. That is a very beautiful sentence, containing much the same great truth, as each part of my text expresses, which occurs in a later Psalm, I mean this: "To the godly there riseth up light in the darkness." It was a dark time indeed to Jerusalem, and especially to Hezekiah, when Jerusalem was surrounded by this large Assyrian army, and all hope of deliverance, except by Divine interposition, seemed taken away. Then it was that Isaiah inspired courage, and raised the hopes of the good king by these words spoken of their enemies, "Because thy rage against Me, and thy tumult is come up into My ears, therefore I will put My hook in thy nose, and My bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest. For I will defend this city to save it for Mine own sake, and for My servant David's sake." All this came to pass by the sudden destruction of Sennacherib's army in one night, the work of the Angel of death, as of old in Egypt on the Paschal Eve.

It was a dark night again, and all hope seemed past and gone, when as soon as the Sabbath was past, before day had yet dawned, the faithful women set out to complete, as they intended, their care for the Lord's Body, which the approach of the Sabbath had interrupted. But Israel had once more, as it were, passed

through in safety the waters of the Red Sea. The great representative seed of Abraham, the Son of David, had already risen when they came; the stone was rolled away, and the tomb was already empty, except for the two Angels in white, who sat where the head and the feet of the Lord had lain. And so of that moment we may say once more with true Christian joy and significance, "O come hither, and behold the works of God: how wonderful He is in His doings toward the children of men. He turned the sea into dry land, so that they went through the water on foot; there did we rejoice thereof." "O come hither and hearken, all ye that fear God, and I will tell you what He hath done for my soul." "Now is Christ risen from the dead and become the firstfruits of them that slept: for since by man (Adam) came death, by man (Christ) came also the Resurrection of the dead: for as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." "Because I live, ye shall live also." "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus shall God bring with Him." These are the great truths, this last the greatest of all truths, which we have to repeat again and again, and to hand on from generation to generation. It is the centre of all our hopes, that as Israel passed safe through the Red Sea, and again through the waters of the Jordan, so too, as Christ passed through death and the grave to His Eternal Glory, and highest exaltation at God's Right

Hand, so may we, living our life here below in and unto Him, pass through death and the grave unto Eternal Life with God for ever in Heaven."

This is of course our greatest change of all, when this mortal shall have put on Immortality, and we shall be clothed upon with the Glory and Righteousness won for us through our Great Redeemer. Then, above all other times, shall we say, "O come hither, and behold the works of God: how wonderful He is in His doing toward the children of men." "O come hither, and hearken, all ye that fear God: and I will tell you what He hath done for my soul." I was weak, but now am strong; I was mortal, but now am I clothed upon with life for ever. I was tempted, but now am I free for ever from all fear of loss and falling away. Now am I one with Christ, and He one with me for evermore.

But in lesser ways it is the experience of every devout life, of every faithful follower of Christ, that God is for ever making a way for him, as it were, "through the Red Sea." And we may each continually be saying, even in this life, "O come hither, and hearken, all ye that fear God; and I will tell you what He hath done for my soul."

That mystical interpretation of "the sea" which is given to many passages in which "the sea" is mentioned, which applies it to express the troubles and restlessness of this world by its perpetual motion and its sudden storms, which all man's efforts are in vain to

resist, in this we may truly see an emblem of this troublesome world, never quiet, but always full of sorrow and trials of some kind or other. Something of this kind seems especially to interpret the various references to "the sea" in the Book of the Revelations, especially when near its close we are told that "the Sea shall give up the dead which are in it," but in the glorious Vision of the New Heaven and the New Earth, "there was no more Sea."

Let us look, I would say, on the sea as the type of all those troubles and trials which fall so thickly around us, if not at this moment upon ourselves; yet in them all and through them all, as my text says, "He turned the sea into dry land; so that they went through the water on foot; there did we rejoice thereof." It was so with the faithful women on the morning of the Resurrection. It is so with each of us if from day to day we try to follow God and to do His will in all things.

It is a very blessed promise for us to rest upon that "God will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able to bear," but will ever make a way for His own people to escape. It is not well for any one to pass through life looking only on the dark side of things; and not rather saying with the Psalmist, "When I said my foot hath slipped, Thy mercy, O Lord, held me up. In the multitude of my sorrows which I had in my heart Thy comforts have refreshed my soul."

It is thus that God is continually bringing good out of evil and turning evil into good, frustrating the devices of evil men, turning the sea into dry land, so that we may walk through the water on foot, and therein rejoice.

The world of our day is full of wars and rumours of wars, yet with all this, those international acts of love and mercy which our own days have produced go far to compensate for the wide-spreading suffering they produce. "If thine enemy hunger, feed him: if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head." And so it is, the great and free intercourse which steam and telegraphic communication have brought about in our day, has led to many acts of international sympathy, in which we may well hope that our own land has taken and will ever take a foremost and energetic part. It is thus that we may make a way through the sea, wherein to walk, and may prove more and more how true it is, that every cloud, however dark, yet "has a silver lining." There is no Winter comes without its bright fires to cheer us, and its hopes of a spring to follow, when all Nature will awake and revive; and we leave no open grave without the thought that "the Spirit saith, "Write, from henceforth blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, for they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them." It is in thus feeling that God ever "makes a way through the sea" for us to walk in, that I would

say to all, let us try to live. Let us be sure that He careth for us. Though a Joseph be in prison, or a Daniel in the lions' den, yet both found in them the road which led to their exaltation.

If it be the case with any of us, as it often is, "Thou, O God, hast proved us: Thou also hast tried us, like as silver is tried," yet there stands the testimony of the Apostle "that the trial of your Faith worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed." "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the Crown of life."

SERMON XVI.

Quinquagesima. Lent approaching.

“God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and shew us the light of His countenance, and be merciful unto us; that Thy way may be known upon earth, Thy saving health among all nations.”—Ps. lxxvii. 1, 2.

THE fact that this sixty-seventh Psalm is one appointed to be said every day in Church, except on the twelfth day of each month, when it occurs in the Psalms for the day, as the alternative Canticle with the “Nunc Dimittis,” or Song of Simeon when he held the Infant Saviour in his arms, this alone gives it a special claim upon our attention. But there are other reasons besides this. One is this. There seems to be a particular reference in it to the form of Blessing appointed for the High Priest to use, as it is appointed for us still to use in the “Visitation of the Sick,” before leaving the sick man’s chamber, when called to his bedside. For the prayer, “may He bless us,” occurs

thrice in this Psalm, in verses 1, 6, 7. And now, turning to the end of the sixth chapter of Numbers, we read, "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, The Lord bless thee and keep thee: the Lord make His face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace."

One difference, however, between these words of Blessing as ordained by Moses, and this prayer for God's blessing in this Psalm is, that in the original form the name "Jehovah" is used for God, whereas here it is the more universal name of "Elohim." And as this Psalm has been called "The Harvest Home song of the spiritual Israel," so there is in these first verses which form my text an indication of God's blessing being extended over all the earth, and not confined, as for so many hundred years it was, to the one chosen people. The blessing to Israel was to be, and is now, extended over all people. For now "God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is accepted of Him." Thus we may regard this Psalm as a sort of invitation to all nations and people to join in one universal chorus of praise and thanksgiving because the Lord (Jehovah) of Israel is now the universal God (Elohim) of all and over all: "It is He that hath

made us, and not we ourselves: we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture.”

If we look carefully at these words we may, I think, very easily see a reference to Christ in them, and a prayer for His coming down from Heaven for man's infinite blessing. And this especially if we call to mind how in the alternative Canticle, the Song of Simeon, as elsewhere, Christ is called “the Light.” Simeon says, “Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace: for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, a *Light* to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the Glory of Thy people Israel.” Here we pray, “God be merciful unto us, and bless us, and show us the *light* of His countenance.”

As in the Book of the Revelations, the colour of white is Christ's colour throughout, as He is there represented clothed in white, brighter than the light, and His followers are clothed in white and ride upon white horses, so this is the reason why the Ministers of Christ, and even the smallest Chorister employed in the special service of Christ are clothed in white; and in old times, both at Baptism and at Confirmation, the Candidates were clothed in white garments; so our Lord says of Himself, “I am the Light of the world.” “And this is the condemnation, that Light is come into the world, but men love darkness rather than Light, because their deeds were evil.” So S. Paul speaks of Christ as “He who only hath Immortality dwelling in the Light, which

no man can approach unto ;” “the brightness of the Father’s Glory, and the express Image of His Person ;” “the Sun of righteousness;” “the Day Spring from on High.”

This thought, I say, at once gives a special application of this Psalm to Christ, and turns the Psalm into a devout prayer for Christ’s appearance upon earth ; and as this prayer was at length fulfilled, as recognised by Simeon of old in the alternative Canticle at Evening Prayer, so will this be once more fulfilled when, “as the Lightning shineth from the one part under Heaven unto the other part, so shall also the Coming of the Son of Man be.” And, “then shall the righteous shine forth as the Sun, in the Kingdom of their Father.”

And thus, my brethren, as this is a devout prayer for all to use at any time, so it seems especially suitable for all at the near commencement of another season of Lent. “God be merciful unto us, and bless us, and show us the light of His countenance, and be merciful unto us, that Thy way may be known upon earth, Thy saving health among all nations.” The Lenten season, so soon to begin, is set apart for all to renew their repentance, and to turn unto God with new affections, and rekindled zeal ; and this not for our own sake alone, but for the good of others as well. People so often talk of having their sins forgiven, as though that were the sum and substance of all they need, or all

they need desire for themselves ; but the only true sanctification has always in it a special reference to and regard for others. We ought all of us to live soberly, righteously, and holily, not for our sake alone, but for the sake of others. Our Lord describes the whole law of God as resting upon two sure foundations : one is the supreme love of God, above and before and beyond all else, with all our heart, all our mind, all our soul, and all our strength ; and the other is, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

Now the best way of all of doing this—of "making God's way known upon earth, His saving health among all nations"—lies in the influence which a really holy life exercises on all around, recommending itself by its goodness and beauty to others. And the great excellence of this as a fact is, that it puts it in the power of every one of us, whatever our age, or whatever our position in life may be, to do something to this end—to spread Christ's kingdom upon earth, and to recommend to others the light in which we ourselves are walking. In old time the heathen were turned unto the Lord by the proverbial remark, which was seen and known to be so true, "See how those Christians love one another." But as Faith failed so love declined ; and where there is little true love amongst Christian people, there there is as little true Christianity at all. For it is a proverb of Christ our Lord, "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another."

This is the most excellent gift, this the special fruit and effectual work of the Holy Spirit within us.

We may imagine persons sitting over their fire at home, and really wishing that they in their humble way could do something for Christ in this world—really *could* help to “make His way known upon earth: His saving health among all nations,”—and yet being at a loss to know how. Let such an one only reflect that he has only to shew forth the sincerity of His love towards all, and there are always little ways of daily occurrence, in which every one of us may do this towards one or other, and that man will be quite sure to succeed in what he thus desires to do. He will be one of those good seeds which in due time “brought forth some thirtyfold, some sixtyfold, and some an hundredfold.”

Let us try to remember this at the very beginning of Lent. Lent begins with that special Collect for Charity, followed as it always is on the Sunday before Lent by S. Paul’s description of charity, which “thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth: beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.” Just as love grows cold in many as iniquity abounds, and so evil spreads from one to another, and another, so in the rekindling of a spirit of love in any heart lies the great motive power of a revival of true religion amongst us. And when we think of this,

brethren, what need have we to pray, "God be merciful unto us and bless us, and shew us the light of his countenance upon us, and be merciful unto us?"

