

# Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

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THE BEST OF THE BEST.

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## A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 5TH, 1896,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

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“I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys.”—Song of Solomon ii. 1.

THE time of flowers has come, and as they are in some faint degree emblems of our Lord, it is well, when God thus calls, that we should seek to learn what he desires to teach us by them. If nature now spreads out her roses and her lilies, or prepares to do so, let us try, not only to see them, but to see Christ as he is shadowed forth in them.

“I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys.” If these are the words of the Well-beloved,—and I have no doubt that they are,—then it may be suggested by some that here we have the Saviour praising himself; and it is true; but in no unworthy sense, for well may he praise himself since no one else can do it as it should be done. There is no human language that can ever set forth his beauties as they deserve to be told. As good John Berridge says,—

“Living tongues are dumb at best,  
We must die to speak of Christ”

as he should be spoken of. He will never fully be described unless he shall describe himself. For certain, we should never have known God if he had not revealed himself; and every good thing that you or I know of him, he himself has told us. We make no discoveries of God except as God discovers himself to us. If, then, any cavillers were to find fault with the Christ of God because he did commend himself, I would answer, Does not God commend himself, and must not his well-beloved Son do the same? Who else is there that can possibly reveal him to us unless he unveils his own face to our admiring gaze?

Moreover, be it always remembered that human self-praise is evil because of the motive which underlies it. We praise ourselves,—and, alas! that we should be so foolish as to do so,—we do it out of pride; but when Christ praises himself, he does it out of humility. “Oh!” say you, “how can you prove that to be true?” Why, thus; he

praises himself that he may win our love ; but what condescension it is on his part that he should care about the love of such insignificant and undeserving persons as we are ! It is a wonderful stoop that the Christ of God should speak about having a bride, and that he should come to seek his bride among the sons of men. If princes were to look for consorts among beggars, that would be after all but a small stoop, for God hath made of one blood all nations of men that dwell upon the face of the earth ; but for Christ to forsake the thrones and glories of heaven, and the splendours of his Father's courts above, to come down to win a well-beloved one here, and for her sake to take upon himself her nature, and in her nature to bear the shame of death, even the death of the cross, this is stupendous condescension of which only God himself is capable ; and this praising of himself is a part of that condescension, a necessary means of winning the love of the heart that he has chosen. So that this is a matchless instance, not of pride, but of humility, that those dear lips of the heavenly Bridegroom should have to speak to his own commendation, and that he should say, " I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys." O human lips, why are ye silent, so that Christ must speak about himself ? O human hearts, why are ye so hard that ye will never feel until Christ himself shall address you ? O human eyes, why are ye so blind that ye shall never see till Christ shows himself in his own superlative light and loveliness ? I think I need not defend my Master, though he used these sweet emblems to set forth himself ; for this is an instance, not of his pride, but of his humility.

It is also an instance of the Master's wisdom, for as it is his design to win hearts to himself, he uses the best means of winning them. How are hearts won ? Very often, by the exhibition of beauty. Love at first sight has been begotten by the vision of a lovely countenance. Men and women, too, are struck with affection through the eye when they perceive some beauty which charms and pleases them ; so, the Saviour lifts the corner of the veil that conceals his glories, and lets us see some glimpse of his beauty, in order that he may win our hearts. There are some who seem to think that they can bully men to Christ ; but that is a great mistake. It is very seldom that sinners can be driven to the Saviour ; his way is to draw them. He himself said, " I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die." And the drawings of Christ are not, as it were, with a cart rope, but with silken bonds, ay, with invisible chains, for his beauty is of such a character that it creates love, his beauty is so attractive that it draws the heart. So, in infinite wisdom, our Lord Jesus Christ sets forth his own beauties that thereby he may win our hearts. I do believe that there is no preaching like the exaltation of Christ crucified. There is nothing so likely to win the sons of men as a sight of him ; and if God the Holy Ghost will but help all his ministers, and help all his people, to set forth the beauties of Christ, I shall not doubt that the same Spirit will incline men's hearts to love him and to trust him. Note, then, the condescension and also the wisdom which are perceptible in this self-commendation on the part of Christ : " I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys."

