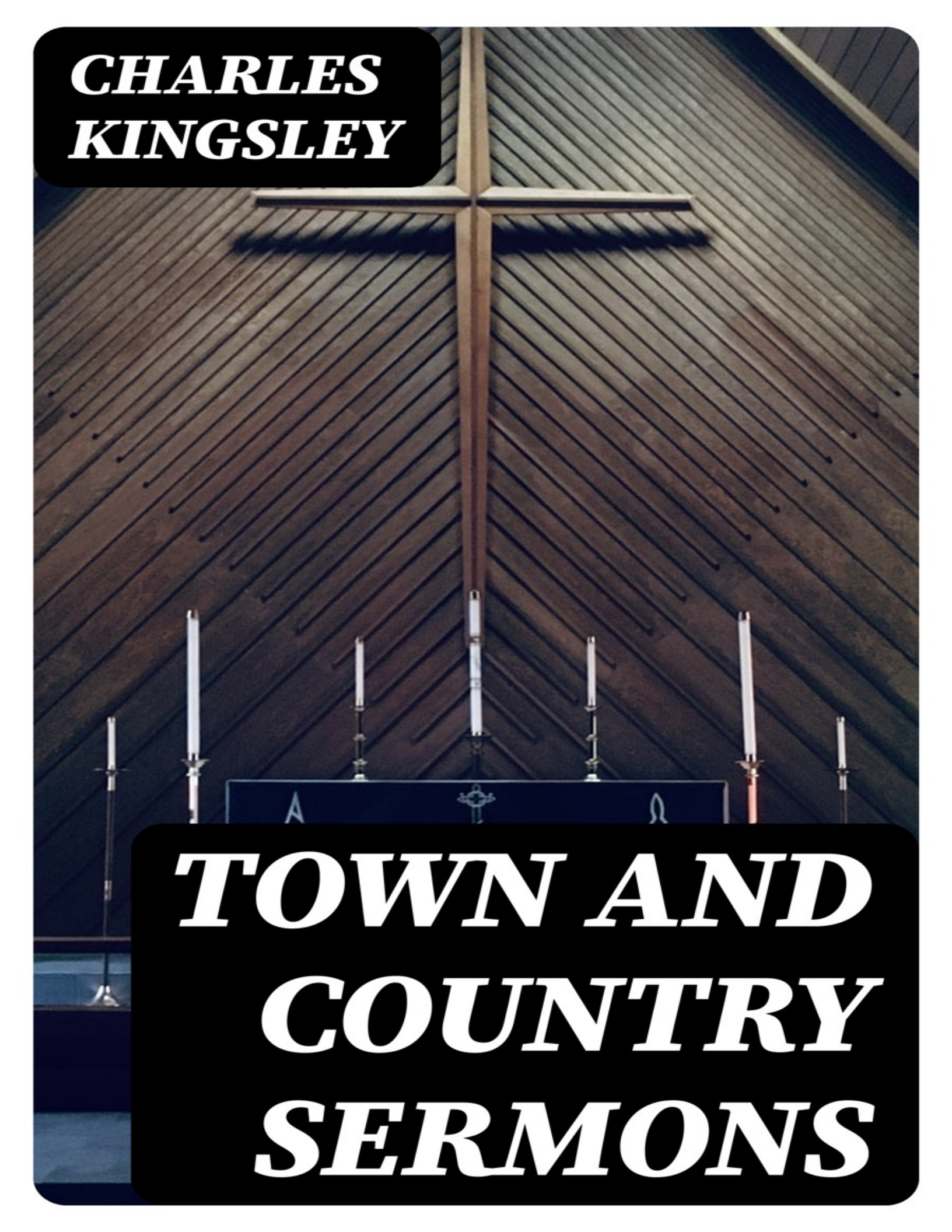


A photograph of a church interior, focusing on the altar area. A large, simple wooden cross is mounted on a wall of dark, vertically-placed wooden slats. Below the cross, several white candles in silver holders are visible. The overall lighting is dim, creating a solemn atmosphere.

***CHARLES
KINGSLEY***

***TOWN AND
COUNTRY
SERMONS***

Charles Kingsley

Town and Country Sermons

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SERMON I. HOW TO KEEP PASSION WEEK

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(Preached before the Queen.)