I look in vain for some special sign, long hoped for in all or in many, young or old, being plainly and surely moved to turn themselves anew unto God. We want in every heart a change more or less distinct, like that of the Prodigal Son's coming to himself, and turning his wayward steps back toward his old deserted home with the words, "I will arise and go unto 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." We want this, desire it, long for it, but where is it to be found, when shall it arise in our midst? Empty seats in a Parish Church like this week after week; misspent Sundays, as they are misspent by so many; "a form of Godliness without the power thereof"; the Holy Sacrament so often or so wholly neglected by many; great and open sins of lust, drunkenness, and oaths; indifference to anything of God, or anything but what is seen; how do these and all the thousand forms of vice and sin around us cry out against us to Heaven, and we have each need to use these words so well known, because so often repeated, "God be merciful unto us, and bless us, and show us the light of His countenance upon us, and be merciful unto us." If we lose this time, if we will go on no better, nor trying to become better, there is a

limit to God's mercy, as there is a limit to our own time and opportunity for better things. They are warning words, which should never be forgotten, "The night cometh when no man can work." This night need not be only the close of life, but it may come long before that; the evil spirit once driven forth may return with sevenfold force, with seven companion spirits more wicked than himself, and if so, "the last state of that man is worse than his first." But why should any of us run such a risk as this? Would any sane man walk on blindfold if told he was on the edge of a precipice? Then why should we do so? "God be merciful unto us, and bless us, and show us the light of His countenance upon us, and be merciful unto us."

SERMON XVII.

Easter Day.

“Let God arise, and let His enemies be scattered; let them also that hate Him flee before Him.”--PSALM lxxviii. 1.

THIS is another instance of many where, as the Hebrew admits, the future tense would, if substituted for the imperative, turn these words into a prophecy—a prophecy of this great day, the greatest day of all the year—for the Event which we now celebrate, as we do in a lesser way, on every Sunday. Thus the verse would run, “God *shall* arise, and His enemies *shall be* scattered; they also which hate Him *shall* flee before Him.”

If we turn to the tenth chapter of the Book of Numbers (verses 35, 36) there we find the very words of my text. “And it came to pass, when the Ark set forward, that Moses said, Rise up, Lord, and let Thine

enemies be scattered : and let them that hate Thee flee before Thee." And when it rested, he said, "Return, O Lord, unto the many thousands of Israel."

This sixty-eighth Psalm is directly called a "Psalm of David's," and it seems to have a special connection with the twenty-fourth Psalm, and to have been used at the removal of the Ark from one place to another ; and thus the words used by Moses, to which I have referred, are here taken as a sort of text on which to found all the other verses that follow.

Both with the Jews and with us this Psalm is especially used at Pentecost. We may call it a "progressive" Psalm, for it begins with the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, and goes on to His Ascension, where at verse 18 it says, "Thou art gone up on High, Thou hast led captivity captive, and received Gifts for men, yea even for Thine enemies, that the Lord God might dwell among them," which we know is specially applied to the great gift of the Gospel, the coming down of the Holy Ghost from Heaven, which followed so soon after our Lord's Ascension into Heaven. For thus S. Paul in the fourth chapter of his Epistle to the Ephesians (verses 7, 8) says, "But unto every one of us is given Grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore, He saith, (in this sixty-eighth Psalm) When He ascended up on High, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men."

So let us take this Psalm as one which I will call a "progressive" Psalm, used at the removal of the Ark, but in a Christian sense beginning with the Resurrection, but leading on to the Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ to God's right hand in Heaven, and to the coming down at Pentecost of the Holy Ghost the Comforter—the eternal Life of the Church. When the Psalm was written it was a prophecy which has since been truly fulfilled: "God shall arise; His enemies shall be scattered; they also which hate Him shall flee before Him."

Now, is not that, brethren, the great event which the whole Christian Church of the West, with all its branches, celebrates to-day, and every Sunday as it comes round week by week? "God *has* arisen," the Eternal Son Who took our nature with His own, and made it one with His Divine Person, this day rose again. True, no human eye saw the return of life, saw this mighty change from death unto life, and the grave clothes dropping off, and the exit of the risen Saviour from the solid tomb, blocked by the great and unmoved stone at its mouth; but it was no sooner accomplished, than it was known first to one, and then to another: first to Mary Magdalene and then to S. Peter, then to the two disciples walking to Emmaus, and afterwards to ten of the Apostles assembled together at night, when the doors were shut. A week later S. Thomas, who before was absent, was convinced

against his will, and invited to identify with his own hands the wounds in the Lord's hands and in His side, received on the cross.

Thus did God arise on this great Festival, and so we change the Sabbath into the Lord's Day, and set apart the first day of every week instead of the seventh as a memorial of His Resurrection from the dead. And when my text goes on "His enemies shall be scattered, and they also that hate Him shall flee before Him," what are we to understand by "His enemies?"

First, there were they who had cried out so shortly before, "Crucify Him, Crucify Him;" there were Pilate, and Herod, and the High Priests; there were the Roman soldiers who had fulfilled their task of execution with military precision and unnecessary cruelty; there were they who had railed upon Him in His agonies on the Cross, like the armed multitude, who fell before Him in Gethsemane, all these drop out of sight, and are powerless before the risen Lord in His victory over death and the grave. A few weeks on and multitudes of these turn unto the Lord, and are baptized into His Resurrection, believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, and putting away their sins. The history begins at once to be, "Disciples were added unto the Lord, multitudes both of men and women;" "The same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls;" "Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed, and the number of the men

was about five thousand ;” “So mightily grew the word of the Lord and prevailed.” Thus were our Lord’s outward enemies scattered like chaff before the wind, or as wax melted before the fire.

Again. *Death* was another enemy scattered by the Saviour’s Resurrection on this day. S. Paul says, “The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.” Death had reigned supreme till this moment. Even they who by miracle, as Lazarus, and the daughter of Jairus, and the widow’s son, had returned once more to life, yet all had to yield up that life again, and return to the grave. Death had found no conqueror as yet. Sooner or later every one in turn submitted to him, and passed away without hope of any bodily restoration to life, and power, and thought. But here was one greater than death. He had submitted to its yoke, in man’s stead, to redeem us from death by dying truly and entirely as we do ; but no more : death could not hold Him. Its fetters snapped like the green withs with which Samson was bound by the Philistines. Its chains fell off from Him Who had “life in Himself,” Who had “power to lay down His life, but had power also (in Himself) to take it again.” And so we sing in praise and thanksgiving to God, “Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.” “O death, where is thy sting ? O grave, where is thy victory ?” For “as in Adam all die : even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”

Again, brethren, another enemy of Christ's which ceased to have full and irresistible power over man from this great day was *Sin*. Till Christ rose from the dead this day, we had no power over sin. Satan was the prince of this world. We were slaves, dead in trespasses and sins, but He restored to us our only true freedom, which consists in the service of God, by hearts renewed, "in the knowledge of Whom standeth our eternal life." "For this cause (says S. John) the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil." This was the great enemy of man's which brought death in its train and all the miseries and sorrows of which the world is full. Here its chains were snapped in twain, and man was restored to the freedom of a regenerated heart and will, through the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead: and from this hour "Satan fell like lightning from Heaven." It is a resurrection in this life from sin and unbelief which leads on to our future resurrection in glory, and to be with Christ for ever.

These, then, are the enemies of God which were scattered when the words of my text were fulfilled, "God shall arise; His enemies shall be scattered." The Jews who had crucified Him were powerless from that moment. Thousands of them turned unto Him Whom they had crucified, and believed. Death relaxed his grasp, and found one still stronger than himself, Who will hereafter put an end to his power in every

one of us, and restore us to life from the grave. And thirdly, sin, which caused death and brought it upon us, bent beneath the yoke of Christ, and has power only over them who yield themselves to its dominion, and in each of us only so far as we give way and submit.

Brethren, the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead is the Pledge to every one of us that "all who are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of Man, 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." Of these two only alternatives each one of us is, day by day, making choice of one for himself. True we may see but little of the great change for good or for evil which is going on in ourselves. It is a long time that the seed remains hidden after sowing before the smallest blade appears above ground, or the least progress is perceptible to our outward eyes. Those seeds which have perished, and those which are putting forth roots which shall keep them alive unto the hour of harvest, are alike unseen and imperceptible on the surface of the field it may be for weeks. So it is with our hearts. A great work for good or for evil is going on in them—in every one of them—day by day and hour by hour. How many of us watch to see this change—to know what it is—to what our life tends? Oh! as "God has arisen, let His enemies be

scattered before Him." Let each try to perfect in himself the resurrection *life*, while he is here, and is able to do so. "Walk in newness of life," is the apostolic injunction. Put off the old man, and put ye on the new man, which is created in holiness, and righteousness, and peace. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Let the Lord's Resurrection have its perfect work in each one of us. In all things great and small, learn to love Christ, to manifest Him to others, by the newness and beauty of thy Regeneration. The body which is to rise and live with God for ever must rise with Christ in this world, or our death will be no gate of everlasting life, our tomb no Easter chamber to us. He having no sin in Him, rose again before He ever saw corruption. We are different, and must for some time more or less undergo death before our final change shall come. Still to every one of us, it may be, as it was S. Paul says with himself, "To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Here is the true secret of a glorious resurrection, "Christ in us the hope of Glory," that "when Christ Who is our Life shall appear, ye also may appear with Him in glory."

SERMON XVIII.

Widows under the Gospel.

“He is a Father of the fatherless, and defendeth the cause of the widow, even God in His Holy Habitation.”—PSALM lxxviii. 5.

I HAVE already said that this great sixty-eighth Psalm may be called a “progressive” Psalm. First, because it was used like the twenty-fourth, on the removal of the Ark from place to place; its first words being the very words of Moses on such occasions as told us in the tenth chapter of the Book of Numbers; and, secondly, because as its first words refer to the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, so it goes on afterwards to His Ascension into Heaven and the descent of the Holy Ghost, and then to the preaching of the Gospel throughout the world, when it says, “Thou art gone up on High”; “the Lord gave the Word; great was the company of the Preachers.”

Immediately after the introduction, which forms a sort of text or groundwork of this Psalm, it calls upon us all to praise God, thus, “O sing unto God, sing praises unto His Name: magnify Him that rideth

upon the Heavens, as it were upon a horse: praise Him in His Name 'Jah' (or Jehovah), and rejoice before Him." "Jehovah" was the sacred name by which God allowed Israel to call Him—a name reminding them of their nearness to Him, and of the covenant made with them in Abraham. Before this follow certain reasons why all people should thus praise God. The first reason given is that contained in my text, "He is a Father of the fatherless, and defendeth the cause of the widows, even God in His Holy Habitation." In other words, it is sorrows and troubles in life which draw men's hearts to God, and exercise His compassions toward them, which are new every morning. So one writer remarks upon this verse: "The meaning of the Holy Ghost here is, that God the Lord is a gracious King, whose first and principal work it is to give attention to those who most need His pity, because they are helpless and comfortless. Earthly sovereigns do not always act thus—they may respect the noblest and richest in the land—the men who adorn their court and strengthen their power and authority. But the highest glory of God is to compassionate the miserable—those who most need help and comfort and protection. God is both a loving Father and a righteous Judge, and the several classes of the lonely, the destitute, the oppressed, and the captive, are mentioned as instances of those who continually experience both His care and His right-

eousness, so that as the Prophet Hosea says, 'With Thee the fatherless findeth comfort.' "

To this exactly agrees the order in the Mosaic Law. In the twenty-second chapter of Exodus we read, "Thou shalt neither vex a stranger nor oppress him, for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt. Ye shall not afflict any widow or fatherless child. If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto Me, I will surely hear their cry, and My wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless." The same order is referred to again in the tenth chapter of Deuteronomy. And to come down from those earlier days to a much later time, we find this very term "fatherless" or "orphans" used by our Lord of His Apostles, and of His care for them. Our translation gives His words thus (S. John xiv. 18), "I will not leave you *comfortless*—I will come to you"; but the real word used in the Greek is not "comfortless" but "orphans" or "fatherless." "I will not leave you *orphans* or fatherless, I will come to you." And with the thought of the Cross still fresh in our minds, we shall remember how, even on His Cross, He commended His mother (evidently then a widow) to the care of S. John, and S. John to her, to be to her as her own son; and "from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home."