I think that our Lord also speaks thus as an encouragement to timid souls; his tender familiarity in praising himself to us is one of the most effectual proofs of his lowliness. Does Christ commend himself to us? Does he say to us, for instance, "I am meek and lowly in heart"? What is his object in speaking thus but that we may take his yoke upon us, and may learn of him, and that we may find rest unto our souls? And if he says, "I am the rose of Sharon," what does he mean but that we may pluck him, and take him for our own? If he says, "I am the lily of the valleys," why does he take the trouble to tell us that but because he wants us to take him, and to have him for our very own? I think that it is so sweet of Christ to praise himself in order to show that he longs for us to come to him. He declares himself to be a fountain of living water; yet why is he a fountain but that we may come unto him, and drink? He tells us, "I am the bread which came down from heaven;" but why does he speak of himself as bread, whereof if a man eat, he shall never hunger? Why, because he wants us to partake of him! You need not, therefore, be afraid that he will refuse you when you come to him. If a man praises his wares, it is that he may sell them. If a doctor advertises his cures, it is that other sick folk may be induced to try his medicine; and when our Lord Jesus Christ praises himself, it is a kind of holy advertisement by which he would tempt us to "come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." If he praises himself, it is that we may fall in love with him; and we need not be afraid to come and lay our poor hearts at his feet, and ask him to accept us, for he would not have wooed us by unveiling his beauties if he had meant, after all, to trample on our hearts, and say, "I care nothing for such poor love as yours."

I feel most grateful, then, that I have not at this time so much to praise my Master as to let him speak his own praises, for "never man spake like this Man." When he commends himself, what would have been folly in others is wisdom in him; and whereas we say to our fellow-man, "Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth," I would say to Christ, "My Master, praise thyself, for thou alone canst do it as it ought to be done. As for thy poor servant, he would try to be the echo of thy voice, and that will be infinitely better than anything he can say of himself.

I think, also, that there is good reason for our Lord to praise himself in the fashion that he does in our text, because, after all, it is not praise. "What!" say you, "and yet you have been talking all this while as if it was praise." Well, so it is in one sense, to us, but it is not so to Christ. Suppose the sun were to compare itself with a glow-worm, would that be praise? Suppose an angel were to compare himself with an emmet, would that be praise? And when my Lord and Master, whose eyes outshine the sun, and who is infinitely higher than the mightiest of the angels, compares himself to a rose and a lily, is that praise? Well, it is so to you and to me, but it certainly cannot be so to him. It is a marvellous stoop for Christ, who is "God over all, blessed for ever," and the Light of the universe, to say, "I am a rose; I am a lily." O my blessed Lord, this is a sort of incarnation, as when the Eternal God did take upon himself an infant's

form! So here, the Everlasting God says, "I am"—and what comes next?—"a rose and a lily." It is an amazing stoop, I know not how to set it forth to you by human language; it is a sort of verbal rehearsal of what he did afterwards when, though he counted it not robbery to be equal with God, "he took upon himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." "I am God, yet," saith he, "I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys."

What does our text mean? I think it means that our Lord Jesus Christ is exceedingly delightful, so, let us speak, first, of *the exceeding delightfulness of our Lord*; and then, inasmuch as he uses two emblems, first the rose, and then the lily, surely this is to express *the sweet variety of his delightfulness*; and, inasmuch as he speaks of himself as the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys, I shall have to show you, in the last place, that this hints to us *the exceeding freeness of his delightfulness*.