Philippians ii. 5-11. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

This the first day of Passion Week; and this text is the key-note of Passion Week. It tells us of the obedience of Christ; of the unselfishness of Christ; and, therefore, of the true glory of Christ.

It tells us of One who was in the form of God; the Co-equal and Co-eternal Son; the brightness of his Father's glory, the express image of his Father's person: but who showed forth his Father's glory, and proved that he was the express likeness of his Father's character, by the very opposite means to those which man takes, when he wishes to show forth his own glory.

He was in the form of God. But he did not (so the text seems to mean) think that the bliss of God was a thing to be seized on greedily for himself. He did not think fit merely to glorify himself; to enjoy himself. He was not like the false gods of whom the heathen dreamed, who sat aloft in heaven and enjoyed themselves, careless of mankind.

No. He obeyed his Father utterly, and at all costs. He emptied himself (says St. Paul). He took on him the form of a slave. He humbled himself. He became obedient; obedient to death; and that death the shameful and dreadful death of the cross.

Therefore God has highly exalted him; has declared him to be perfectly good, worthy of all praise, honour, glory, power, and dominion; and has given him a name above all names, the name of Jesus—Saviour. One who saved others, and cared not to save himself.

And therefore, too, God has given him that dominion of which he is worthy, and has proclaimed him Lord and Creator of all beings and all worlds, past, present, and to come.

It is of him; of his obedience; of his unselfishness, that Passion Week speaks to us. It tell us of the mind of Christ, and says, 'Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.'

How, then, shall we keep his Passion Week? There are several ways of keeping it, and all more or less good. Wisdom is justified of all her children.

But no way will be safe for us, unless we keep in mind the mind of Christ—obedience and self-sacrifice.

Some, for instance, are careful this week to attend church as often as possible; and who will blame them?

But unless they keep in mind the mind of Christ, they are apt to fall into the mistake of using vain repetitions, as the heathen do; and of fancying, like them, that they shall be heard for their much speaking, forgetting their Father in heaven knows what they have need of, before they ask him. And that is not like the mind of Christ. It is not like the mind of Christ to fancy that God dwells in temples made with hands; or that he can be worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed anything; seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things. For in him we live, and move, and have our being; and (as even the heathen poet knew), are the offspring, the children, of God.

It is *not* according to the mind of Christ, to worship God as the heathen do, in order to win him to do our will. It *is* according to the mind of Christ to worship God, in order that we may do his will; to believe that God's will is a good will, good in itself, and good for us, and for all things and beings; and, therefore, to ask for strength to do God's will, whatever it may cost us. That is the mind of Christ, who came not to do his own will, but the will of him who sent him; who taught us to pray, as the greatest blessing for which we can ask, 'Father, thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven;' who himself, in his utter agony, cried, 'Father, not my will, but thine, be done.'

Therefore, it is good to go to church; and good, for some at least, to go as often as possible: but only if we remember why we go, and whom we go to worship—a Father, who asks

of us to worship him in spirit and in truth. A Father who has told us what that worship is like.

‘Is this (God asked the Jews of old) the fast which I have chosen? Is it a day for a man to afflict his soul, and bow down his head like a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him (playing at being sad, while God has not made him sad)? Wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord?’

‘Is not this the fast which I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and to bring the poor that are cast out to thine house; when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh.’

This is that pure worship and undefined before God and the Father, of which St. James tells us; and says that it consists in this—‘to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction; and to keep ourselves unspotted from the world.’

In a word, this worship in the spirit, and in truth, is nought else but the mind of Christ. To believe in, to adore the Father’s perfect goodness; to long and try to copy that goodness here on earth. That is what Christ did utterly and perfectly, that is what we have to do, each according to our powers; and without it, without the spirit of obedience, all our church-going is of little worth in the eyes of our heavenly Father.

Others, again, go into retirement for this week, and spend it in examining themselves, and thinking over the

sufferings of Christ. And who, again, will blame them, provided they do not neglect their daily duty meanwhile?

But they, too, need to keep in mind the mind of Christ, if they mean to keep Passion Week aright.