Now in this Easter season, which is shadowed over

by the remembrance of our Lord's great act of love for us, and looking forward to the day so soon to come, when after His Ascension, He sent down the Holy Ghost from Heaven upon the Apostles, that they might be no longer orphans or fatherless, this text of to-day is no unsuitable subject for our thoughts.

In that Dispensation of the Spirit, which it is our great happiness to live in the possession of—the Church of Christ—the care of the fatherless and widows of the Church has been made a special mark of true Christianity. God would thus have us in every way to become like unto Him, Who is a “Father of the fatherless, and defendeth the cause of the widows, even God in His Holy Habitation.” And thus the notice of widows in the New Testament is very remarkable, because it is so frequent. Of the two, who alone that we know of saw the Lord Jesus Christ when He was brought into the Temple forty days after His birth, one was Anna, a widow for long years past, who devoted her life to the service of God in His Temple.

When our Lord wrought a miracle, His rule was to require faith and perseverance and prayer from the recipient of His mercy, or from those about Him; but the widow's son at Nain was raised to life, not in answer to prayer or faith, but because “The Lord had compassion on her, for she was a widow,” and this was

her only son. Again, when the Saviour desired to teach His disciples how to give largely and acceptably into the offerings of God, the example He selected was that of the poor widow who, as she entered or left the Temple, cast into the treasury "two mites, which make a farthing," but it was in His sight far more than others had given, "for they cast in of their abundance, but she gave all that she had, even all her living."

After this, when we come to that Dispensation of the Spirit, which we commonly call the Church of Christ, no sooner has the Heavenly seed begun to grow and spread than a new order of men were ordained by the Apostles, and set apart principally to take more especial care of the poor widows of the Church. Thus we read in the sixth chapter of Acts, "And in those days, when the number of the Disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their *widows* were neglected in the daily ministrations. Then the twelve called the multitude of the Disciples together and said, It is not reason that we should leave the Word of God, and serve tables; wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and of wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business." Thus arose the order of Deacons, which has ever since been continued in the Church of Christ, as a special provision that those

who most need the help and care of others should not be overlooked, or forgotten, or disregarded in the Church below.

After this, in the Epistles of S. Paul, we find in them particular directions for the care of and conduct of widows in the Church ; while S. James makes this to be one special mark of the true Christian, that, following what my text says of God—we should each remember that “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.”

I think we may easily see what a merciful provision this is in the Church of Christ, especially in lands but little civilized. Our love and care is to be shewn, not to the great, or rich, or powerful, or those well able to help themselves, so much as to those who are least able to protect or support themselves—the widow and the fatherless. Hence arose that petition in our Litany—“That it may please Thee to defend and provide for the fatherless children and widows, and all that are destitute and oppressed.”

Hence, too, have arisen all the various institutions throughout this and every Christian land for orphans and widows, where so often both find a home, the one employing themselves in the care and education of the other. And so, my brethren, amongst ourselves for many years now past and gone—since we have

had the privilege of a weekly Celebration of the Holy Communion and a weekly collection of Alms in this Church, I have thought it right to set apart the alms on one Sunday in every month, as a special sum for the relief of the widows in this parish, who are, as I have been saying, so especially commended to our love and care; which I have given out early in the month of October, before the years' rent has to be paid.

Let us remember, then, it is the spirit of this world to think for, and care for ourselves alone; but he is most like unto Christ who provides not for himself but for others, and tries to be in some small measure like Him of whom my text says:—"He is a Father of the fatherless, and defendeth the cause of the widows, even God in His Holy Habitation."

Brethren, this Easter season calls to us all to walk in newness of life, to rise with Christ here, that we may rise hereafter to those in His eternal glory; and few, if any, ways are more acceptable to Him than when we try to be eyes to the blind, and feet unto the lame, a refuge to the needy in his distress, a father to the fatherless, and a protector of the widow and defenceless ones. How many less sorrows would there be in this world if we were each like this? How much alleviation of human suffering and sorrow would be accomplished which remains now undone? How often would a kindly light shine in upon a darkened home?

“Blessed is the man that provideth for the sick and needy: the Lord shall deliver him in the time of trouble.”

But what should they be who are so kindly spoken of, and thought of, and remembered by God, if he has caused it to be written of Himself, “He is a Father of the fatherless, and defendeth the cause of the widows, even God in His Holy Habitation?” Hear what S. Paul says to and of such persons in the Church of Christ: “Now, she that is a widow indeed, and destitute, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day. But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth”; and further on he speaks of a widow as one to be “Well reported of for good works, 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.”

These are the persons who are (says the Apostle) to be a care to the Church of Christ. There should they find a home, kind words, a ready help and sympathy; but spending their time and strength in God’s service and in good works to others, and so claiming for themselves the love and care of Him “Who is a Father of the fatherless, and defendeth the cause of the widows, even God in His Holy Habitation”

SERMON XIX.

Whitsun Day.

“Thou hast ascended on high, Thou hast led captivity captive; Thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them.—PSALM lxxviii. 18.

THIS is the great Pentecostal Psalm. It was so amongst the Jews of old, it is so still with them, and it is so with us. *They* commemorated at Pentecost God’s coming down on Mount Sinai, and giving to Moses the two Tables of the Law: *we* commemorate the coming down of the Holy Ghost from Heaven upon the Apostles, enabling them to keep that Law, “in cloven tongues like as of fire, which sat upon each of them; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”

I have before called this Psalm a “progressive” Psalm, first for its use on the removal of the Ark from place to place, till finally it rested on Mount Zion. Next, because as I have applied its first words to the Resurrection of our Lord from the dead at Easter, so here in my text, it refers so expressly to His Ascension

into Heaven, and to His greatest gift to man on this day, till the whole is summed up in these beautiful words, "O God, wonderful art Thou in Thy Holy places: blessed be God."

There are passages in this Psalm of great difficulty for us to explain or to understand, and it has this peculiar reference, we may say, to the Gift of Tongues on Whitsun Day, that in it are found no less than thirteen words which are found nowhere else in Hebrew. But these words of my text, where it seems Christ is especially addressed, "Thou art gone up on high; Thou hast led captivity captive; Thou hast received gifts for men," have a particular authority for their interpretation, because S. Paul has given us his own interpretation of them in his Epistle to the Ephesians, iv. 4—8. S. Paul says, "There is one Body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling: one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all, Who is above all, and through all, and in you all. But unto every one of us is given grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore He saith, When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." And so, as S. Paul goes on to build upon this text, what there immediately follows, so let us on this great Festival look at these words in the light thus thrown upon them.

First, we have in them the fact of our Lord's

Ascension, "Thou art gone up on high." Next, we have the *result* of His work accomplished upon earth, "Thou hast led captivity captive." Thirdly, we have the great Gift of to-day, "Thou hast received gifts for men, yea even for the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell among them." As to this last we know there is a special connection between our Lord's Ascension and the gift of the Holy Ghost, for He said, on the night before He suffered, "Nevertheless, I tell you the truth, it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you: but if I depart, I will send Him unto you."

No wonder the Angels in Heaven are represented in another Psalm as answering to the call, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in. Who is this King of Glory"? Who? One who was and is true man—One Who is not ashamed to call us "brethren"—One like unto us in all things, sin only excepted—One Who was the poorest of the poor, "for the Son of Man had not where to lay His Head"—One born in a stable, and brought up to a humble trade, a citizen of despised Nazareth—One Whom men cast out, and Who still bears in His Body the marks of the nails and the spear, with which men wounded Him—One Who has died, as man dies, and has occupied a grave, and known to the full what

suffering and death are to every man—One, in short, Who is touched with the feeling of our infirmity, and was “in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” This One, after forty days, is received up into Glory, and sat down at God’s Right Hand, having all power both in Heaven and earth. Such is the Ascension of our Lord in its simple truth.

Now, if we but rightly apprehend this, it is easy to see how He thus “led captivity captive.” Hitherto sin and death had reigned without let or power of resistance. There had been no power in fallen manhood to resist sin, and death as its consequence reigned supreme. Even here and there, when one by miracle had been restored to life, yet after a while he had to undergo death a second time, and to him there was no permanent and sure hope that though last, yet at last, “the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.” But here was one who had fully submitted to death, but had risen again, now “no more to return to corruption.” He had first conquered sin in the very person of Satan in the wilderness, so that he departed from Him; and though for our sakes He submitted Himself to death, yet “now was Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept: for since by man came death, by Man came also the Resurrection of the dead: for as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.” Thus death had to relax his supreme grasp, and own a conqueror: so

that henceforth neither sin nor death should have supreme power over the people of God. Thus death is turned into sleep, because it has an awakening hour to come.

Of each Christian we may say, as Christ did of the daughter of Jairus, "she is not dead, but sleepeth." And so S. Paul writes to the Thessalonians (1 Thess. iv. 13—17), "I would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them that are *asleep*, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which *sleep* in Jesus will God bring with Him. For the Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." And thus has been fulfilled this old prophecy in my text, "Thou hast led captivity captive."

Then, thirdly, there is the great gift of this day: "Thou hast received gifts for men, yea, even for the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell among them." Thus is described in very clear language the great event of this day. The Apostles were led to expect and to await some great gift from Heaven, though how or when it would come, or what would be the nature of it they knew not. Our Lord's last

words were, "Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on High." He "commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, "which, (saith He) ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." Such was the prospect held out to the Apostles at the moment of our Lord's Ascension. And so on this tenth day after, that promise was fulfilled. One of the earliest of the Prophets had said, "And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh." God the Holy Ghost came down from Heaven, not to take a solid and material body upon Himself as our Lord had done, and yet not to be, as here and there He had hitherto been amongst men, an *external* influence only, like the air we breathe, and the wind which passes over us, and is gone. But now, this greatest of all gifts came down from Heaven to take up His abode permanently in the Church of Christ,—in every Christian's heart—to convince us of sin; to lead us into all truth; to guide the Church of God, inspiring every good and holy work which has ever since been done, making men more and more to resemble God, because "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost, Which is given unto us." This gift is an

eternal gift, and an all-pervading gift. So long as the world lasts it will never be taken away from the world. It knows no boundaries; it passes over seas and lands; it mounts to the highest mountain tops, and goes down into the little valleys beneath; it is the guest of the palace and the cottage. There is no limit to the Spirit's presence and work, either as to time, or distance, or multitude, or space. This is the power in us which subdues the power of sin in our hearts, and so carries on to its completion the work of Christ; when the sinner is led to feel and see and know his sin, and he turns unto the Lord; when we feel our prayers are heartily offered, and are certainly accepted; when good thoughts and good desires arise in our hearts we know not why; when any one is led to sacrifice himself in any way for the good of others; when new missions are set on foot, and young men devote themselves to the fulfilment of the command, "Go ye into all the world and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them"; or when at home churches are built and churches are restored; Christian schools are established in this parish or that; or works of mercy arise, hospitals for the sick, refuges and houses of mercy for the lost and penitent, asylums for the blind, and deaf, and dumb, and other phases of human suffering.

All these, and a thousand other forms of good, come out of that great gift, which we are commemorating

this day in its first descent. It is the Spirit of God which purifies our hearts, elevates them above this world and the things of this world, inspires our prayers, draws us to God in Holy Communion, regenerates the infant born in sin by the initiatory Sacrament of Christ. It is the Spirit of God which makes any man kind, and gentle, and generous, and noble, pure and unselfish; and in any way or every way makes any of us fit for Heaven amid all the sins and occupations and trials of this life. There is not one of us who could ever please or serve God, or in the end be the better for our Redemption through Jesus Christ our Lord, but for the presence and work in us of the Holy Ghost.

