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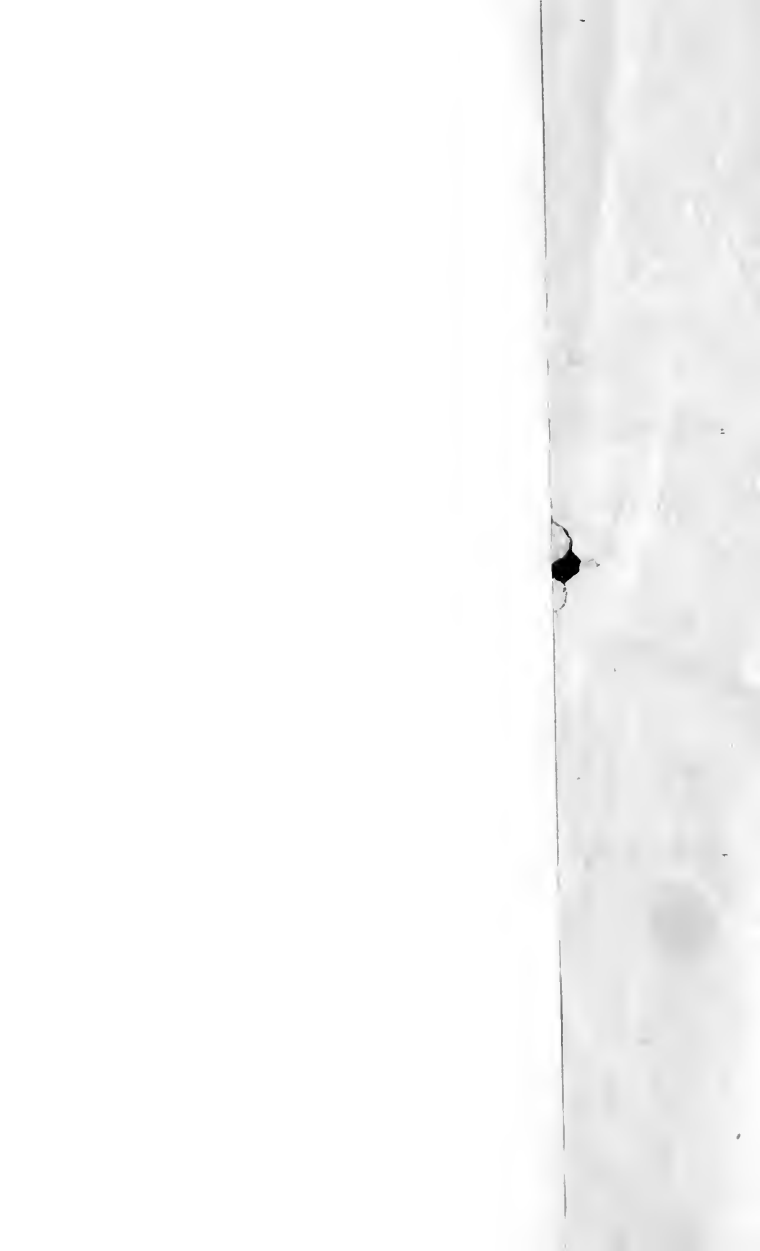
“The Land Mourneth.”

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A SERMON

ON THE DEATH OF THE

President of the United States.

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# “The Land Mourneeth”

THE DEATH OF

ABRAHAM LINCOLN,

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.



A SERMON,

DELIVERED IN THE

Church of the Covenant,

On Sunday Evening, April 16th, 1865,

BY

Rev. William T. Sabine, Rector.

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among the congregation.

# A SERMON

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## President of the United States.

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I am about to utter sentiments which some of my auditors may consider unwise, illjudged, inappropriate, extreme. I cannot help it. I have no apology to make for it. A full heart must overflow—a saddened spirit must tell its tale of grief. Nor, I am bold to say, do I think the sentiments to be announced unbecoming, at such a time, either in this house of prayer or from this sacred desk. The hand of God is in this heavy judgment, and whatever helps us to feel its smart helps us to an appreciation of our sin, and of His inflexible determination to punish it.