They need it, indeed. And such a man, before he shuts himself up, and begins to examine himself, would do well *to examine himself as to why he is going to examine himself*, and to ask, Why am I going to do this? Because it is my interest? Because I think I shall gain more safety for my soul? Because I hope it will give me more chance of pleasure and glory in the next world? But, if so; have I the mind of Christ? For he did *not* think of his own interest, his own gain, his own pleasure, his own glory. How is this, then? I confess that the root of all my faults is selfishness. Shall I examine into my own selfishness for a selfish end—to get safety and pleasure by it hereafter? I confess that the very glory of Christ is, that there is no selfishness in him. Shall I think over the sufferings of the unselfish Christ for a selfish end—to get something by it after I die? I am too apt already to make myself the centre, round which all the world must turn: to care for everything only as far as it does *me* good or harm. Shall I make myself the centre round which heaven is to turn? Shall I think of God and of Christ only as far as it will profit *me*? And this week, too, of all weeks in the year? God forgive me! Into what a contradiction I am running unawares!

No. If I do shut myself up from my fellowmen, it shall be only to think how I may do my duty better to my fellowmen. If I do think over Christ's sufferings, it shall be only that I may learn from him how to suffer, if need be, at the call of

duty; at least, to stir up in me obedience, usefulness, generosity, that I may go back to my work cheerfully, willingly, careless what reward I get, provided only I can do good in my station.

But, after all, will not the text tell us best how to keep Passion Week? Will not our Lord's own example tell us? Can we go wrong, if we keep our Passion Week as Christ kept his?

And how did he keep it? Certainly not by shutting himself up apart. Certainly not by mere thinking over the glory of self-sacrifice. He taught daily, we read, in the temple. Instead of giving up his work for a while, he seems to have worked more earnestly than ever. As the terrible end drew near; and his soul was troubled; and he was straitened as he looked forward to his baptism of fire; and the struggle in him grew fiercer (for the Bible tells us that there was a struggle) between the Man's natural desire to save his life, and the God's heavenly desire to lay down his life, he threw himself more and more into the work which he had to do. We hear more, perhaps, of our Lord's saying and doings during this week, up to the very moment before he was betrayed to death, than we do of the whole three years of his public life. His teaching was never, it seems, so continual; his appeals to the nation which he was trying to save were never so pathetic as at the very last; his warnings to the bigots who were destroying his nation never so terrible; his contempt for personal danger never so clear. The Bible seems to picture him to us as gathering up all his strength for one last effort, if by any means he might save that doomed city of

Jerusalem, and in his divine spirit, courting death the more, the more his human flesh shrank from it.

This—the pattern of perfect obedience, perfect unselfishness, perfect generosity, perfect self-sacrificing love—is what we are to look at in Passion Week. This, I believe, is what we are meant to copy in Passion Week; that we may learn the habit of copying it all our lives long.

Why should not we, then, keep Passion Week somewhat as our Lord kept it before us? Not by merely hiding in our closets to meditate, even about *him*: but by going about our work, each in his place, dutifully, bravely, as he went? By doing the duty which lies nearest us, and trying to draw our lesson out of it.

Thus we may keep Passion Week in spirit and in truth; though some of us may hardly have time to enter a church, hardly have time for an hour's private thought about religion.

Amid the bustle of daily duties; amid the buzz of petty cares; amid the anxieties of great labours; amid the roar of the busy world, which cannot stop (and which ought not to stop), for our convenience; we may keep Passion Week in spirit and in truth, if we will do the duty which lies nearest us, and try to draw our lesson out of it.

For practice—and, I believe, practice alone—will teach us to restrain ourselves, and conquer ourselves. Experience—and, I believe, experience alone—will show us our own faults and weaknesses.

Every man—every human spirit on God's earth has spiritual enemies—habits and principles within him—if not other spirits without him, which hinder him, more or less,

from being all that God meant him to be. And we must find out those enemies, and measure their strength, not merely by reading of them in books; not merely by fancying them in our own minds; but by the hard blows, and sudden falls, which they too often give us in the actual battle of daily life.

And how can we find them out?

This at least we can do.

We can ask ourselves at every turn,—For what end am I doing this, and this? For what end am I living at all? For myself, or for others?

Am I living for ambition? for fame? for show? for money? for pleasure? If so, I have not the mind of Christ. I have not found out the golden secret. I have not seen what true glory is; what the glory of Christ is—to live for the sake of doing my duty—for the sake of doing good.

