

Passiontide Sermons
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London: Longmans, Green, and Co. 1891

SERMON VII.
THE CORN OF WHEAT.
Preached at St. Paul's on Good Friday, April 11, 1873.

St. John xii. 24.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; out if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.

THIS is one of our Lord's own ways of speaking about His own Death. He had made His triumphal entry on Palm Sunday into Jerusalem, and certain Greeks, proselytes of the gate it would seem, asked an Apostle to let them see Him. There was no difficulty about this: the Greeks came to Jesus, and He told them that the hour for His glorification had come. They were very likely to misunderstand this expression; they would probably think of some pageant of earthly splendour, or at least of some social or spiritual victory which would conquer all opposition at once and for good. Our Lord, as we Christians know, when He spoke of His being glorified, really meant that He would die in the course of four days upon a cross. He knew too that if the Greeks remained on in Jerusalem and saw Him die in this way, they would be greatly perplexed and shocked; and He, therefore, gives them a reason for His Death, couched in the language of parable: "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."

Here we learn from His own lips that it was necessary that our Lord Jesus Christ should die. We know that before His Death, and even after it, men who loved Him and who trusted Him had great difficulty in understanding this. Death to them seemed to have plainly stamped upon it the mark of weakness, failure, incapacity, or even guilt. Great saints of God in earlier ages had been exempted from submission to the law of death: if an Enoch was "taken," if an Elijah went up to heaven in a chariot of fire, was He, of Whom these men were only shadows, in very deed to die? Was the one Perfect Human Life to which all the ages were pointing forward to be veiled at the last, like that of any sinner among us, in the humiliation and weakness which come in the train of death? Why call Him the Second Adam, if He does not share the original immortality of the first Adam? How look to Him as the Saviour of men, if He must Himself, pay tribute to man's last enemy? These questions at first sight were natural enough. When the Jews saw Him nailed to the Cross—as it seemed, in the power of His enemies, and in the stern grip of death—they held that the question of His claims was practically settled. They that passed by, as they looked up and saw His Eyes closing in death, "reviled Him, wagging their heads and saying, He saved others, Himself He cannot save. If He be the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him." And the feeling which prompted these sarcasms at the foot of the Cross was not altogether unshared, both

before and after, by disciples of the Crucified. When our Lord predicted His Sufferings at Caesarea-Philippi to St. Peter, the Apostle indignantly exclaimed, "Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall not happen unto Thee." When the two disciples on the day of the Resurrection were joined on the Emmaus road by the Stranger Whom as yet they knew not, they confided to Him the bitterness of their disappointment. "We trusted that it had been He That should have redeemed Israel:" His Death had shattered their hopes. When St. Paul would describe the effect of the preaching of the Crucifixion upon the two divisions of the ancient world among which he laboured, he says that it presented itself to the Jews as a scandal, that is, a stumbling-block in the way of their receiving faith, and to the Greeks as a folly, the exact reverse of everything they thought wisdom.⁸ When the Epistle to the Hebrews was written, Christians were still raising difficulties about the Death of Christ; and Jews were taunting them with it, not without the effect of making them uncomfortable. Our Lord foresaw all this and much more, and He, therefore, sets His Death before the Greek visitors at Jerusalem, and before His disciples to the very end of time, in words which will be helpful to us, my brethren, I trust, on this evening of the most solemn day in the year to every believing Christian. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."

How then does He explain His approaching Death? Had He been speaking to born Jews, He would have said, as He did to the two disciples, that prophecy, properly understood, made it strictly necessary for any who claimed to be the true Messiah. Had he been instructing Christians, like those addressed in the Epistle to the Hebrews, who believed that He was the true Representative of the Race, the Pattern or Ideal Man, He would have insisted, as did His Apostle, that as man He must submit to the law of Humanity; that, as it is appointed unto all men once to die, so Christ must once be offered, though with results altogether transcending those of any ordinary human death. But speaking as He is to Greeks, who would have known little or nothing of prophecy or of His own relation to the race, but who were by taste and habit observers of the changes and forms of nature, He points to a great truth written on the face of nature by the Finger of God. Nature is one of God's two Books: the invisible things of God, says St. Paul, are seen in it by those who do not destroy their eyesight by disobedience to known Truth. Nature, looked at superficially, seems to say that death is ruin, the ruin and end of all that is strong and beautiful in life: this mournful idea of death appears again and again in the poetry of the Greeks. Nature, scanned more penetratingly, more profoundly, shows that death is the precursor of new and vigorous life. The caterpillar forfeits its form to become the butterfly. The seed decomposes to become the plant. If the corn of wheat does not fall into the ground and die, it abides alone—intact, but dry, shrivelled, unproductive. If it dies, it forthwith becomes a principle of life: it bringeth forth much fruit.