I. First, then, the text sets forth THE EXCEEDING DELIGHTFULNESS OF OUR LORD.

He compares himself here, not as in other places to needful bread and refreshing water, but to lovely flowers, to roses and lilies. What is the use of roses and lilies? I know what the use of corn is; I must eat it, it is necessary to me for food. I know why barley and rye and all sorts of roots and fruits are created; they are the necessary food of man or beast. But what do we want with roses? What do we want with lilies? They are of no use at all except for joy and delight. With their sweet form, their charming colour, and their delicious fragrance, we are comforted and pleased and delighted; but they are not necessities of life. A man can live without roses; there are millions of people, I have no doubt, who live without possessing lilies of the valley. There are all too few roses and lilies in this smoky Babylon of ours; but, when we do get them, what are their uses? Why, they are things of beauty, if not "a joy for ever." Jesus is all that and more; he is far more than "a thing of beauty," and to all who trust him he will be "a joy for ever." To you who are Christ's people, he is your bread, for you feed on him, and he makes you live; you could not do without him as the sustenance of your soul. He is the living water, and your soul would pine and perish of a burning thirst if you did not drink of him. But that is not all that Jesus is to you; God has never intended to save his people on the scale of the workhouse, to give you just as much as you absolutely need, and nothing more. No, no, no; he means you to have joy as well as to have life, to look upon beauty as well as to be in safety, and to have not only a healthy atmosphere, but an atmosphere that is laden with the odour of sweet flowers. You are to find in Christ roses and lilies, as well as bread and water; you have not yet seen all his beauties, and you do not yet know all his excellence.

The exceeding delightfulness of Christ is suggested to our mind by his declaration, "I am the rose, and I am the lily." And first, *he is in himself the delight of men*. He speaks not of offices, gifts, works, possessions; but of himself: "I am." Our Lord Jesus is the best of all beings; the dearest, sweetest, fairest, and most charming of all beings that we can think of is the Son of God, our Saviour. Come

hither, ye poets who dream of beauty, and then try to sing its praises; but your imagination could never reach up to the matchless perfection of his person, neither could your sweetest music ever attain to the full measure of his praise. Think of him as the God-man, God incarnate in human nature, and absolutely perfect; I was going to say something more than that, for there is not only in him all that there ought to be, but there is more than your thoughts or wishes have ever compassed. Eyes need to be trained to see beauty. No man seeth half or a thousandth part of the beauty even of this poor, natural world; but the painter's eye—the eye of Turner, for instance,—can see much more than you or I ever saw. “Oh!” said one, when he looked on one of Turner's landscapes, “I have seen that view every day, but I never saw as much as that in it.” “No,” replied Turner, “don't you wish you could?” And, when the Spirit of God trains and tutors the eye, it sees in Christ what it never saw before. But, even then, as Turner's eye was not able to see all the mystery of God's beauty in nature, so neither is the most trained and educated Christian able to perceive all the matchless beauty that there is in Christ.

I do not think, brethren, that there is anything about Christ but what should make his people glad. There are dark truths concerning him, such as his bearing our sin; but what a joy it is to us that he did bear it, and put it away for ever! It makes us weep to look at Jesus dying on the cross, but there is more real joy in the tears of repentance than there is in the smiles of worldly mirth. I would choose my heaven to be a heaven of everlasting weeping for sin, sooner than have a heaven—if such a heaven could be,—consisting of perpetual laughing at the mirth of fools. There is more true pleasure in mourning before God than in dancing before the devil. Christ is, then, all beauty; even the dark parts in him are light, and the bitter parts are sweet. He has only to be seen by you, and you must perceive that, whether it be his Godhead or his manhood, whether it be his priesthood, his royalty, or his prophetic office, whether it be on the cross or on the throne, whether it be on earth, or in heaven, or in the glory of his second coming, every way,—

“All over glorious is my Lord,  
Must be beloved, and yet ador'd;  
His worth if all the nations knew,  
Sure the whole earth would love him too.”

But, next, our Lord is *exceedingly delightful to the eye of faith*. He not only tells us of what delight is in himself,—“I am the rose, and I am the lily,”—but he thereby tells us that there is something to see in him, for the rose is very pleasing to look upon. Is there a more beautiful sight than a rose that is in bud, or even one that is full-blown? And the lily—what a charming thing it is! It seems to be more a flower of heaven than of earth. Well now, Christ is delightful to the eye of faith. I remember the first time I ever saw him; I shall never forget that sight, and I have seen him many a time since, and my grief is that I ever take off my eyes from him, for it is to look away from the sun into blackness; it is to look away from bliss into misery. To you who look at Christ by faith, a sight of him brings

such peace, such rest, such hope, as no other sight can ever afford; it so sweetens everything, so entirely takes away the bitterness of life, and brings us to anticipate the glory of the life that is to come, that I am sure you say, "Yes, yes; the figure in the text is quite correct; there is a beauty in Jesus to the eye of faith, he is indeed red as the rose and white as the lily."