And am I—I surely shall be if I am living for myself—straggling, envying, casting an evil eye on those more fortunate than I; perhaps letting loose against them a cruel tongue? If I am doing thus, God forgive me. What have I of the mind of Christ? What likeness between me and him who emptied himself of self, who humbled himself, gave himself up utterly, even to death? Is this the mind of Christ? Is this the spirit whose name is Love?

And yet there should be a likeness. A likeness between Christ and us. A likeness between God and us. For Christ is the likeness of his Father; and not only of his Father, but of our Father, The Father in heaven. And what should a child be, but like his father? What should man be, but like God?

But how shall we get that likeness? How shall we get the mind of Christ which is the Spirit of God?

This at least we know. That the father will surely hear the child, when the child cries to him. Perhaps will hear him all the more tenderly, the more utterly the child has strayed away.

Our highest reason, the instincts of our own hearts, tell us so. Christ himself has told us so; and said to the Jews of old: 'If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask *him*?'

Shall give? Yes; and has given already. From that Spirit of God have come, and will always come, all our purest, highest, best thoughts and feelings.

From him comes all which raises us above the animals, and makes us really and truly men and women. All sense of duty, obedience, order, justice, law; all tenderness, pity, generosity, honour, modesty; all this, if you will receive it, is that Christ in us of whom St. Paul tells us, and tells us that he is our hope of glory.

Yes, these feelings in us, which, just as far as we obey them, make us respect ourselves, and make us blessings to our fellow-men; what are they but the Spirit of Christ, the likeness of Christ, the mind of Christ in us; the hope of our glory; because, if we obey them, we shall attain to something of the true glory, the glory with which Christ himself is glorious.

Then let us pray to God, now in this Passion Week, to stir up in us that generous spirit; to deepen in us that fair likeness; to fill us with that noble mind. Let us ask God to quench in us all which is selfish, idle, mean; to quicken to life in us all which is godlike, and from God; that so we may

attain, at last, to the true glory, the glory which comes not from selfish ambition; not from selfish pride; not from selfish ease; but from getting rid of selfishness, in all its shapes. The glory which Christ alone has in perfection. The glory before which every knee will one day bow, whether in earth or heaven. Even the glory of doing our duty, regardless of what it costs us in the station to which each of us has been called by his Father in heaven. Amen.

SERMON II. THE DIVINE HUNGER AND THIRST

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(Preached before the Queen.)

Psalm xxxvi. 7, 8, 9. How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures. For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light.

This is a great saying. So great that we shall never know, certainly never in this life, how much it means.

It speaks of being satisfied; of what alone can satisfy a man. It speaks of man as a creature who is, or rather ought to be, always hungering and thirsting after something better than he has, as it is written: 'Blessed are they which hunger

and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled.' So says David, also, in this Psalm.

I say man ought to be always hungering and thirsting for something better. I do not mean by that that he ought to be discontented. Nothing less. For just in as far as a man hungers and thirsts after righteousness and truth, he will hunger and thirst after nothing else. As long as a man does not care for righteousness, does not care to be a better man himself, and to see the world better round him, so long will he go longing after this fine thing and that, tormenting himself with lusts and passions, greediness and covetousness of divers sorts; and little satisfaction will he get from them. But, when he begins to hunger and thirst after righteousness, that heavenly and spiritual hunger destroys the old carnal hunger in him. He cares less and less to ask, What shall I eat and drink, wherewithal shall I be clothed?—Or how shall I win for myself admiration, station, and all the fine things of this world?—What he thinks of more and more is,—How can I become better and more righteous? How can I make my neighbours better likewise? How the world? As for the good things of this life, if they will make me a better man, let them come. If not, why should I care so much about them? What I want is, to be righteous like God, beneficent and good-doing like God.

That is the man of whom it is written, that he shall be satisfied with the plenteousness of God's house, God's kingdom; for with God is the fountain of life.

Again, as long as a man has no hunger and thirst after truth, he is easily enough interested, though he is not satisfied. He reads, perhaps, and amuses his fancy, but he

does no more. He reads again, really to instruct his mind, and learns about this and that: but he does not learn the causes of things; the reasons of the chances and changes of this world; and so he is not satisfied; he takes up doctrines, true ones, perhaps, at secondhand out of books and out of sermons:, without having had any personal experience of them; and so, when sickness or sorrow, doubt or dread, come, they do not satisfy him. Then he longs—he ought at least to long—for truth. He thirsts for truth. O that I could know the truth about myself; about my fellow-creatures; about this world. What am I really? What are they? Where am I? What can I know? What ought I to do? I do not want secondhand names and notions. I want to be sure.