The fruitfulness of death! Do we not see the truth of it every day of our lives in the world of thought and the world of action? God raises up some one man in a generation, the herald of a forgotten truth, or the apostle of a great discovery. He speaks; he writes; he warns; he entreats; but men shrug their shoulders, with a passing remark, at his well-meant enthusiasm, at his waste of energy. He perseveres, nevertheless, amid discouragement and coldness; he perseveres, it may be, in the teeth of interested opposition; he perseveres, until at last he feels that his strength is failing, and that his work will soon be done,—done, as it seems, to no purpose. He lies down to die, it may be, without any hopes for the future, it may be with a presentiment that the hour of his

death will be that of his victory. And so in the event it is. When he is really gone; when the reiterated entreaties, appeals, warnings have ceased, men feel the silence, though they heeded not the voice, and are willing to believe a doctrine whose teacher is no more. The fact is, death makes his life more or less sublime; it refines our recollections of it; it puts the personal feelings, competitions, jealousies, which prevented justice to him, utterly and for ever aside; and as he speaks now, not in fact but in our memories, not in this, but, as it seems, from another world, we are willing, we are constrained to listen. Had he lived on, he would still have been impotent: his death has ennobled his work and made it fruitful. The grain of wheat would have done nothing for humanity, had it not fallen into the soil, and died. Such is the law. Death, even when it comes only in the order of nature, has, not seldom, a fructifying power. The departed parent, the departed pastor, the true friend, whose voice was for so long unheeded, wields after death a power over hearts and wills which was denied him in life. But when death is freely accepted, as a sacrifice to truth or to duty, its fructifying power is enormously enhanced. And our Lord, of course, was contemplating His Death as an issue freely accepted by Himself, an issue which He might—as far as His power went—have declined. My brethren, if any one of the laws by which the moral world is governed is certain, this is certain: that to do real good in life is, sooner or later, costly and painful to the doer. It has ever been so. All the great truths which have illuminated human thought; all the lofty examples which have inspired and invigorated human effort—all have been more or less dearly paid for, by moral, or mental, or physical suffering. Each truth has had its martyr, unseen, it may be, and unsuspected, yet known to God. Here it is a violent death; there the gradual wasting away produced by exhausting labours: but the reality is the same. Here it is the soldier who saves a lost cause by his self-devotion; there it is a statesman who resigns power, influence, even personal safety, rather than retain them at the cost of his country. Elsewhere it is a teacher who throws his popularity to the winds, when, to keep it, he must echo some prejudice which he inwardly despises, or denounce some truth or creed which he heartily reveres. Like the legal impurities of the old tabernacle, the errors and miseries of the world are purged with blood: everywhere in the great passages of human history we are on the track of sacrifice; and sacrifice, meet it where we may, is a moral power of incalculable force.

Do we think sometimes that Jesus Christ might have saved us in some less costly way than by shedding His Blood? Might He not have saved us, by putting forth His miraculous power, by showing among men His gracious presence, His severe purity, His inimitable tenderness? Might He not have sat, like the Greek teachers before Him, in some porch or garden, where the enterprise and intelligence of the world might have sought and found the Wisdom that would save it? So, perhaps, we think; and if Jesus had been only a Teacher of men, and had taught none but popular truths, so it might have been. As it was, to bring man close to God was a different task from any attempted by any old-world philosopher. Such deep work as Christ had to do—forcing the human conscience to stand face to face with the sternest and most unwelcome sides of truth ere He disclosed His Divine Remedy—could not be done without sacrifice, unless the existing conditions of human life were to be changed. And our Lord came, not to make a new world, but, at whatever cost, to redeem and invigorate an old one.

II.

Our Lord's Death, then, is fruitful. And, first, as a moral example of extraordinary power.