Thus it is that S. Paul speaks of our "bodies being the Temple of the Holy Ghost"; and, "if any man defile the Temple of God, Him shall God destroy"; or, "Know ye not that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" and, "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." Boundless as the air we breathe, which pervades all lands, yet we see it not, so is the Spirit of God in and to the Church of Christ. We may do as Israel is spoken of as doing, "resist the Holy Ghost." Any one may resist, grieve, and even finally quench the Holy Ghost in himself, just as any one can commit suicide or any other grievous crime, but still, for that life or crime he must account before the judgment seat of Christ, remembering that

there is a "sin against the Holy Ghost which hath no forgiveness, neither in this world, neither in the world to come." And it is too, brethren, let us not forget, a Gift of increase—a Gift which grows, and not wastes by the using—a Gift given to every man to profit withal thereby—a Gift to be sought for in larger and still larger measure by prayer, and at the Holy Sacrament. It is the special gift of the Father, at the prayer of Christ. It brings us salvation. It carries on the work which Christ began. It builds up the Temple, made of living stones, on the Foundation which He has laid. Let us ever pray for it in larger measure, remembering our Lord's words, "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in Heaven give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him."

S E R M O N X X .

Trinity Sunday.

“ O God, wonderful art Thou in Thy Holy Places Blessed be God.”—PSALM lxxviii. 35.

THESE words are a fitting conclusion to this great Psalm, and peculiarly suitable to this day. Trinity Sunday begins the second great division of the Christian year. For one half of it we contemplate Christ in His Birth, Temptation, Passion, Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Ascension, till in the great gift of Whitsun Day we are reminded of that new Power given to man to overcome sin in himself and live unto God, which seems to be the special work which these next six months of the year call us to fulfil. Thus the one half-year teaches us Faith; this next half-year to come calls us to prove our Faith by our works and life. In the one we contemplate God in His relationship to us; in the other, we contemplate God as He is in Himself. Our Sundays now for six months are unbroken by any special commemoration of Christ's work in our Redemption. There is a silence like the silence of earth when, after

the seed is sown, we leave the fields as it were to themselves till the time of harvest has come; or after the activity of harvest we leave them empty and neglected. "O God, wonderful are Thou in Thy Holy Places Blessed be God." This is the special subject brought before us to day. The mystery of the Godhead in its Trinity, but Unity—three Persons, yet but one God; one God, yet three-fold in His Nature and Being.

Such is the fact which on this day is especially presented to our minds. There is no explanation of it; we cannot fathom or describe how can these things be. Would there be Faith if it were otherwise? Seeing, knowing, and understanding a matter puts an end to Faith. Faith is the ascent of the mind and will of man to a truth which God has revealed, but has left unexplained—which He has given for us to live by, though the reason, and mode, and understanding of it may be past all human comprehension. What do we know of the Incarnation, of Redemption, of soul and body, of death? We know how the needle of the compass points without fail to the north, and so the mariner, relying upon this unfailing guide, navigates his vessel over all the trackless seas which surround the earth, but man has not yet dived into this simple secret, great as is its importance in the world. So, too, in another great natural fact, that everything by its centre of gravity naturally falls downwards to earth, instead of ever mounting upwards,

yet what forms this power of earth's attraction has never yet been explained, nor ever will be. We have to take such facts as they stand, and act upon such knowledge of them as we have.

So in the great Mystery we commemorate this day, giving its name as it does to our Sundays for six months to come. It appeals to our Faith, but it surpasses our understanding. There is no defining the Mystery of the Godhead, but it claims especially our Faith to be given to it. When S. Thomas doubted of our Lord's Resurrection, but was convinced in a moment by the exposition of the sacred wounds in his Saviour's person, still he received the memorable reproof: "Thomas, because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, yet have believed." And as on an earlier occasion we hear our Lord's reproof recorded for all times, "Except ye see signs and wonders ye will not believe."

It is in this light that we are to view the great Mystery of which this day bears the name. Doubtless, if any of you were asked to prove by Holy Scripture that God has so revealed Himself to man, we should choose those words given us for the administration of Baptism by our Lord Himself, and that sentence we so well know, with which S. Paul concludes his Second Epistle to the Corinthians, and we end with it both our Morning and Evening Form of Prayer; and that, perhaps, would be the most or all the proof which

many of us may suppose that the Holy Scriptures contain of the Holy Trinity of Father, Son, and Spirit—one God.

I should like, then, when we are remembering, “O God, how wonderful Thou art in Thy Holy Places,” to remove such an impression from every mind. It is now very many years ago since I noted down in a book by itself all the references I could trace in the New Testament to God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; and, instead of being only those two passages I have named, I found them to be one hundred and ninety. In fact, the only books of the New Testament in which I could see no apparent reference to the Holy Trinity are the Epistle of S. Paul to Philemon, the General Epistle of S. James, and Second and Third Epistles of S. John. Let me give you a few instances of what I mean. This one from S. Matthew’s Gospel, iii. 16, 17 :—“And Jesus, (1) when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and lo, the Heavens were opened unto Him, and he saw the Spirit (2) of God (3) descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him; and lo! a voice from Heaven saying, This is My beloved Son.” This from S. Mark xii. 36 :—“For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, (1) the Lord (2) said to my Lord.” (3) This from S. Luke ii. 26 :—“And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, (1) that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord’s (2) Christ.” (3) This from S. John: “Jesus (1) answered, except a man be

born of water and of the Spirit, (2) he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.” (3) Or this, chap. xv. 26, “Even the Spirit (1) of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, (2) He shall testify of Me.” (3) This from the Acts of the Apostles (i. 7, 8): “And He (Jesus) (1) said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father (2) hath put in His own power; but ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost (3) is come upon you.”

And so I may go through every book of the New Testament, with those four exceptions I have already named, in all of which passage after passage occurs like the above; and like this from the Ephesians, iv. 4, “There is one body and one Spirit, (1) one Lord, (2) one God and Father (3) of us all”; or this from the First Epistle of S. Johu, 13, 14, “Because He hath given us of His Spirit, (1) and we have seen and do testify that the Father (2) sent the Son.” (3)

It is thus, my brethren, that the great doctrine, which we term the Trinity, runs through all the Scriptures of the New Testament, and is presented to our minds as an object of Faith, not of speculation, of questioning, or inquiry. The testimony to it is overwhelming, but the nature of the Mystery has no definition or explanation afforded to it. “O God, wonderful art Thou in Thy Holy Places Blessed be God.”

Wonderful in Heaven, the Holiest Place of all—above all. In Glory which we cannot imagine, nor

could we behold and live. Surrounded by the unnumbered armies of Holy Angels who do His will in all things, with the perpetual chant going up before His Throne, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts." Uncomprehended in space as to time; no beginning and with no end in view; the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the great Original Cause of all that is, or was, or ever will be. "O God, wonderful art Thou in Thy Holy Places Blessed be God." But to come down from Heaven to earth is more within our comprehension; and here, too, God is "wonderful in His Holy Places." What are they? First there are the hearts of men made His, and given to Him, and these are the best of all holy places which God has on earth; indeed all other holy places are only so subordinately to this, which is the object God has in view in the use of them. Then we may say that the Holy Scriptures are one of these Holy Places in which God is found, and by which He manifests Himself amongst us. And so, too, are these earthly Temples, built indeed by men, and though all-unworthy in their best materials and in their best state and preservation, yet are they termed "God's House," where, above all else, and oftenest, when two or three only are gathered together in His Name, He is in the midst of us.

How wonderful God is in the holy places of men's hearts. When we see men and women changed in heart, altered altogether in character and disposition,

living by a higher rule than any law of man's, when we know them to be the same in secret that they are in the light, not thinking of or for themselves alone, but in one way or many ways living and working for others rather than for themselves. When we see them, unconscious of their own real goodness and holiness, triumphing over sins which may be ever so common around them, or may be their own peculiar and besetting temptation, except for the work of grace in their hearts; or when we look around us and see churches built or churches restored and beautified to God's honor, or see schools and hospitals and asylums provided for the old, for orphans, and for widows, for the blind, and deaf, and dumb, for penitents and idiots, and every phase of human sorrow and suffering. When we think how all these spring up and arise out of that "love of God, which is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us;" or when we see the heart of a sinner turned from darkness to light; or, what is still better, the little child growing up without any greivous falling away from God into the perfect Christian man or woman; look which way we will in any land, where God is known, and compare all this with men and customs in Heathen lands, it is but a most true expression of what each devout heart, which would give all true glory to God, will exclaim, "O God, wonderful art Thou in Thy Holy Places Blessed be God."

Wonderful in Heaven, but wonderful on earth also,

embracing all lands at one time in His omnipotent mind, and not only all lands but each individual soul in all those lands, and all else that lives, with such perfect knowledge that not a sparrow falleth to the ground without Him, nor a hair from our heads. It is He clothes this earth with her fruits, and trees with their leaves. It is He ruleth the seas, and gives us both summer and winter in due course, blessing the earth with her fruits, and feeding the young ravens which call upon Him. What machinery of man's ever works on for long without reparation and renewal? The most perfect specimens are soon cast aside for something still better, or are cast away because worn out and useless. Yet God's works in us and around us go on from year to year, from generation to generation, never failing, never coming to an end. "O God, wonderful art Thou in Thy Holy Places." And so too, my brethren, the Holy Scriptures are, as I have said, one of God's holy places on earth in which He is wonderful. Let a man be ever so little instructed in the sciences of this world, yet if he knows much of his Bible, how elevated is that man in life and mind and character, always contented to be as God shall order for him from day to day, bearing troubles in life with patience and submission to God's will, ever rejoicing because He knows that sooner or later good will come out of evil, and that "all things work together for good to them that love God"; and so in thousands of homes in this way God is wonderful in

the works that He doeth for the children of men. And here, where we are now, is not this, in an especial way one of God's Holy Places? These old walls have vibrated from year to year for hundreds of years past with the tidings of God's grace and love to fallen man. We are here surrounded by the earthly remains, not only of hundreds, but of thousands, who on this very spot have in their day learnt to know God, and in their degree more or less perfectly to serve Him, till the hour of their being taken out of this world has arrived, when their bodies have been committed to the grave in the sure and certain hope of the Resurrection to Eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

It must remain till the great disclosures of the last day, even for ourselves to know in our own selves, what change and work has been done in us here. If in this House of God we have learnt that to give a cup of cold water only to a little child will have its own sure reward; if in this Holy Place we have ever learnt that to love our neighbour, to care for the poor, to visit the sick, to relieve or comfort the distressed, is to do all this not only to them but to Christ; how surely will such of us say, when all is revealed of this Place in the Great Day, "O God, wonderful art Thou in Thy Holy Places Blessed be God"!

SERMON XXI.

Religious Zeal.

“For the Zeal of Thine House hath even eaten Me: and the rebukes of them that rebuked Thee fell on Me.”—PSALM lxi. 9.

THIS Psalm, though placed among the first seventy-two Psalms, which are more especially Psalms of David's than the three latter books of the Psalter—each of these old divisions being still marked in our Prayer-book version by the word “Amen” at the end of the following Psalms, viz., 41st, 72nd, 89th, 106th—yet this Psalm has been attributed by some commentators to the time and pen of the Prophet Jeremiah, three hundred years later than David's time. Certainly the first words of it are very applicable to Jeremiah when cast into the pit full of mire, where it says, “I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing; I am come into deep waters so that the floods run over me.” Still, I would rather adhere to the view which others take, that this Psalm is truly one of David's; that, as the last four Psalms of the first book, viz., 38th, 39th, 40th, 41st, were occasioned by the dispute respecting the succession of his son Solomon to his throne at the close of his reign, so these last Psalms of the second book find in those same events their origin.