That is the divine thirst after truth, which will surely be satisfied. He will drink of the pleasure of true knowledge, as out of an overflowing river; and the more he knows, the more he will be glad to know, and the more he will find he can know, if only he loves truth for truth's own sake; for, as it is written, in God's light shall that man see light.

With God is the well of life; and in his light we shall see light. The first is the answer to man's hunger after righteousness, the second answers to his thirst after truth.

With God is the well of life. There is the answer. Thou wishest to be a good man; to live a good life; to live as a good son, good husband, good father, good in all the relations of humanity; as it is written, 'And Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generations; and Noah walked with God.' Then do thou walk with God. For in him is the life thou wishest for. He alone can quicken thee, and give thee spirit and power to fulfil thy duty in thy generation. Is not his

Spirit the Lord and Giver of life—the only fount and eternal spring of life? From him life flows out unto the smallest blade of grass beneath thy feet, the smallest gnat which dances in the sun, that it may live the life which God intends for it. How much more to thee, who hast an altogether boundless power of life; whom God has made in his own likeness, that thou mayest be called his son, and live his life, and do, as Christ did, what thou seest thy heavenly Father do.

Thou feelest, perhaps, how poor and paltry thine own life is, compared with what it might have been. Thou feelest that thou hast never done thy best. When the world is praising thee most, thou art most ashamed of thyself. Thou art ready to cry all day long, ‘I have left undone that which I ought to have done;’ till, at times, thou longest that all was over, and thou wert beginning again in some freer, fuller, nobler, holier life, to do and to be what thou hast never done nor been here; and criest with the poet—

‘Tis life, whereof my nerves are scant;
‘Tis life, not death, for which I pant;
More life, and fuller, that I want.

Then have patience. With God is the fount of life. He will refresh and strengthen thee; and raise thee up day by day to that new life for which thou longest. Is not Holy communion his own pledge that he will do so? Is not that God’s own sign to thee, that though thou canst not feed and strengthen thine own soul, he can and will feed and strengthen it; and feed it—mystery of mysteries—with himself; that God may dwell in thee, and thou in God. And if

God and Christ live in thee, and work in thee to will and to do of their own good pleasure, that shall be enough for thee, and thou shall be satisfied.

And just so, again, with that same thirst after truth. That, too, can only be satisfied by God, and in God. Not by the reading of books, however true; not by listening to sermons, however clever; can we see light: but only in the light of God. Know God. Know that he is justice itself, order itself, love itself, patience itself, pity itself. In the light of that, all things will become light and bright to thee. Matters which seemed to have nothing to do with God, the thought of God will explain to thee, if thou thinkest aright concerning God; and the true knowledge of him will be the key to all other true knowledge in heaven and earth. For the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and a good understanding have all they that do thereafter. Must it not be so? How can it be otherwise? For in God all live and move and have their being; and all things which he has made are rays from off his glory, and patterns of his perfect mind. As the Maker is, so is his work; if, therefore, thou wouldest judge rightly of the work, acquaint thyself with the Maker of it, and know first, and know for ever, that his name is Love.

Thus, sooner or later, in God the Father's good time, will thy thirst for truth be satisfied, and thou shalt see the light of God. He may keep thee long waiting for full truth. He may send thee by strange and crooked paths. He may exercise and strain thy reason by doubts, mistakes, and failures; but sooner or later, if thou dost not faint and grow weary, he will show to thee the thing which thou knewest not; for he is thy Father, and wills that all his children, each according to their

powers, should share not only in his goodness, but in his wisdom also.

Do any of you say, 'These are words too deep for us; they are for learned people, clever, great saints?' I think not.

I have seen poor people, ignorant people, sick people, poor old souls on parish pay, satisfied with the plenteousness of God's house, and drinking so freely of God's pleasure, that they knew no thirst, fretted not, never were discontented. All vain longings after this and that were gone from their hearts. They had very little; but it seemed to be enough. They had nothing indeed, which we could call pleasure in this world; but somehow what they had satisfied them, because it came from God. They had a hidden pleasure, joy, content, and peace.