We all of us know the difference between precept and example. Precept is the easy part of teaching; example the difficult. Precept is the measure of the teacher's ability: example of his sincerity. Precept may lay burdens on others which the teacher does not touch with one of his fingers; example gives precepts in the most persuasive way, and something into the bargain. Precept is the father who says to his boy, "Climb that mountain." Example is the father who says, "Follow me; see where I tread; put your foot where I put mine: lay hold on this rock, on that branch, just as I do; and we shall reach the top at last."

Now our Lord Jesus Christ taught men by precept. The Gospels are full of precepts which He gave. The Sermon on the Mount is a collection of them; there is no other code of precepts like it in the world. But His precepts—even His, we may dare to say,—would have died away upon the breeze, if they had not been enforced by His Example. And He gave that example in its fulness, when He became obedient unto death.

The collect for Palm Sunday speaks of two forms of excellence, as taught us more especially by our Lord and Saviour. Of these the first is humility: He took on Him our flesh, and suffered death upon the cross that all mankind should follow the example of His great humility. Jesus had taught men by precept to be humble. They were to look on themselves as being what they are—nothing before God, or worse than nothing. They were to confess themselves unprofitable servants when they had done all that was required. They were not to do their alms before men; they were not to be called Babbi;² they must be converted, and become as little children, or they would not enter heaven; they must not be as the kings of the Gentiles, exercising authority for its own sake; the greatest must be first in service, lowliest in personal aim. Knowing themselves to be sinners, they must rejoice if men thought of them, spoke of them, acted towards them, as being what they were. They must "rejoice," even if men said all manner of evil against them falsely; if those particular charges were not deserved, others, they must know, were. The great thing was, never to forget what it is for a sinner to stand before the face of the Most Holy.

Such was the teaching of Jesus on this bead. Our conscience tells us that it is true. Our wills tell us that it is very hard. Pride, we feel, in a coarser or more subtle form, has taken possession of the energies, poisoned the very springs, of our life.

Are we not constantly thinking of our good qualities; ranking ourselves higher than others; feeling annoyed when others are highly spoken of; defending our own opinion, even in indifferent matters, with obstinacy; assuming a quiet air of superiority in conversation, as if there could be no doubt about our right to assume it; desponding when our efforts do not succeed, as if we had a natural right to command success; rejoicing in showy work which attracts general admiration, rather than in quiet unostentatious work, known only to God and His angels; anxious that men should see and remark our good qualities; anxious perhaps to improve and become virtuous, not because God wills it and to promote His glory, but simply that in the contemplation of our attainments our vanity may have more to feed upon? It is hard, no doubt, to be really humble.

This is what we feel: and Jesus, Who, as the Sinless One, cannot have the reasons for humility that we have, yet teaches us by example, what He has taught by precept. He was robed in humility from the first. The accessories of His birth, the employments of

His youth and early Manhood, His relation to His parents, His choice of His disciples, His stern refusal of human praise and human honour: the silence which He enjoined about His miracles; the rebuke which He administered to the flatterer who, supposing Him to be only human, called Him “good”—these, and much else, were His methods of teaching us humility.

But it was in His Passion that He taught this grace most persuasively. Then, of His own will, He was arraigned as an impostor, as a seducer of the people, as a blasphemer, as the enemy of God. He was arrested as if He were a thief, He was dressed in mockery by Herod as an idiot; He was buffeted as if He had been guilty of some gross insolence; He was scourged as a slave of the worst character; He was condemned to the shameful and cruel death reserved for the most desperate criminals; He was crucified between two thieves, as if He was the chief of them. He, the Uncreated Sanctity, the Eternal Wisdom, was, of His own free will, trodden down beneath the feet of His creatures as a sinner and a fool, that He might teach them at least one virtue—Humility.

And He has succeeded. It is not the precepts of Jesus: it is the figure of Jesus Incarnate and dying which has sunk deepest into the heart of Christendom. “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 slave, and was made in the likeness of man: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” Wherever Christians have learned the greatness of humility, it has been by gazing on the Crucified. All the moral glories of self-renouncement in its higher and more splendid forms; all the noble ambitions to do great works for God, and to be misunderstood or undervalued or forgotten in doing them; all these passive virtues which really subdue the world, and which have their root in humility, show that the Corn of Wheat Which fell into the ground and died eighteen centuries ago has not died in vain.