To speak, then, as I wish to speak to-night of some of the many traits of excellence which adorned the character of our departed chief, may lead us to reflect somewhat upon

the severity of our bereavement ; and looking up from our bereavement to an acknowledgment of the justice of God in its infliction and a consequent determination that we, as members of this nation, will seek to regulate our conduct more conformably to his holy will and the precepts of his righteous law.

Having this for an end sincerely, applause or censure matters not.

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“ *The Land Mourneth.*”

Joel, 1 : 10.

On her day of greatest joy, the nation bows her head in deepest grief. Not over a dishonored flag ; not over a defeated army ; not over a navy dismantled, scattered or destroyed ; not over a rebellion triumphant ; but over her dear dead President, the nation sheds her bitter tears ! The man whom she hath loved as she never loved another man, save one ; the man to whom she owed a debt of gratitude which every rolling year of all her coming history will only make more manifest ; the man who hath done more than any man to purge her of iniquity, to vindicate her honor,

to render her name lustrous among the people of the earth, LIES DEAD ! and dead, not by disease, not through the infirmities of age, but murdered in cold blood by the hand of a vile assassin. Oh ! land bereaved, well mayest thou mourn with a lamentation loud and sore !

*The land mourneth* because she hath lost a son in whom she felt a special pride. Yes, I do not exaggerate, I do, in no sense, strain a point when I say that the loyal men and women of these United States were honestly proud of their late President. The genius of American institutions was never better illustrated than in his life and career. No higher eulogy could be pronounced upon them, no more exalted testimony could be given to their beneficence and excellence than that accorded in his history. Sprung from no royal line, without one drop of regal blood, unversed entirely in the sophistries, the intrigues, the hollow, heartless etiquette of courts. Uncouth, some said he was, but better be uncouth and honest than polished and a knave. A man of

the people, lowly in his origin, humble in his home and that a western wilderness home, possessed of few educational advantages ; gifted, perhaps, with no very sparkling or transcendent talents, owing nothing of his after greatness to the fictitious power of wealth or family prestige, winning, by the toil of his own hands, an epithet which, though mean and low, and sordid minds may have held it to be a fit subject for reproach, was a title truly glorious ; he was a self-made, self-educated, self-elevated man. He was a product of America peculiarly American. Is Switzerland proud of her patriot race ? Is Holland proud of her thrifty sons ? Well, we are prouder still of our self-made men, and he was one of them, and one of the very noblest of them all. He struggled up from a position the most obscure to a station the most exalted, he triumphed over difficulties the greatest, and proved himself a victor over obstacles which most men had not even dared to face ; and we respected, we honored, we loved him not merely for this, the inherent nobility of his own character—



but because his whole career has furnished a commentary so illustrious upon our institutions and laws.

*The land mourneth* because she hath lost a "Father!" They called him "*father*" in a way of pleasantry, but bye and bye it will appear that he had better title to the epithet than the witticism of any joke could ever give. He cherished beyond all things the welfare of the people over whom the arrangements of a gracious Providence had placed him. To see this people prosperous, united, peaceful, happy; to behold this government firmly established upon principles of integrity and justice and right, was the intensest wish of his great soul. To this end he devoted himself with a steady purpose and an unswerving aim. He has had bitter and unprincipled enemies—men who have intensely hated him, not so much for himself perhaps, as because they hated what was just and good; and because he was, they consciously felt, the representative of what was just and good. Yet, differ as they may from him on questions of State policy,

they can never asperse the integrity of his motives, or impugn the sincerity of his wish to do that which was right. They may call him fanatical, extreme, injudicious if they will, they can never say that he was intentionally dishonest. After years will thoroughly establish his claim to be called "Pater Patræ," and will enshrine his name on the same tablet with that of the first occupant of the position he has so nobly filled.