It is thus that one of the most learned and careful of all Bible commentators, Bishop Wordsworth of Lincoln, attributes this Psalm to the last stage of David's life, when he was brought very low by old age and weakness of body, and when his son Adonijah rose up in rebellion against him, and usurped the throne which was designed for Solomon, and was helped and abetted by Joab, the captain of David's host, and by Abiathar the priest, conspiring against their royal master.

There is this fact about it that, with the single exception of the twenty-second Psalm, there is no Psalm so frequently quoted in the New Testament as this sixty-ninth; and in one of those passages (Rom. xi. 9) it is expressly attributed to David. Thus, S. Paul writes, "And David saith, let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumbling-block, and a recompence unto them." But the words of my text will be more especially remembered from that passage in the second chapter of S. John's Gospel, where, after cleansing the Temple for the first time at the outset of His ministry, as He did again at the close of it, we read, "And His disciples remembered that it was written, The Zeal of Thine House hath eaten Me up." The latter words of the same verse (ninth) we find S. Paul applying to Christ in this passage (Rom. xv. 3), "For even Christ pleased not Himself, but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached Thee

fell on Me." And once more, we find our Lord using the words of verse 4 of Himself, in S. John xv. 25, "They hated Me without a cause." While in Acts i. 20, the twenty-fifth verse is specially applied to the sin and destruction of Judas.

Thus we could not have higher authority for the specially Christian interpretation of this Psalm than these several passages afford from the New Testament.

Leaving at once the thought of David and of Jeremiah, I think we shall do well to regard the verse I have selected as my text as descriptive of our Lord's ministerial life on earth; while later verses describe the scenes which took place on Good Friday, when this Psalm is one of those specially selected for use in Church; and the last verses may be held to describe to us the joy of the Resurrection, and the establishment of His Church on earth.

I say these words, "The zeal of Thine House hath even eaten Me," is a very true description of what our Lord's life was from the moment that He began to fulfil His public ministry amongst men. What is zeal but literally a "boiling over," a fervour, and effervescence of energy, and spirit, and activity, which so often leads men on to great and noble self-denying or daring deeds, and enables them to accomplish what would otherwise be impossible without it. True, it may have a wrong as well as a right direction. Jehu's zeal was a righteous zeal, though so cruel in our eyes,

when he cut off all the posterity of King Ahab. S. Paul's was a zeal, "but not according to knowledge," as he so often afterwards testified of himself, when "concerning zeal he persecuted the Church," being "zealous towards God as ye all are this day, I persecuted them (the disciples of Christ) from city to city." It was this zeal, however wrong, which seems especially to have marked him out for that special act of mercy on God's part, when he was miraculously converted by the bright light from Heaven, near the gates of Damascus.

And so he tells us, in long after years, that "It is good to be zealously affected, always in a good thing," and that all Christian people should be "zealous of good works." And one of the directions to the Seven Churches in Asia from S. John is, "Be zealous and repent." (Rev. iii. 19.)

So we see by all these passages how good it is for us to have a holy fervour of soul in us. It shews that a person has, for the time at least, set his heart on God and Heaven, and, as our Lord tells us, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

Zeal is a disposition often bestowed upon persons newly converted to Faith and Holiness. One who wakes up from a false position, and comes to himself, like the Prodigal Son, will often, in the sincerity of the first hours of his repentance, or in the first moments of a conscious love of God in his soul, manifest a zeal towards God which Christians older and colder in the faith have not, but might envy.

But zeal is hardly a disposition likely to be kept alive, or to burn brightly, all through a man's life on earth. It is a great gift bestowed on some for a time to start them determinedly on a new and better career of life. It brings us to Christ very like that man who said unasked, "Lord, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest." So, too, felt the poor demoniac when restored to mind and sense, "he besought the Lord that he might be with Him, but Jesus bade him return home, and shew to them of his own house what great things God had done for him, and had been gracious unto him."

But our Lord's own life was through all that we know of it most truly described by these words, "The zeal of Thine house hath eaten Me up." The only incident in the Great Life which is revealed to us from the Presentation in the Temple till "Jesus began to be about thirty years of age," is that visit to Jerusalem when twelve years of age, when He was lost for three days, but was at length found in the Temple, "sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions." His words seem to imply, How came ye to seek for Me anywhere else, but where ye have now found Me—in My Father's House? Then occurs, at the commencement of His public ministry, that first cleansing of the Temple by His single arm (which he repeated just at last) to which these words of my text are directly applied in

the Gospel of S. John. And from that moment the whole three years were consumed by His overflowing zeal for God's House on earth, for when He was in Jerusalem, "I sat with you daily in the Temple teaching," "He taught them daily in the Temple." Here was the great secret of His entire forgetfulness of Himself in seeking and following after the good of others: "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work." "I must walk to-day, and to-morrow, and the day after." This made Him lend His ear to the Syrophenician woman in her distress, when others repulsed her. This brought the blind men to His feet when others bade them hold their peace. This took Him to the house of Jairus, and led Him to the mountain side in the night for prayer; and led Him on to the Temptation, to the grave of Lazarus, to His Cross—that true zeal, that overflowing effervescence and fervour of spirit towards God, which makes the highest piety most beautiful, because most self-sacrificing, and leads on to noble deeds, from which a colder nature and a calmer heart would shrink. None stood so calm and unmoved: "as a lamb before her shearers is dumb, so opened He not His mouth." This was when His own safety and person were at stake; but when God's honour was concerned, there, as at the double cleansing of the Temple, He raised His powerful arm, and kept a multitude at bay, and proved Himself to be resistless.

Brethren, let us try to be in this respect in some measure likeminded with our Lord. How often, and eagerly, and fiercely do men resent the least word or deed which is, or only looks like, a slight or wrong towards themselves; but how often does it happen that they take no notice of anything that is said or done against God. It is nothing to most of us, *e.g.*, how men in general neglect or desecrate God's House—these earthly temples, which, whether we will hear or whether we forbear to hear, still vibrate, as for hundreds of years past, with the tidings of God's grace and love to fallen man. It is nothing to most of us how people profane or misuse their Sunday, with all its precious opportunities; or neglect the Sacraments, which we know are "generally (that is, universally) necessary to salvation." It matters not, we think to ourselves, what other people believe or disbelieve; we are too lukewarm in ourselves to make that a matter of any moment one way or other. What most or all of us want is a little more real, living, burning zeal towards God. We go on in our cold, lukewarm, dull, if not dead state of heart, till nothing that relates to God, or concerns the good or the welfare of others, seems of any moment to us; and where this is so, there, as a rule, is there a lively interest in *our own* welfare, an unflinching regard for *our own* interests, likes, and dislikes. It was our Lord's zeal towards God which carried Him through all the trials and difficulties

of His earthly life, made Him give Himself altogether for us, and twice (as a type of what He will at last do in the Judgment Day) made Him cleanse God's Temple from all who polluted it with their usury and money-changing for the legal offerings of the Temple, or sold doves for the fulfilment of the legal requirements. "The zeal of Thine House hath eaten Me up." It was S. Paul's zeal which led him to carry the Gospel of peace "from Jerusalem round about into Illyrium."

To us all, brethren, it is a dangerous state to be and to live cold and indifferent towards God and the things of God. It keeps us from ever attempting anything for His sake alone. It leads us to give up one thing and then another where faith is concerned, and so to go backwards and downwards. An aimless and objectless life is a sad blank to look back upon at last upon our dying bed. What we should desire and pray for is that we may make God and the things of God a real matter of daily importance to us in life. "What shall it profit a man" in the Judgment Day—the great day of God's cleansing His Temple—"if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" But God says to us, "Them that honour Me, I will honour." Let it then be said of us as of our Lord, "The zeal of Thine House hath even eaten Me up."

SERMON XXII.

Good Friday. The broken Heart.

“Thy rebuke hath broken My heart : I am full of heaviness : I looked for some to have pity upon Me, but there was no man, neither found I any to comfort Me. They gave Me gall to eat, and when I was thirsty they gave Me vinegar to drink.”—PSALM lxix. 20, 21.

I HAVE already said that this sixty-ninth Psalm is more often quoted in the New Testament than any other Psalm, except the twenty-second. They are the two Psalms which more especially relate to our Lord's Passion and Death. You will remember how the twenty-second Psalm begins with those great central words on the Cross, “My God, My God, look upon Me : why hast Thou forsaken Me ?” And then it describes the Crucifixion by the words, “They pierced My hands and My feet, and upon My vesture did they cast lots.” But there is one special connection between these two Psalms in this. The twenty-second says, “My heart also in the midst of

My body is even like melting wax." This sixty-ninth says, in the first words of my text, "Thy rebuke hath broken My heart."

I propose especially, then, to draw your attention to this point to-day, but before doing so, let us for a few minutes notice how many references there are in this Psalm to our Lord's life of self-sacrifice and suffering. Thus, verse 4, "They that hate Me are more than the hairs of my head: they that are Mine enemies, and would destroy Me guiltless, are mighty." Again, when we remember how the Lord left His home at Nazareth, and when told that His mother and His brethren desired to speak with Him, replied, "Behold My mother and My brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of My Father Which is in Heaven, the same is My brother, My sister, and mother." (S. Mark iii. 34, 35.) Let us compare with this the eighth verse, "I am become a stranger unto My brethren, even an alien unto My mother's children." Again, take the twenty-first verse of my text, "They gave Me gall to eat: and when I was thirsty they gave Me vinegar to drink," and compare this prediction with the actual words of S. Matthew and S. John. The former says, (xxvii. 34) "They gave Him vinegar to drink mingled with gall." And S. John says, (xix. 29) "Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to His mouth." These will be

enough to show how closely the actual facts of the Cross correspond with the plain words of this Psalm.

I take, then, as I said, this Psalm as descriptive of our Lord's ministerial life, in its three principal stages. First, that the words, "The zeal of (or for) Thine House hath eaten Me up," are truly descriptive of Him of Whose childhood the only known event is His being found after three days' absence "in the Temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions,"—of Him Whose first act and last act of public importance consisted in cleansing that Temple from its unholy crowd of buyers and sellers, of thieves and usurers,—of Him Who was, when at Jerusalem, daily in the Temple teaching. "I ever taught in the Synagogue and in the Temple whither the Jews always resort."

Next, I apply these verses, especially my text, to the Saviour's Passion and Crucifixion; and other words afterwards to His Resurrection and Glory in Heaven.

Now, let us return to these first words of to-day, "Thy rebuke hath broken My heart." These words reveal to us a great and very interesting fact, namely this, the physical cause of our Lord's death. In the first place, we know that our Lord submitted to death this day entirely of His own free will. He had entire power over His own life. As He said to the Jews, "No man taketh My life from Me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have

power to take it again. This commandment have I received of My Father." (S. John x. 17, 18.)

Next, we are not to attribute our Lord's death to the actual pain of the Crucifixion. As one writer says, "As there was but little loss of blood, the nails that pierced the extremities touching no large blood vessel, and closing the wounds they made, the death which followed crucifixion resulted from the processes of bodily exhaustion and irritation, and these were so slow, that in no case, where the person crucified was in ordinary health and vigour, did they terminate within twelve hours. Almost invariably the sufferer survived the first twenty-four hours, lived generally over the second, occasionally even into the fifth or sixth day." Both ancient and modern testimonies in Abyssinia to this fact exist. What, then, we may ask, was the physical cause of our Lord's death? And it is very remarkable that just thirty years since (1847), a devout and scholarly physician states it as the result of a quarter of a century's reading and reflection, dealing with this subject with all that reverence and delicacy with which it so especially requires to be handled, that "the immediate physical cause of the death of Christ was the rupture of His heart, induced by the inner agony of His Spirit." "If common earthly sorrow has broken other human hearts, why may not that sorrow, deep beyond all other sorrow, have broken His?" We all know what we mean by

a person dying of a broken heart. Some very sudden and unexpected joy has been known to do it, but uncommon as it is, it is more often caused by some great and overwhelming sorrow than by joy. But as regards our Lord's immediate cause of death this is no useless or unmeaning supposition. For this reason, it explains to us, not only His quick and sudden death after only six hours of exposure on the Cross, which hardly if ever occurred in any other known instance, but it explains to us two great facts, which are related by the Evangelists: first, the loud and sudden cry just at the moment of His expiring.