Or take the other grace mentioned in the Collect, the grace of patience, the power of bearing resignedly and cheerfully the trials which come to us in the course of God’s Providence, or at the hands of our fellow-creatures. Our Lord constantly insists on the need of this. If our Lord says that the mourners are blessed; that the “persecuted for righteousness’ sake “are blessed; that His disciples are to account themselves blessed, when they are reviled, wronged, defamed; why is this but because these are opportunities for the exercise of patience? “If any man strike thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.” “Do good to them that hate you, pray for them that despitefully use you: and ye shall be the children of your Father Which is in heaven.” The disciples who would call down fire from heaven know not “what spirit they are of.” The man who says to His brother “Thou fool” is guilty of hell fire. The faithful will bring forth fruit with patience; in the dark days that will come upon the world they will have the true mastery who in patience possess their souls.

This is our Lord’s teaching: these His very words. Our conscience—that deep ineradicable sense of right which He has given us—echoes this teaching. We see that it is right intuitively as soon as He utters it. But is it not hard to follow? we ask. We think, perhaps, that it is ideal only, impracticable, exaggerated.

“Very well, then,” He says to us, “look at Me. Take up your crosses and follow Me.” Forthwith He leads to Calvary. We follow Him from the Supper-room to the Garden; from the Garden to the Hall of Judgment; from the tribunal, along the Way of

Sorrows, to the Cross. We note the delicacy, the exquisite sensitiveness, of His Body. If creatures are capable of pain in proportion to their place in the scale of being, what must have been the capacity of Jesus for suffering? We note the variety of pains to which He submitted. No one of His senses, no part of His Body, was exempt from its peculiar pain. We observe that some of the tortures, such as that produced by the crown of thorns, or by the scourging, or by the raising the Cross into the socket, must have been exceptionally painful; that His Sufferings were continuous; that there was no moment of reprieve throughout His Passion; and that, as when He refused the hyssop, He resolutely denied Himself any means of alleviation. Then we reflect that on the Cross as in the Garden His Human Soul is the scene of keener agony than that which afflicts His Body: the Agony produced not merely by the clear consciousness and detailed anticipation of physical suffering, but, in the case of the Sinless One, by the dreadful sight of the sins of a world which He had taken upon Himself, and which He was expiating. He says enough to show what He suffers: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" He does not say one word which impairs His patience. The prophet had said of Him, "He is led as a sheep to the slaughter; and as a lamb before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth." The Apostle records of Him that "when lie was reviled He reviled not again, when He suffered He threatened not." The motto of the Passion is, "The cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?" And here, too, He has not died in vain. Think of the hundreds of thousands throughout Christendom who are lying in pain,—who are drawing nearer moment by moment to their last agony—or who are in the pains of death. If they can lie still; if they have the great grace to suffer uncomplainingly, brightly; if they irradiate the last sad scenes of our frail humanity with a radiance streaming from another world, what is the secret of their power? It is that they have been gazing steadily on Jesus Christ Crucified; that His patience has won them, and they have had an eye unto Him and have been lightened;⁴ that they have said to themselves with one great sufferer, "If He could endure that for me, how little is this to suffer with Him!"

III.

Not, my brethren, that humility and patience were the only lessons taught us by our Lord from His Cross. They are but samples of that vast circle of teaching upon which from that day to this Christians have earnestly dwelt, and the full import of which they are as far as ever from having exhausted. But although Jesus Christ crucified teaches the world the truths and duties which it most needs to know, He does much more than this; and to limit the fruitfulness of His Death to this would be to do you and to do Him a grievous wrong. If in dying Jesus had only shown us His own teaching in practice He would have left us in despair. Like the Jewish law, but on a greater scale, He would have convinced us of sin and shortcoming, without providing a remedy. As it is, while He hung upon the Cross, He showed us that His Death would have results of quite a different kind from the death of the martyr to truth or to duty: effects which flow directly from His Representative relation to the human family, and from His Higher and Eternal Nature, and which are, in truth, all its own.