*The land mourneth* because she has lost a *wise Governor*. It is neither my purpose, right, nor wish to discuss questions of policy here, which properly belong to the halls of legislation and the council chamber of the Cabinet. Yet I should do very wrong to omit in this connection all reference to a cause of grief so prominent as this. There have been forced upon his attention, and submitted to his investigation, questions the most momentous and absorbing which mortal man, in the merely earthly relations of his being, was ever called upon to solve. Candor must compel the admission, even from those who differed

from him on topics of political expediency, that he handled those questions with honesty, clearness and firmness. Fearful as was his responsibility, he did not shrink from or shirk it. All have admired the pointedness, simplicity, absence of wordy declamation, with which he was wont to grasp the main issue involved. All must confess the gentleness and the conciliatory spirit he has ever shown to a traitorous conspiracy, the most diabolical and infamous that ever cursed the earth. With great delight, with growing affection, have the loyal millions of this land watched the calm consistency of his course and unfaltering fidelity to the great principles he was elected to represent and maintain. Whether the darkness of disaster or defeat shrouded the cause in gloom, or the brightness of success tipped the standard with victory, all propositions looking to a surrender of principle and duty found ever, on his lips, the same emphatic negative. Again and again did they ask his terms. Again and again did they receive the same unhesitating answer,

till patriot hearts everywhere learned to feel *in that man's hands the C'ountry's honor is secure.*

So fully convinced had men become of the sterling integrity of his motives and the soundness of his judgment, that the intricate and extremely harassing questions which the heaven-gvien success of our armies were just forcing upon the government, for its solution, seemed stripped of half their difficulty, when we remembered that our loved President would have at least some voice in their solution. Alas for the vanity of earthly hopes! That busy brain has ceased to think, that patriot heart has ceased to throb, that faithful life—worth to us ten thousand times the life of the villian who destroyed it—has found its termination in a death of violence. The last two weeks had done much to confirm our confidence. The magnanimity, nay I will go further, and say Christian tenderness, with which he was disposed to treat a fallen foe, the gentleness of his expressions, his willingness to concede all that truth and justice

would allow, stamped *him* as the truest friend, which the rebellious South possessed. Oh! Sunny South, land of bright skies and early flowers, and balmy airs, lift up thy voice and weep for thou hast lost thy truest friend.

*The land mourneth* because she has lost a Christian Patriot. A Christian dying is always a loss, still more a Christian Patriot, in days when political ability is too often divorced from Christianity, still more so when that Christian patriot, is a Christian President. That this trait was characteristic of our departed ruler, no one can dispute. Granted, unfortunate beyond expression, was the time and the place of his decease; granted, distressing extremely, were the circumstances in which the dark angel found his victim in the hour of the dread summons; yet none who have read the Presidential proclamations of the last two years, can deny to him who issued them, the character of a *God-fearing* man. Oh! bereaved land, well mayest thou mourn, here is thy deepest loss! Thou

mayest find Chief Magistrates whose talents are conspicuous, whose loyalty is unquestionable, whose learning is profound, whose devotion is entire, but rarely hast thou ever found before, hardly wilt thou find again, one who will hold thy welfare with an eye so single, or commit thine interest to the keeping of the *God* of Nations with a dependence so complete and a trust in His sustaining guidance so simple and sincere.

My fellow Christians *we* have sustained in this dark tragedy a special loss. We love to trace the hand of Providence in National Affairs, to see a connection between National sin and National suffering, between National penitence and National success. That connection our beloved Chief Magistrate was ever foremost to admit. How often have we perused with delight his public acknowledgements of our transgressions *against*, and our gratitude *to God*; with what a thrill of pleasure have we often read and re-read his simple, direct and touching exhortations to penitence and thanksgiving; till with full hearts

and unfeigned lips we have been compelled to cry giving expression to feelings that would have utterance, "God bless that man."

*The land mourneth* from the pine-clad forests of Maine, to the golden-sanded rivers of California, from the bosom of broad lakes, and the surface of wide praries, from New England farms, and Western log-huts, the loyal sisters of this once happy family of States together chant over their dead Chieftain their mornful requiem.