They had found out that with God was the well of life; that in God they lived and moved, and had their being. And as long as their souls lived in God, full of the eternal life and goodness, obeying his laws, loving the thing which he commanded, and desiring what he promised, they could trust him for their poor worn-out dying bodies, that he would not let them perish, but raise them up again at the last day. They knew very little; but what they did know was full of light. Cheerful and hopeful they were always; for they saw all things in the light of God. They knew that God was light, and God was love; that his love was shining down on them and on all around them, warming, cheering, quickening into life all things which he had made; so that when the world should have looked most dark to them, it looked most bright, because they saw it lightened up by the smile of their Father in heaven.

O may God bring us all to such an old age, that, as our mortal bodies decay, our souls may be renewed day by day; that as the life of our bodies grows cold and feeble, the life of our souls may grow richer, warmer, stronger, more useful to all around us, for ever and ever; that as the light of this life fades, the light of our souls may grow brighter, fuller, deeper; till all is clear to us in the everlasting light of God, in that perfect day for which St. Paul thirsted through so many weary years; when he should no more see through a glass darkly, or prophesy in part, and talk as a child, but see face to face, and know even as he was known.

SERMON III. THE TRANSFIGURATION

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(Preached before the Queen.)

Matthew xvii. 2 and 9. And he was transfigured before them. . . . And he charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of Man be risen again from the dead.

Any one who will consider the gospels, will see that there is a peculiar calm, a soberness and modesty about them, very different from what we should have expected to find in them. Speaking, as they do, of the grandest person who ever trod this earth, of the grandest events which ever happened upon this earth—of the events, indeed, which settled the future of this earth for ever,—one would not be surprised at their using grand words—the grandest they

could find. If they had gone off into beautiful poetry; if they had filled pages with words of astonishment, admiration, delight; if they had told us their own thoughts and feelings at the sight of our Lord; if they had given us long and full descriptions of our Lord's face and figure, even (as forged documents have pretended to do) to the very colour of his hair, we should have thought it but natural.

But there is nothing of the kind in either of the four gospels, even when speaking of the most awful matters. Their words are as quiet and simple and modest as if they were written of things which might be seen every day. When they tell of our Lord's crucifixion, for instance, how easy, natural, harmless, right, as far as we can see, it would have been to have poured out their own feelings about the most pitiable and shameful crime ever committed upon earth; to have spoken out all their own pity, terror, grief, indignation; and to have stirred up ours thereby. And yet all they say is, —'And they crucified him.' They feel that is enough. The deed is too dark to talk about. Let it tell its own story to all human hearts.

So with this account of the Lord's transfiguration. 'And he took Peter, and James, and John, his brother, up into a high mountain, apart, and was transfigured before them; and his face did shine as the sun; and his raiment was white as the light; . . . and while he yet spake a bright cloud overshadowed them; and, behold, a voice out of the cloud, which said: This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear ye him.'

How soberly, simply, modestly, they tell this strange story. How differently they might have told it. A man might

write whole poems, whole books of philosophy, about that transfiguration, and yet never reach the full depth of its beauty and of its meaning. But the evangelists do not even try to do that. As with the crucifixion, as with all the most wonderful passages of our Lord's life, they simply say what happened, and let the story bring its own message home to our hearts.

What may we suppose is the reason of this great stillness and soberness of the gospels? I believe that it may be explained thus. The men who wrote them were too much *awed* by our Lord, to make more words about him than they absolutely needed.

Our Lord was too utterly *beyond* them. They felt that they could not understand him; could not give a worthy picture of him. He was too noble, too awful, in spite of all his tenderness, for any words of theirs, however fine. We all know that the holiest things, the deepest feelings, the most beautiful sights, are those about which we talk least, and least like to hear others talk. Putting them into words seems impertinent, profane. No one needs to gild gold, or paint the lily. When we see a glorious sunset; when we hear the rolling of the thunder-storm; we do not *talk* about them; we do not begin to cry, How awful, how magnificent; we admire them in silence, and let them tell their own story. Who that ever truly loved his wife talked about his love to her? Who that ever came to Holy Communion in spirit and in truth, tried to put into words what he felt as he knelt before Christ's altar? When God speaks, man had best keep silence.