Three were crucified on Mount Calvary: the Most Holy in the midst, and a thief on either side. Two Evangelists tell us that the thieves joined with the mob in reviling their fellow-sufferer. All classes, all interests, Herod and Pilate, Jews and Romans, nobles

and the people, Pharisees and Sadducees, and even the victims with their executioners, were banded in one grand conspiracy against the Holiness of God revealed in Jesus. Why should they all hate Him, we ask? Ask why it is that the sunlight which gladdens nature, which invigorates healthy life, is torture to a diseased eyesight? It is not that the light is less beneficent, but the organ is diseased, and therefore the light brings irritation, discomfort, pain, and no effort is too great to escape it. The light of lofty sanctity is just as painful to diseased souls: in its highest and perfect form as manifested in Jesus, it goads them to madness: in its broken and imperfect forms, as we see it in Christians, it provokes dislike,—secret it may be, but strong, and only waiting its opportunity for speech or action.

It is easily explained, but, in the case of the dying thieves, the blasphemy of Jesus is especially dreadful. They know that life is ebbing from them, that all will soon be over; that this world has nothing more in reserve in the way of adventure or excitement, yet they blaspheme.

Misfortune generally creates a certain sympathy between its victims; but for Jesus the thieves feel only hatred. Pain is God's own instrument for breaking hard hearts, for softening harsh characters, for teaching men to think tenderly of others, sternly of themselves. Alas! one of the most terrible spectacles in the moral world is the miscarriage and failure of this ministry of pain; most clergymen of any experience have seen it on deathbeds: and it was exhibited upon two out of the three crosses on Calvary. If pain does not soften, it scars; it burns up all that remains of tenderness, and almost of humanity; it scorches each finer sensibility of the soul, and leaves it hard, fierce, brutal, beyond any previous experience.

And yet, while that chorus of defiance and hate was being chanted around the dying Jesus, by the mob and by the thieves, one of the latter became silent. He had looked on the Face of the Divine Sufferer,—besmeared as It now was with tears and blood,—and he had seen traced beneath a Dignity, a Love, a Sanctity, which were utterly new to him. Probably his ear had caught the faint prayer, just as the Cross was being raised: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." It was a moment unlike any previous moment in his life: he felt a new movement in his soul, he was face to face with Truth, with Sanctity. The revelation of holiness is the revelation of sin. As he gazes on Jesus, he learns the truth about himself: he will make no excuses, such as we might make for him on the score of ignorance or lack of opportunity: he is not playing at penitence; his heart is broken. The Crucified Truth at his side has made all plain to him. "We indeed suffer justly," he cries; "for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this Man hath done nothing amiss." Not is this all. His faith is even more striking than his repentance. By one of those rapid glances into the depths of truth which are vouchsafed to souls in moments of exceptional illumination or agony, he sees that the Sufferer at his side, Who has revealed Himself to him, must be able to help him, even in his last terrible extremity. The life of souls, in these supreme moments, cannot be measured by the clock or the almanac; a lifetime may be compressed into a few minutes: there is no real relation between what passes and the lapse of time. And so the poor thief breathes a prayer which might have come at the end of a long life of labour from a martyred Apostle: "Lord, remember me—remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." It was enough: "To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." To-day: what readiness to receive him! With Me: what Companionship for a criminal! In Paradise: what a vision of repose!

He had yet to die in agony, it is true; but death was tolerable enough—it was even welcome—now. He had to linger on in agony; but pain, the worst pain, had been transfigured for him; he could more than bear it. He had to witness the last hour, to hear the last cry, “Into Thy hands I commend My spirit,” uttered by His crucified Friend: he knows that that cry means for him the opening of the gates of Paradise. In these last hours of his agony he is a type of the dying Christian to the end of time; he is the first believer who enters the kingdom of heaven when the King had overcome the sharpness of death: he is the first sample of that mighty harvest of souls which was to be the fruit of the death of the Son of God.

IV.