This tribute of affection is as general as it is sincere. It comes not only from the great or the rich, the poor man's heart beats responsive to it too. Go walk through your most crowded streets; go traverse your narrowest alleys, there you shall learn from bits of ribbon, little flags looped up, or deep edged with black crape, how strong a hold the dead patriot had upon the nation's heart. For the narrow muslin banner thrust from the second story of a wooden shanty (and there are many such) is far more affecting, though not more sincere testimonial

to his worth, than the shrouded silken ensign of the millionaire. I might go farther down, and speak of hearts fast throbbing beneath dusky skins; for the poor, despised, down-trodden children of Africa owed him a debt of loving gratitude, such as they never owed to any other of the statesmen of America. Gently, kindly, and judiciously, had he lifted them out of bondage into the golden light of liberty! And had his precious life been spared, had done much to dissipate the wicked prejudice which now will seek to crush them still. Oh, sons and daughters of Ethiopia! bitter is your bereavement. Well may you mingle your tears with your fair-skinned brothers of the Western Race.

Majestic is this Nation's grief. Let no man hereafter dare to say that Republics cannot love their rulers with a love as genuine and heartfelt as that which ever shrined the members of some royal house. Never has earth known a tribute more solemn, touching, wide-spread, or spontaneous than that which an affectionate and outraged people offer this



day to the memory of their Chief Magistrate.

*The land mourneth* but what lesson is there in this mourning? What will *God* teach the Nation by this heavy stroke?

*First*, That we trust not in an arm of flesh, but fix our hope entirely on *Him!* Stunned by the terrible suddenness of the blow we cannot fully, really understand our loss. As little children hardly at first realize the loss of a fond father, but only afterwards, thus we loved him, we honored him, we trusted him so much that, as yet, we scarcely understand the stunning stroke. Ere long, however, we must feel it keenly.

Trust God! trust God! Oh people saved by the Lord, put not your confidence in man! This is the lesson of the hour. The same Jehovah who guided the Pilgrim Fathers in their voyage across the dreary and unknown sea, and sheltered them houseless on these foreign shores,—the same Jehovah who upheld the cause and blessed the arms of the young Republic at the first,—the same Jehovah through whose blessing rebel-

lion totters to its fall, the same Jehovah who gave us our good President, is Jehovah Jireh still! and He is able to save unto the uttermost.

*Second,* That we bow in deepest humiliation beneath the smiting hand. There is a wise purpose in this stroke. We have needed a further chastisement, God sends it in a way, perhaps the last we should have chosen. Submit we to His will, acknowledge His sovereignty, confess we the wisdom of His way, turn we from the sin which hath justly drawn upon us this frightful punishment as its penalty!

*Third,* That we learn here the shortness of life, the nearness of death, the vanity of human hope. Oh! it is awful to think of one thus surrounded by friends and in the very midst of gaiety, hurried into a few hours unconsciousness, and then into the audience chamber of the Eternal Judge. Who guessed a week ago, when the wires were pulsating with the glad news of victory, that to-night our beloved ruler would be a corpse?

and who shall say that ere another week flits by, you or I, my Christless friend, shall not have followed him to the same bourne? Are you ready? Oh fly to *Jesus* and buried with *Him*, risen through *Him*, saved by *Him*, you shall be lifted over all contingency.

*Fourth*, That we must be true to the great work through all discouragements. Truth is immutable, justice is ever the same, principle knows no change. Men die, *God* never dies! That which was righteousness last week is righteousness to-day. The sentiments, motives, rules of duty held by our departed "Father," are just as solemnly binding, just as salutary, just as wise as they were before the vile act was consummated. Unwillingly he left the work undone. Sad was it that he might not see the full result of all his noble toil but so *God* willed it, and we bow before his inscrutable majesty! But let us, standing as it were over his body, vow solemnly that *God* sparing us and helping us, we will complete the work,—that we will never compromise with traitors,—that we will

smite the shackles from off every slave,—that we will toil on through years of struggling if need be, till we attain an abiding Union of these States,—that we will support with money, with sympathy and most of all with earnest prayer, the hands of him on whom now the mighty task devolves.

Oh, faithful, martyred, loved and honored President! Thou hast not lived, thou hast not died in vain. Stained with thy blood, dearer now than ever to us are the mighty principles for which thy precious life was given. Embalmed forever is thy memory and thy example on the tablets of our nation's history, and in our own grateful loving hearts.

May we like thee be faithful unto death.





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