So it was, I suppose, with the writers of the gospels. They had been in too grand company for them to speak freely of what they felt there. They had seen such sights, and heard such words, that they were inclined to be silent, and think over it all, and only wrote because they must write. They felt that our Lord, as I say, was utterly beyond them, too unlike any one whom they had ever met before; too perfect, too noble, for them to talk about him. So they simply set down his words as he spoke them, and his works as he did them, as far as they could recollect, and left them to tell their own story. Even St. John, who was our Lord's beloved friend, who seems to have caught and copied exactly his way of speaking, seems to feel that there was infinitely more in our Lord than he could put into words, and ends with confessing,—‘And there are also many more things which Jesus did, the which if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written.’

The first reason then, I suppose, for the evangelists' modesty, was their awe and astonishment at our Lord. The next, I think, may have been that they wished to copy him, and so to please him. It surely must have been so, if, as all good Christians believe, they were inspired to write our Lord's life. The Lord would inspire them to write as he would like his life to be written, as he would have written it (if it be reverent to speak of such a thing) himself. They were inspired by Christ's Spirit; and, therefore, they wrote according to the Spirit of Christ, soberly, humbly, modestly, copying the character of Christ.

Think upon that word *modestly*. I am not sure that it is the best; I only know that it is the best which I can find, to express one excellence which we see in our Lord, which is like what we call modesty in common human beings.

We all know how beautiful and noble modesty is; how we all admire it; how it raises a man in our eyes to see him afraid of boasting; never showing off; never requiring people to admire him; never pushing himself forward; or, if his business forces him to go into public, not going for the sake of display, but simply because the thing has to be done; and then quietly withdrawing himself when the thing is done, content that none should be staring at him or thinking of him. This is modesty; and we admire it not only in young people, or those who have little cause to be proud: we admire it much more in the greatest, the wisest, and the best; in those who have, humanly speaking, most cause to be proud. Whenever, on the other hand, we see in wise and good men any vanity, boasting, pompousness of any kind, we call it a weakness in them, and are sorry to see them lowering themselves by the least want of divine modesty.

Now, this great grace and noble virtue should surely be in our Lord, from whom all graces and virtues come; and I think we need not look far through the gospels to find it.

See how he refused to cast himself down from the temple, and make himself a sign and a wonder to the Jews. How he refused to show the Pharisees a sign. How, in this very text, when it seemed good to him to show his glory, he takes only three favourite apostles, and commands them to tell no man till he be risen again. See, again, how when the Jews wanted to take him by force, and make him a king, he

escaped out of their hands. How when He had been preaching to, or healing the multitude, so that they crowded on him, and became excited about him, he more than once immediately left them, and retired into a desert place to pray.

See, again, how when he did tell the Jews who he was, in words most awfully unmistakeable, the confession was, as it were, drawn from him, at the end of a long argument, when he was forced to speak out for truth's sake. And, even then, how simple, how modest (if I dare so speak), are his words. 'Before Abraham was, I am.' The most awful words ever spoken on earth; and yet most divine in their very simplicity. The Maker of the world telling his creatures that he is their God! What might he *not* have said at such a moment? What might we not fancy his saying? What words, grand enough, awful enough, might not the evangelists have put into his mouth, if they had not been men full of the spirit of truth? And yet what does the Lord say? 'Before Abraham was, I am.' Could he say more? If you think of the matter, No. But could he say less? If you think of the manner, No, likewise.

Truly, 'never man spake as he spake:' because never man was like him. Perfect strength, wisdom, determination, endurance; and yet perfect meekness, simplicity, sobriety. Zeal and modesty. They are the last two virtues which go together most seldom. In him they went together utterly; and were one, as he was one in spirit.

Him some of the evangelists saw, and by him all were inspired; and, therefore, they toned their account of him to his likeness, and, as it were, took their key-note from him,

and made the very manner and language of their gospels a pattern of his manners and his life.

And, if we wanted a fresh proof (as, thank God, needs not) that the gospels are true, I think we might find it in this. For when a man is inventing a wonderful story out of his own head, he is certain to dress it up in fine words, fancies, shrewd reflections of his own, in order to make people see, as he goes on, how wonderful it all is. Whereas, no books on earth which describe wonderful events, true or false, are so sober and simple as the gospels, which describe the most wonderful of all events. And this is to me a plain proof (as I hope it will be to you) that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were not inventing but telling a plain and true story, and dared not alter it in the least; and, again, a story so strange and beautiful, that they dared not try to make it more strange, or more beautiful, by any words of their own.