Any man, my brethren, who seriously believes that Jesus Christ is the Eternal Son of God must feel that such an event as His Death in human form must be attended by consequences altogether beyond those which would follow on the death of the best or wisest of the sons of men. What those consequences would be we could not reasonably conjecture: but here Revelation comes to our assistance. It sets the Death of Jesus Christ before us in three aspects: by It sin is atoned for; by It we are redeemed from the penalty of sin; by It sinful man and the All-holy God are reconciled. “Christ,” says St. John, “is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.” “Christ,” says St. Paul, “hath redeemed us from the curse of the law; being made a curse for us.” “We have redemption through His Blood,” and, as a consequence, “we are reconciled to God,” says St. Paul, “by the death of His Son:” How, we ask, does His Death thus propitiate, redeem, reconcile? “Because,” reply the Apostles, “He was made to be sin for us Who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him;” and so He “bare our sins in His own Body on the tree.” How, we ask again, could this transfer of guilt, of responsibility, have taken place? Is there not a contradiction here with our sense of natural justice; with the Divine rule that “no man can deliver his brother, or make agreement unto God for him”? No; there is no contradiction; and for two reasons. First, Jesus is not merely a common or single specimen of the race. He is the Second Adam; that is, like our first parent, He represents in some way all other men: He is human nature by Representation. So He loved to call Himself “the Son of Man,” meaning, among other things, that He was the Representative, Ideal, Pattern Man, Who had relations to all others, and in Whom all others had a share, if they would. In Him the Eternal Father beheld not merely an individual, but the human race; the human race corresponding for once to the Ideal in the Divine Mind; the human race embodied in a Representative to Whom it was said from heaven, “This is My Beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased.” Jesus represents the race, not as a member of parliament who is elected by his constituents, but as a parent represents his children. No one would deny the right of a parent to act for his young family on a critical occasion: and Jesus, dying on the Cross, is acting for those whom He already and naturally represents. And this leads me to the second reason for there being no injustice in the idea of the Atonement; namely, that Jesus, being thus by nature representative of us all, freely willed to die for us. We may dare to say it: His life was not taken from Him whether He would or not, like the lives of the victims slain at Jewish altars. “No one taketh My life from Me,” He said, “but I lay it down of Myself; I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.” He

willed, in His love and in His pity, to bear the burden which was really ours. He could bear it, because He already, by the terms of His Nature, represented us; and there was no injustice in accepting what was so generously, so freely offered. And if it be asked why Holy Scripture connects this salvation so particularly with the Death of Christ—why His Death has this Expiatory and Redemptive power—the answer is, that His Death is the highest expression of His perfect Obedience; it is His Obedience triumphing over the strongest motive which can urge men to disobey—the instinct of self-preservation. As St. Paul says emphatically, He was “obedient unto death.” And that which gave this obedience its literally infinite value was the Person of the Sufferer. “If God spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?”

Yes! the Corn of seed has indeed brought forth much fruit by falling into the ground to die; like Samson, they whom Christ slew at His Death were more than they whom He slew in His life. The power of death, the power of sin, the power of Satan,—these, if we will, are gone. All the agencies of restoration and grace which we find in the Church of God flow down from the Wounds of the Crucified. If Sacraments have power, if prayer prevails, if the Spirit is given to guide and to purify us, if consciences are clear, and hearts buoyant, and wills invigorated; if life’s burdens are borne cheerfully, and death is looked forward to, not without awe, but without apprehension; this is because Jesus Christ has died. “If it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.” Ever since His Ascension the store has been accumulating above; not a year, not a week, not a day passes without some addition to the company of the Redeemed who are gathered around the Throne of the Immaculate Lamb, to sing unweariedly, “Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us unto God by Thy Blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.”

My brethren, how utterly insignificant is any other question that we can ask ourselves compared with this: Shall I ever join that company? Will the Divine Redeemer own me as one of the fruits of His Death? Alas if any one of us should have hereafter to reflect, “He died, the Everlasting Son of God; but, as far as I am concerned, it was in vain.” God’s grace is not bound to great agencies or great occasions; the Eternal Spirit acts through the humblest means. A German nobleman was converted from a life of careless indifference by seeing in a gallery a painting of our Saviour’s Head crowned with thorns, with the words traced under,

“This have I borne for thee; What willest thou for Me?”

God grant that the scenes of the Passion, which have passed before us this day in the pages of the blessed Evangelists, may haunt us too, till we yield ourselves entirely and for good to God. There is no repentance in the grave, or pardon offered to the dead; and there is no name under heaven given among men whereby we may be saved, but the Name of Jesus, our Crucified Saviour, and He, in His Love and in His Pity, is willing to save us to the uttermost.