S. Matthew says (xxvii. 50) and S. Mark (xv. 37), "Jesus, when He had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the Ghost." And S. Luke says (xxiii. 46), "And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Thy hands I commend my Spirit, and having thus said, He gave up the Ghost."

Now, this is one special sign known to precede death of a broken heart—a loud and sudden cry, immediately followed by death.

But there is another fact which has great light thrown in upon it by this supposition of the cause of our Lord's death, which recent anatomy has discovered in cases of death of a broken heart, and it is a point to which S. John, who witnessed it, has called the particular attention of all believers (xix. 33), "But when they came to Jesus, and saw that He was

dead already they brake not His legs. But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side, and forthwith came there out Blood and Water. And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true, and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe."

The late Sir James Simpson, one of the most eminent physicians of our day, says "that no other natural event or mode of death, except a broken heart, can explain or account for this fact, so expressly attested by S. John, 'forthwith came there out blood and water.'" And he adds, "If ever a human heart was riven and ruptured by the mere amount of mental agony that was endured, it would surely be that of our Redeemer, when during these dark and dreadful hours on the Cross, He 'being made a curse for us, bore our griefs, and carried our sorrows,' and suffered for sin, and was 'sorrowful even unto death.' There are (he says) theological as well as medical arguments in favour of the opinion that Christ in reality died from a ruptured or broken heart. If the various prophecies and minute predictions in Psalms xxii. and lxix. be justly held as literally true, such as, 'They pierced My hands and My feet,' 'They part My garments among them, and cast lots upon My vesture,' why should we regard as merely metaphorical, and not as literally true also, the declarations in the same Psalms, 'Reproach hath broken My heart,' 'My heart is like wax, it is melted in the midst of My bowels'?"

Then he goes on, "Death by mere crucifixion was not a form of death in which there was much, if indeed any, shedding of blood. Punctured wounds do not generally bleed. But the whole language and types of Scripture involve the idea that the atonement for our sins was obtained by the blood of Christ shed for us during His death on the Cross. 'Without shedding of blood is no remission.' This shedding of blood, however, was assuredly done in the fullest possible sense, under the view that the immediate cause of His dissolution was rupture of the heart, and it has always appeared, to my medical mind at least, that this view of the mode by which death was produced in the human body of Christ, intensifies all our thoughts and ideas regarding the immensity of the astounding Sacrifice which He made for our sinful race upon the Cross. Nothing can possibly be more striking and startling than the appalling and terrible passiveness with which God, as man, submitted, for our sakes, His Incarnate Body to all the horrors and tortures of the Crucifixion. But our wonderment at the stupendous Sacrifice only increases when we reflect, whilst thus enduring for our sins the most cruel and agonising form of bodily death, He was ultimately 'slain,' not by the effects of the anguish of His Body, but by the effects of the mightier anguish of His Mind: the fleshy walls of His heart—like the veil, as it were, in the Temple of His human body—

becoming rent and riven, as for us 'He poured out His soul unto death'; 'the travail of His soul' in that awful hour thus standing out as unspeakably bitterer and more dreadful than even the travail of His Body."*

This has been a long extract to make, but I feel sure the interest and usefulness of it is not easily measured. It opens to us a fresh view, as I suppose it to be to most of us, of the intensity of our Blessed Lord's suffering for us. Every sorrow seems summed up in our minds in "death of a broken heart." Then, as I have said, it directly explains that surprisingly loud cry immediately preceding His death, which three Evangelists have so particularly recorded; and again it explains to us that stream of Blood and Water which S. John testifies to his having seen, and which is a peculiar fact now ascertained to be a certain proof after death of a broken heart.

But I think it shows also, brethren, how strictly accurate every word of Holy Scripture is: that though we may not be able to explain or to verify this fact or that fact at this moment, yet that should occasion no doubt whatever in our minds as to what is stated being strictly and assuredly true.

Here is a verification of our Lord's own words: "Therefore every Scribe which is instructed unto the

* See *The Last Days of our Lord's Passion.*—DR. HANNA.

Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth from his treasures things new and old." Here is a fact explaining the physical cause of our Lord's death on the Cross, which never seems to have been arrived at, or even surmised, by all the thousands of commentators upon it, till, after five-and-twenty years of thought and silence, a medical man in our own land, some thirty years ago, suggested this as its cause.

We may well pray, again and again, from generation to generation, "Blessed Lord, Who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning; Grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience, and comfort of Thy holy Word, we may embrace, and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which Thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ." Amen.

SERMON XXIII.

Joy Cometh in the Morning.

“Seek ye after God: and your soul shall live.”—PSALM lxix. 33.

IF we are right in attributing this Psalm to the last days of David's life, as I have said before, then there is surely a note of Easter joy in these few words I take to-day from one of the concluding verses of it. I have said there is a great note of the Redeemer's life on earth in those earlier words, “The zeal of Thine House hath eaten Me up,”—words which He began to fulfil when lost and found at twelve years of age, spending three days in the Temple, and again when He first cleansed that Temple, and afterwards by His frequent presence in it, and at last by His second cleansing of it from the crowd of buyers and sellers, and by His mournful words over it when He had left it for the last time.

Another stage in our Lord's life on earth is clearly delineated in those verses of this Psalm relating to His Passion and Death, “Thy rebuke hath broken My heart.” “They gave Me gall to eat, and when I was thirsty they gave Me vinegar to drink.” After which follow words expressive of God's Judgment upon those who had rejected Him, especially on Judas.

And this part of this Psalm is very like the hundred and ninth and others, when it say, "Let their eyes be blinded that they see not: and ever bow Thou down their backs. Pour out Thine indignation upon them, and let Thy wrathful displeasure take hold of them. Let their habitation be void: and no man to dwell in their tents. Let them be wiped out of the book of the living, and not be written among the righteous,"—sentences which in our translation sound irreconcilable with the words of Him who has said, "Love ye your enemies: bless them that curse you: and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you." And yet what a difference will a slight alteration make, which the Hebrew admits of, namely, a future tense put for the imperative; then we have a true *prediction* of the fate of Christ's enemies, instead of an imprecation of evil upon the head of them.

It is in this sense, I am sure, that we ought always to use and regard the harsh-sounding passages in this and several other of the Psalms. But when we come to the latter verse of it there is, I say, a ring of Easter joy about it. The sorrows and sufferings are passed away. "Thy help, O God, shall lift me up, I will praise the Name of God with a song, and magnify it with thanksgiving." "Seek ye after God, and your soul shall live."

The closer we look at all these last verses, the more we shall find echoes of Easter in them, with the promise

which has long since come to pass of God's mercy, and the blessings of Redemption extending themselves through all generations and to all the world.

But the special words I have selected for to-day are these, "Seek ye after God, and your soul shall live." It was so with our Lord Himself. His own words are, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work." And so though He submitted Himself to death for our sakes, yet it was not possible that He should be holden of it. "Thou wilt not leave My soul in Hell, neither shalt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption." And so it was. One full day—a day of darkness and sadness to those who loved Him—with an hour or two of the preceding day, and a few hours of the day after, and then the Saviour's human soul, which had in the meanwhile visited the world of spirits, and taken with Him into Paradise the soul of the penitent thief on His right hand on the Cross, and had preached to the spirits in their places of safe keeping, returned again to the Tabernacle in which it had dwelt. The stiffened limbs relaxed their hardness, and His glorious Body, now made spiritual, incorruptible, and deathless, passed through the solid rock, never more to return to death and the grave. He *had* sought God, and His Soul did now live for ever. "I am He that liveth and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of Hell and of Death." (Rev. i. 18.)

This is the great joy of Easter. Our Head has returned to life, “Jesus Christ is risen to-day.” Now, “If any man sin we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous, and He is the Propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.” (1 S. John ii. 1, 2.)

This surely is the truest and fullest meaning of these words, “Seek ye after God, and your soul shall live.” But they belong to every one of us also. How many are there who never try to seek after God! How many who expect God to seek them, to turn their hearts to Him, but never try, or expect, or even say they are *unable* of themselves to seek after God! You may depend upon this, my brethren, when men and women refuse to seek after God, if He sees good in them, as He did in Saul when he was yet the persecutor of the Church, and was taking part against Christ even to the death of His saints, God may, and often does, seek after them, but it is generally by saying of such, as He did of S. Paul, “I will show him how great things he must suffer for My Name’s sake.” Depend upon it, in this Divine rule we may find the explanation of many sorrows, afflictions, and troubles which fall thickly around us. Just as it was, not until the Prodigal Son had tasted the trials of want and poverty, and “no man gave unto him,” that he came to himself, and retraced his steps to the home he had deserted, and the father he had forsaken. How

many of us do, like him, forsake God, give up our attendance at church and at Holy Communion, give up our early-formed habits of prayer and love for our Bible, and follow the way of the world, and love its sins and its temptations. And of these how many are never recovered, nor recover of themselves. They pass on into the eternal state with no love of God in their hearts, and no concern about His will, and to conform their lives to what He requires. And then, how often upon a dying bed comes back a full consciousness of all that their life has been, the bitter remorse for all their sins and neglects, when they have now neither time, nor strength, nor opportunity to work out their salvation, and make their calling and election sure. Yet how great are the promises of God to all who seek him: "They who seek Me early shall find Me." "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all other things shall be added unto you." "To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, God will give eternal life." All these invitations to us fulfil the promise of my text, "Seek ye after God, and your soul shall live."

The truth is, brethren, that God, having endowed us with the perfection of a free will, demands of us that we should co-operate with Him in His work, and desire, that we should be saved. This is strictly in accordance with all His dealings with us in this life. Nothing is

done without effort on our part. The whole work of this world goes on from age age by man's eager and energetic action to fulfil his part in life: "If a man will not work, neither shall he eat." There is no spontaneous supply of the most necessary things for human life, coming forth like "the springs which run among the hills." No, it is for ever and ever this, "Man goeth forth to his work and to his labour until the evening." Yet, wise as we all are as to this fact, as regards our human life, how slow and averse are many to see and recognize the existence of the very same rule in all matters of the soul. Would we have it to be true of us, "Your soul shall live," then let us recognize the condition on which that promise depends, "Seek ye after God." In this we do not grope, as it were, in the dark. God ever helps them who help themselves. They may be tried,—heart, spirit, courage, and constancy, faith and love, all may be tried; but if, as we wait after the sowing, through winter snows, and spring's trying winds and rains, for our yearly harvest, so, if we be not weary in well doing, and faint not, our end is sure. "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." The earnest, humble, faithful soul goes on "from strength to strength." There is a spiritual progress like that of the two disciples who first followed the holy Baptist, but when "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world" was pointed out to them, they left the servant

to follow the Master. Their next step is to bring others to Christ; and thus S. Andrew is the first to bring his still greater brother, S. Peter, into the knowledge and presence of Christ. Afterwards, he does the same office again and again, introducing to Christ the lad with the five loaves, from which the great miracle was performed, and those Greeks—the first-fruits of our Gentile world—who desired to see Christ; and they saw Him and were glad. So is, or should be, the religious life in and with us all. An ever high mounting, an ever increasing desire to seek more and more those things which are above.

Must we not all feel, when we think on these things, very much as the Psalmist speaks in one verse of the longest Psalm of all, “I have gone astray like a sheep that is lost: O seek Thy servant, for I do not forget Thy commandments.”