They had seen a person, to describe whom passed all their powers of thought and memory, much more their power of words. A person of whom even St. Paul could only say, 'that he was the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person.'

Words in which to write of him failed them; for no words could suffice. But the temper of mind in which to write of him did not fail them; for, by gazing on the face of the Lord, they had been changed, more or less, into the likeness of his glory; into that temper, simplicity, sobriety, gentleness, modesty, which shone forth in him, and shines forth still in their immortal words about him. God grant that it may shine forth in us. God grant it truly. May we read their words till their spirit passes into us. May we (as St. Paul expresses it)

looking on the face of the Lord, as into a glass, be changed into his likeness, from glory to glory. May he who inspired them to write, inspire us to think and work, like our Lord, soberly, quietly, simply. May God take out of us all pride and vanity, boasting and forwardness; and give us the true courage which shows itself by gentleness; the true wisdom which show itself by simplicity; and the true power which show itself by modesty. Amen.

SERMON IV. A SOLDIER'S TRAINING

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Luke vii. 2-9. And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear unto him, was sick, and ready to die. And when he heard of Jesus, he sent unto him the elders of the Jews, beseeching him that he would come and heal his servant. And when they came to Jesus, they besought him instantly, saying, That he was worthy for whom he should do this: For he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue. Then Jesus went with them. And when he was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying unto him, Lord, trouble not thyself; for I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof: Wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee: but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed. For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he

cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. When Jesus heard these things he marvelled at him, and turned him about, and said unto the people that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.

There is something puzzling in this speech of the centurion's. One must think twice, and more than twice, to understand clearly what he had in his mind. I, indeed, am not quite sure that I altogether understand it. But I may, perhaps, help you to understand it, by telling you what this centurion was.

He was not a Jew. He was a Roman, and a heathen; a man of our race, very likely. And he was a centurion, a captain in the army; and one, mind, who had risen from the ranks, by good conduct, and good service. Before he got his vine-stock, which was the mark of his authority over a hundred men, he had, no doubt, marched many a weary mile under a heavy load, and fought, probably, many a bloody battle in foreign parts. That had been his education, his training, namely, discipline, and hard work. And because he had learned to obey, he was fit to rule. He was helping now to keep in order those treacherous, unruly Jews, and their worthless puppet-kings, like Herod; much as our soldiers in India are keeping in order the Hindoos, and their worthless puppet-kings.

Whether the Romans had any *right* to conquer and keep down the Jews as they did, is no concern of ours just now. But we have proof that what this centurion did, he did wisely and kindly. The elders of the Jews said of him, that he loved the Jews, and had built them a synagogue, a church. I suppose that what he had heard from them about a one

living God, who had made all things in heaven and earth, and given them a law, which cannot be broken, so that all things obey him to this day—I suppose, I say, that this pleased him better than the Roman stories of many gods, who were capricious, and fretful, and quarrelled with each other in a fashion which ought to have been shocking to the conscience and reason of a disciplined soldier.

There was a great deal, besides, in the Old Testament, which would, surely, come home to a soldier's heart, when it told him of a God of law, and order, and justice, and might, who defended the right in battle, and inspired the old Jews to conquer the heathen, and to fight for their own liberty. For what was it, which had enabled the Romans to conquer so many great nations? What was it which enabled them to keep them in order, and, on the whole, make them happier, more peaceable, more prosperous, than they had ever been? What was it which had made him, the poor common soldier, an officer, and a wealthy man, governing, by his little garrison of a hundred soldiers, this town of Capernaum, and the country round?

It was this. Discipline; drill; obedience to authority. That Roman army was the most admirably disciplined which the world till then had ever seen. So, indeed, was the whole Roman Government. Every man knew his place, and knew his work. Every man had been trained to obey orders; if he was told to go, to go; if he was told to do, to do, or to die in trying to do, what he was bidden.

This was the great and true thought which had filled this good man's mind—duty, order, and obedience. And by thinking of order, and seeing how strength, and safety, and