Brethren, seek God everywhere, and ye shall find Him everywhere. There is a beauty in the smallest thing that has life in it in this world below which bespeaks God’s work, and care, and providence, and power. Here especially, in His own Temple, if we seek Him, shall we ever find Him in prayer, and Sacraments, and Holy Scriptures. Or if we raise our eyes above this world, there “the Heavens declare the glory of God, and the Firmament showeth His handiwork.” “Seek ye after God, and your soul shall live.”

SERMON XXIV.

The new Advent.

“Thou art my Helper, and my Redeemer: O Lord, make no long tarrying.”—PSALM lxx. 6.

THIS is not only one of the shortest of all the Psalms, but it is almost an exact repetition of the concluding part of the fortieth Psalm. With the exception of the name here, “Elohim” for God, instead of “Jehovah” as there, this and the latter verses of the fortieth are, we may say, identical. As the first book of the Psalter ends with the forty-first Psalm, as denoted by the word “Amen,” so this second book ends with the seventy-second Psalm, which also is denoted by the word Amen; and as the four last Psalms in the first book are a sort of conclusion to it, so it is with these four last Psalms of the second book. They are a summing up of the whole book. They are also attributed to the same period in David’s life as the latter Psalms of the first book, when he was near his end, worn out and weary, but had, at the last moment (as we may say) to rouse himself that he might publicly and unmistakably denote which of his sons was to succeed to his throne. He had thus, as appears

more fully in the First Book of Chronicles than of the Kings, to rise up and go forth in public and see Solomon installed before his eyes: so this circumstance was in some measure typical of our Lord's Resurrection and reappearance before the eyes of men. We may remember, perhaps, that the fortieth Psalm is one of those appointed for us on Good Friday, and thus, as is frequently the case, this recovery on David's part is a sort of indication of our Lord's Resurrection from the dead. And thus this short Psalm comes in suitably for our consideration during this Easter season of the year. There is little otherwise specially for us to notice in it. Its first words supply that suffrage used in the Order of both our Morning and Evening Form of Prayer, "O God, make speed to save us: O Lord, make haste to help us." Still we may take those words of my text, "Thou art my Helper and my Redeemer: O Lord, make no long tarrying," as the prayer of the Disciples, between the Cross and the Resurrection; and then they come to be a most fitting expression of our desire for the Lord's return, since His Ascension into Heaven, which should form a frequent subject of our prayers and thoughts.

When our Lord left the Disciples, amongst His last words were these, "A little while ye shall not see Me, and again a little while and ye shall see Me": and the meaning they were to put upon them became at once a special subject of discussion amongst them.

Our Lord knew this fact, but He gave them no direct explanation further than this, that He was going to His Father, and that they would have a short-lived time of sorrow, but a sudden restoration to joy, which no man should take from them. And so it was, as we know so well. The tears of Calvary were soon wiped away by Easter joy, and so entirely disappeared, that when on the fortieth day after He left them for good and all, yet "they returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the Temple, praising and blessing God." And so one writer says of the Apostles after the Ascension, "Late found and early lost. This perhaps was the Apostles' first feeling on His parting from them. And the like often happens here below. We understand our blessings just when we are about to forfeit them: our prospects are most hopeful just when they are most hopelessly clouded. Years upon years we have had great privileges, the light of truth, the presence of holy men, opportunities of religious improvement, kind and tender parents; yet we knew not or thought of our happiness. We valued not our gifts: and then they are taken away just when we have begun to value them." It will be well if we take this lesson to ourselves, and learn that great truth which the Apostles shrank from at first, but at length rejoiced in. Christ suffered and entered into joy: so did they in their measure after Him. And in our measure so do we. It is written that "through

much tribulation we must enter into the Kingdom of God." God has all things in His own hands. We are all like the leaves in Spring, just at this moment putting forth their first and freshest hues of Summer foliage, which is to follow: but then as the Prophet says, "We all do fade as a leaf." We have to accomplish, as had our Lord, that subjection of human Nature to the universal law of existence only for a time, which renders each of us in this life sooner or later like the leaves which strew the ground in Autumn, with this difference, that we have in view a period of rest and waiting till the Lord shall return once more and "restore all things." "Thou art my Helper and my Redeemer: O Lord, make no long tarrying."

It is for this, brethren, that we need to pray, and it is to this event which we have in view that we may more especially apply these last words of the seventieth Psalm, which form my text to day. Our Lord has left us—we have lately been keeping in mind, day by day, those last hours which He spent on earth, as altogether one of us: and soon will come round again once more that fortieth day after Easter, when we shall be commemorating again His final departure from these scenes of earth and the eyes of man, until He comes again to judge all men. But He has left us for perpetual repetition the continual prayer, "Thy Kingdom come"—words which are in some measure

interpreted by those of S. John at the close of our Bible, "And, behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give to every man as his work shall be. Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come Lord Jesus." (Rev. xxii. 12, 20.)

Thus it is that the Church never commits the earthly remains of any Christian to the grave without these words, "Beseeching Thee, that it may please Thee, of Thy gracious goodness, *shortly to accomplish the number of Thine elect, and to hasten Thy Kingdom*; that we, with all those that are departed in the true faith of Thy Holy Name, may have our perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul, in Thy eternal and everlasting glory."

There is, I fear, brethren, but little looking forward to this period and this great event with any earnest desire, or longing for it to come to pass in these days. Yet this is, perhaps, as real and true a test of our own state of heart, of our love for Christ, and of our faith towards God as we can ever have. We may remember that striking passage in the last (as it is supposed to have been) of S. Paul's Epistles, where he uses these words (2 Tim. iv. 8), "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 to all them also *that love His appearing*." There could hardly be words more agreeable to the prayer of my text, "O Lord, make no long tarrying."

When we look around us—whether at the kingdoms of this world or at the state of Christ's Church throughout the world—all the signs foretold us of the Lord's coming drawing nigh, seem, year by year, to thicken around us; yet on that very account men's hearts are less and less occupied with the thought of it, or any expectation of this greatest of all events. Besides those well-known predictions of "wars and rumours of wars, nation rising against nation and kingdom against kingdom," which so often now fill our ears and occupy our thoughts in these times in which we live, there is that silent spreading of the Church and faith of Christ all over the earth, which makes but little noise, for "the Gospel shall be preached in all the world, as a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come." There is the silent but rapid re-peopling of the Holy Land by its original possessors, which betokens the early fulfilment of their restoration, of which men in general may see and hear little until it be accomplished. There is also that failing of faith and uprising of new and strange opinions, and the unsettling of men's minds, which our Lord's words seem to betoken, "Nevertheless, when the Son of Man cometh, shall He find Faith on the earth." Will not the world's state rather be like the times before the Flood and the days before Sodom and Gomorrah were buried in ashes? So few saved out of the multitudes swept away! All these signs which we

are led to expect preparing the way for the last Revelation, "When as the lightning shineth from the one part under Heaven unto the other part, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be." It is to this event above all that we had best apply these words of our Psalm to day, "O Lord, make no long tarrying."

Are we not at present like a ship tossed on the waves, and the winds are contrary? Whether we turn our eyes and our thoughts to the Church, or the world, all things seem more or less out of gear; and they, whose peculiar mark should be a oneness of heart and of spirit—we whose rule should be this, "Endeavouring to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, as there is one Body and one Spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all"—even we seem involved more and more in endless divisions of one body of professing Christians apart from another. When shall the end come? "O Lord, make no long tarrying." Our true home is, and so our hearts should be, where "there is no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither any more pain, for the former things are passed away." Where there will be no more sin, nor guilt, nor remorse; no more trials and no more punishment; "no infirmity to depress us, no affection to mislead us, no prejudice to blind us; no pride, no envy, no strife; but only the light of God's countenance and the peace of Eternity." This lies before us. Shall it be ours, or shall it not?

“In My Father’s house are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you.” So the failure is ours if it be so. But why should it? It is but for a little while. “Stand fast in the faith : quit you like men ; be strong.” Let us try to keep the thought and hope of our Lord’s return often before our minds. There is nothing which will so dwarf the little matters and troubles of this life. Nothing which will so encourage us to take heart, and try to fulfil our part in this world, that we may in some way serve Christ and advance His Kingdom over all. Like the widow’s mite, which in God’s sight was a greater gift than any other contribution, so even the least and lowest may do their part by secret prayer and frequent communion, desiring, again and again, “Thy Kingdom come.” “Thou art my Helper and my Redeemer : O Lord, make no long tarrying.”

SERMON XXV.

The Last Psalm of David.

“Forsake me not, O God, in mine old age, when I am gray-headed : until I have shewed Thy strength unto this generation, and Thy power to all them that are yet for to come.”—PSALM lxxi. 16.

THIS is the last Psalm in this second book of the Psalms according to the original division into five books, which is ascribed to David, for the next Psalm, with which the book ends, has the name of “Solomon” at the head of it. I have already said that these four Psalms are ascribed to the last days of David’s life ; and the best commentary we could read in connection with this Psalm is the twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth chapters of the First Book of Chronicles. There we read how David was raised up from his sick bed to go forth and address all the princes and chief men of Israel before he died, and to point out to them Solomon as his successor, and to describe all the preparations he had been for many years making for building the Temple, which was so soon to be undertaken by Solomon on succeeding to his throne.

There is a special connection in the twentieth and

twenty-third verses with 1 Kings i. 29, 30, which relates to the same period in David's lifetime, but a still more remarkable coincidence with those chapters I have named in the First Book of Chronicles.

Here in the twentieth verse David calls upon God, "O Thou Holy One of Israel"—a term used twenty-five times by Isaiah, but only in this one place by David. But in those two chapters we shall find how frequently the name of Israel is introduced. There David speaks of himself as "chosen of God to be king over Israel for ever." So he had summoned "the princes of Israel" to do honour to the God of Israel, and to present to them Solomon as his successor to the throne of Israel. Here he showed them the pattern of the future Temple of the Holy One of Israel, "in the sight of all Israel," and "the chief of the fathers and princes of the Tribes of Israel assent willingly;" and at last "David blessed the Lord before all the congregation, and said, blessed be Thou, Lord God of Israel, our Father for ever and ever. Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the Heavens and in the earth is Thine: Thine is the kingdom, and Thou art exalted as Head above all. Both riches and honour come of Thee, and Thou reignest over all: and in Thine hand is power and might: and in Thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all." These are beautiful words, the last-recorded

utterances of David; and having this special connection which I have named above with this last Psalm, as we believe and may call it, of David's.

And this, perhaps, is the reason that the greater part of this Psalm (omitting only the latter verses of it) has been selected for our use in the Service for "The Visitation of the Sick." Whether a sickness be unto death, or only a temporary malady which soon passes away, yet it is to us all, or it ought to be, a reminder how short on earth our life is, how quickly passed, how seldom protracted even to those seven or eight decades of years, which is the utmost of man's career in this world. A sick bed, come when it may upon us, gives time to many a person to look both backwards and forwards, which they seem never able to do in the press and occupations of their busy daily life. It is well if then, like David in this Psalm, we do each look back, and are able to say, "Thou, O Lord God, art the thing that I long for. Thou art my hope, even from my youth. Through Thee have I been holden up ever since I was born: Thou art He that took me out of my mother's womb: my praise shall be always of Thee:" "Cast me not away in the time of age: forsake me not when my strength faileth me. Forsake me not, O God, in mine old age, when I am gray-headed, until I have shewed Thy strength unto this generation, and Thy power to all them that are yet for to come." I suppose that very few, if any,

of us are conscious to ourselves of the change which each year, as it passes, is working in us silently but surely. The sure way of coming to a peaceful and happy state in old age, if such should be granted us, is to love God, and try to serve Him with all our best power of mind and body, while we are in health and strength. We look around at the trees, and see how every one differs one from the other, but perhaps we seldom reflect that that difference began from the very beginning of their growth, and they have but continued in the form which they first of all took, or have been bent and shaped to it by man's pruning and training. So it is with all of us. Years as they pass do but shape us, as a rule, the more surely after the pattern with which we commenced life, to and in ourselves. The main characters of the man at his prime, and in his fullest strength, are, like the features of his figure and face, but the development of what he was at first.

All the chief saints, all the lives which best stand out in Holy Scripture as in any way a pattern to others, and as especially blessed of God, are those whose first years were given to God, and His grace has worked in them more and more as life advanced. We need only look to the early life of Joseph, of Moses, of Samuel, of David, of Daniel, or of S. John, and we see this at once. What they became at last, they were in some degree in the earliest years of life and manhood.

Joseph asking himself the question, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Moses fleeing from the temptations of Pharaoh's court, as S. Paul says of him, "choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;" Daniel kneeling down three times a day to pray unto God, at the risk of his life; these are the sort of indications left us in the blessed Word of God. to show us how, if we give our youth and our early and best years to God, He will never leave us, but will guide and keep us amid all temptations and trials which befall us. Still there is, I believe, as in these cases, so in all, some supreme moment in the life of every one of us, when we have to make a decided choice, and to take a definite line for God, or against Him, which in the main influences all our after course in life.

I would that every young person would remember this, and act upon it. Early in life there is quite sure to come to every one of us some one occasion when we must throw in our lot with God, and follow what is good, or turn away from Him, and do what we know is wrong, though it may be we esteem that of small consequence at the moment. But it is not so. Good or evil for life come, for the most part, in and to all of us from the smallest possible beginnings. Who would expect the mighty river as it flows into the sea from the first tiny spring-flow at its source?

Such is life in us all. The child's earliest simple prayer is the parent of the devoutest, holiest, and most devoted life of faith. We sow the seeds in our earliest state of consciousness, and knowledge of good and evil, which in due season and by steady progress produce wheat unto the harvest or tares for the burning. Yet how little account do we each take of all this! The perfection of all we can desire for ourselves, or for our children, is that they and we may be in some measure like Him of Whom it is written, "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man." What is there more beautiful to contemplate than the daily life of some really good and devout old person—one who has served God from his youth upwards, and who can with truth say and feel with David in this Psalm, "Thou, O Lord God, art the thing that I long for: Thou art my hope even from my youth. Through Thee have I been holden up ever since I was born. My praise shall be always of Thee." And the only sure way to this, I would say again and again, lies in passing our childhood and youth in innocence, purity, and piety. Early sins, wilfully or carelessly indulged, leave a stain which it is always difficult, and in many cases impossible, for us ever to erase and remove. Esau was but a young man when he despised his birthright and the peculiar blessing which belonged to him as the eldest son in the chosen race, and he found, we are told, "no

place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears." We all know how bright most things look to the eyes of youth; how slight are its dangers; how small the difficulties in store for us. But all these bear a very different complexion as time passes on. What a happy lot must that ever be when little children look up to any of us with their pure love and admiration, and reverence us for matured wisdom, or cling to us for our kindness or our advice.

Such should be the case with all of us who ever attain to old age, however rare it may be, because it denotes one who has loved God from his youth, one who has "kept innocency, and taken heed unto the thing that was right;" and that has, as the promise is, brought that man peace at the last. The devoutness of our early prayers, our ready and implicit obedience to our parents, truthfulness in our lips, and purity in our hearts, these are the foundations of the best and most saintly lives amongst us: these are the men who leave the surest and greatest marks behind them of works done, which remain, it may be, for generations. True there are, from time to time, men who seem to carry all before them—great kings, or great generals, or great statesmen—still, if their work has not been for God, those names soon die out of memory; their works come to an end, and never last, perhaps, for one generation. Compare with this the work of them who in hundreds of years past have studded our native land

all over with our ten thousand old parish churches. Here is work which has lasted, and still lasts, and will, we hope, do so for all generations to come. Let us remember this, that nothing is lost which is done unto God. Time changes all things, but to this day the deed of her who in her love brake the box of precious ointment, and poured it on the Saviour's head at Bethany, is told in all lands, and is kept alive to all times, as the memorial of her who did it, as an example for us all to follow, in that our Lord testified of her and what she had done, "She hath done what she could."

SERMON XXVI.

Universal Dominion.

“All kings shall fall down before Him : all nations shall do Him service. He shall live, and unto Him shall be given of the gold of Arabia : prayer shall be made ever unto Him, and daily shall He be praised. His Name shall endure for ever ; His Name shall remain under the sun among the posterities : which shall be blessed through Him : and all the heathen shall praise Him.”—PSALM lxxii. 11, 15, 17.

THIS Psalm concludes the second of the five books into which the Psalter was originally divided, and so ends, as I have said before, with the word “Amen,” which still marks each of these old divisions. It is a Psalm of, or, as some have thought, for Solomon. There is but one other of the Psalms which in the same way bears his name, and that is the one hundred and twenty-seventh.

Many have thought this to be a Psalm of David, uttered on his dying bed on behalf of his son and successor. But the repeated mention of Arabia and other places specially connected with Solomon’s reign, point rather to a date subsequent to David’s life, and there seems also a special reference to Solomon, whose name means “The Peaceable,” in the repeated mention

of peace: "The mountains shall bring peace" (ver. 3). "In his time shall the righteous flourish: yea, and abundance of peace, so long as the moon endureth" (verse 7).

One of the best of modern commentators (Bishop Wordsworth) says on this Psalm, "There is something very beautiful and interesting in the conjunction of these two Psalms (seventy-first and seventy-second). In the foregoing Psalm we saw David in his old age declaring his faith in God, and rendering thanks to Him for His benefits ever since he was born. We saw him there going forth from his sick chamber in order to present Solomon, his son and successor, to the assembled nobles and people of Israel; we heard the prophetic utterances of David, the king, the progenitor, and type of Christ, especially in his suffering and victories. And now in the present Psalm, we see at his side Solomon, his son and successor, (whose name signifies "peaceable") another progenitor and type of Christ, especially as the Prince of Peace, and as the builder of the Temple, the type of the Church of Christ; and we have in this Psalm a prophecy uttered by Solomon in Christ's name, of His universal and everlasting dominion."

How true a prophecy was this Psalm of Solomon's future glory and kingdom. His rule did extend itself from one sea to another, from the shores of the Mediterranean Sea to the great river—the river Euphrates.

So, too, when Hiram, King of Tyre, and the Queen of Sheba in Ethiopia visited Jerusalem, bringing with them as gifts the best productions of their own land, how true were these words, "All kings shall fall down before Him, all nations shall do Him service." Solomon had peace on all sides, and was more glorious than any king before or since, so long as he continued to fear and love God, and to keep His Commandments. But in his old age he fell away and fell into grievous sins, and so lost the favour of Almighty God. It was then that he wrote that saddest book of all, Ecclesiastes, which is full of bitter memories, of grief over lost opportunities, of the emptiness and unsatisfying nature of all human things, and power and glory apart from God's favour and blessing. Yet with it all are mixed up here and there very beautiful passages, such as these, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them" "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His Commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work unto judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil."

But the glory and extent of Solomon's kingdom was little indeed compared to that far greater descendant of David according to the flesh, who combined in His own Person the original circumstances, traits of character,

and excellences, which, in one way or other, belong to the lives of every great and good man from Abel to David and Solomon. Thus to Him in His cradle at Bethlehem came the kings of the East, "of Arabia and Saba," laying at His feet their gifts of gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. And when this Psalm speaks of his dominion extending unto the world's end, of its penetrating into the wildernesses; that prayer shall be made ever unto Him, and daily shall He be praised; that His name shall endure for ever as long as the sun and moon endureth; and in Him shall all men be blessed, and Him shall all nations call blessed; in all these expressions we are surely much more reminded of our great Redeemer than of Solomon: and how we are each bound to do our small part in this life to spread the kingdom of truth, of righteousness, and peace throughout the world; until the old promise is indeed fulfilled, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever;" "until the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the seas."

As often, then, as we repeat, month by month, this one amongst the Psalms, let it first of all remind us of our duty, each in some way, to spread Christ's Kingdom upon earth, to enlarge its borders, to extend its influence, till all nations shall be brought within its sphere, and our Lord's own words shall be fulfilled:

“This Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, as a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come.”

No branch of the Church, and no individual member in the Church, can stand still and be safe without any effort ever made to fulfil our constant and often repeated prayer, “Thy Kingdom come.” See how soon the pool of purest water becomes dark and repulsive both to taste and sight if it rests stagnant, unmoved, and silent within its own boundaries. Whereas the living stream, which is ever flowing on and passing by, continues sweet and pure even against a thousand objects of pollution which it meets with in its course. So is that living stream of purest water, the Grace of God, which dwells in the souls of God’s true people. “The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal by.” It is not to be laid up like treasure, but to be exerted and exercised, that as salt savours all that it is put into, and preserves even perishable things from decay, so will this gift of God both savour other souls besides our own if we try so to employ it, and may save some soul from death, and so hide a multitude of our own sins in God’s sight.

We ought all to remember how our Lord speaks of salt which has lost its savour, and is, if so, good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden underfoot of men. How much I wish, my brethren, we would each

try to exert this power for good with which God has endowed every one of us—some in one way, some in another, but all in some way. It is not the lot of everyone, or of any but a very few comparatively, to go forth as missionaries to other distant lands. Some feel this to be their special call in life, but it is not so with many or most. Still there are ways in which we may each take our part in the great work of evangelising the world, giving to it of our time, of our money, but above all of our prayers. I think no one should pass a day without, when on his knees, asking it of God to “send forth labourers into His harvest”; when we know that in our own land there are parishes which contain tens of thousands of souls under the care of one, two, or three clergy. And, abroad, what a field of Christian labour presents itself in every quarter of the globe! India with its two hundred millions of heathen, China with its dense population, Japan and Central Africa, besides those many vast countries which are being more and more peopled from our own shores, how rises up our Lord’s contemplation respecting His own time on earth, “The harvest truly is great, and labourers are few, pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that He would send forth labourers into His harvest.”

Besides this, the first words of this Psalm remind us of one subject, which some persons have thought is too frequently, or too prominently, introduced into our

Form of Prayer for Public Worship, and that is, intercession on behalf of the Queen and those in authority under her. The first words of our Psalm are, "Give the king Thy judgments, O God, and Thy righteousness unto the king's son." And so S. Paul, when laying down a rule for the practice of the particular Church entrusted to his faithful companion Timothy, at Athens, says, "I exhort, therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men: for kings, and for all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty: for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour." And thus it is, in compliance with this rule, the Queen's name is introduced in all our public services in church. As these services were not arranged, or intended at first to be used as we use them now, in immediate succession one after another, there was not in the original design this repetition which occurs now. Still it is better that the same thing should occur again and again rather than too seldom and too little.

The history of an age and nation, and especially in these times of quick intercourse and rapid communication, is formed and moulded very greatly by the individual life, character, and influence of the Sovereign. A grand opportunity of good which has been missed, or a fatal mistake at some important juncture of affairs,

may at any moment affect the whole nation's welfare for years, if not for ever. And if we reflect that the empire of England extends so widely that, as is often said, the sun never sets upon it; for when it is sunset in one quarter it is sunrise in the opposite hemisphere; and that this is far from being all, for I believe we are not wrong in saying that all other nations are more guided and influenced by English customs, and the line which England takes, than by any other land or country; and so our influence reaches over and embraces more or less all people. How can we, then, too often and too earnestly pray God to bless, protect, and guide our nation's head, her Parliament, and her Councillors in Church and State; "that peace and righteousness, truth and justice, religion and piety, may be established amongst us for all generations." Never has England been so united, so happy, or so influential far and wide, as during the already long and prosperous reign of Queen Victoria; and never have more prayers been offered up than for her and hers; and may we never cease to pray in the words of Solomon the Wise and Peaceable: "Give the king Thy judgments, O God: and Thy righteousness unto the king's son."*msd*



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