And, next, the Lord Jesus Christ is *delightful in the savour which comes from him to us*. In him is a delicious, varied, abiding fragrance which is very delightful to the spiritual nostril. Smell is, I suppose, a kind of delicate feeling; minute particles of certain substances touch sensitive membranes, and we call the sensation that is produced smelling. It is a mysterious sense; you can understand sight and hearing better than you can understand smelling. There is a spiritual way of perceiving the savour of Christ; I cannot explain it to you, but there is an ineffable mysterious sweetness that proceeds from him which touches the spiritual senses, and affords supreme delight; and as the body has its nose, and its tender nerves that can appreciate sweet odours, so the soul has its spiritual nostril by which, though Christ be at a distance, it yet can perceive the fragrant emanations that come from him, and is delighted therewith.

What is there that comes from Christ, from day to day, but his truth, his Spirit, his influence, his promises, his doctrines, his words of cheer? All these have a heavenly sweetness, and make us, with the psalmist, say to our Lord, "All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad." Whenever these sweet odours are wafted down to us, they make us also glad; anything that has the savour of Christ in it is sweet to a Christian. If Christ has touched it, let me put it in my bosom, and keep it there as a sweet forget-me-not, until I see his face in glory. Ay, the very stones he trod on, I was about to say, the very mountains at which he looked, have become dear to us. We have no idolatrous or superstitious reverence for Palestine, or even for the garden in which he sweat great drops of blood; but for spiritual things with which he has to do, we have a never-ceasing reverence and affection. Everything that comes from him is wondrous as the songs of the angels must have been to the shepherds of Bethlehem, and sweet to the taste as the manna that dropped from the skies around Israel's desert camp. Yes, brethren and sisters, there is a sweet savour about the Lord Jesus Christ; do you all perceive it?

Once more, *in all that he is, Christ is the choicest of the choice*. You notice, the Bridegroom says, "I am the rose." Yes, but there were some particularly beautiful roses that grew in the valley of Sharon; "I am that rose," said he. And there were some delightful lilies in Palestine; it is a land of lilies, there are so many of them that nobody knows which lily Christ meant, and it does not at all signify, for almost all lilies are wondrously beautiful. "But," said he, "I am the lily of the valleys," the choicest kind of lily that grew where the soil was fat and damp with the overflow of mountain streams. "I am the lily of the valleys:" that is to say, Christ is not only good, but he is the best; and he is not only the best, but he is the best of the best. He is a flower; ay, but he is a rose, that is the queen of flowers; ay,

but then he is the best rose there is, he is the rose of Sharon. He is a Saviour, and a great one; yea, the only Saviour. He is a Husband; but what a Husband! Was there ever such a Bridegroom as Christ Jesus the Lord? He is the Head; but Father Adam was a poor head compared with him. He is inexpressibly, unutterably, indescribably lovely; I might as well leave off talking about him, for I cannot hope to set him forth as he deserves. If you could but see him, I would leave off, for I am sure I should be only hanging a veil before him with the choicest words that I could possibly use. Suppose you had a dear son, or husband, or friend, far away, and that I was a painter who could carry pictures in my mind's eye, and then draw them to the very life. If I stood here, trying to paint your well-beloved friend, laying on my colours with all the skill I possessed, and doing my best to reproduce his features; suppose, while I was at work, that the door at the back was opened, and he came in, I should cry out, "Oh, stop, stop, stop! Let me put away my canvas, let me pack up my brushes and my paints. Here is the loved one himself; look at him! Look at him, not at my portrait of him!" And you would rise from your seat, and say, "It is he! It is he! You may talk as long as you like, dear sir, when he is away; but when he is himself here, your talk seems but mere chatter." Well, I shall be quite content that you should think so, I shall be even glad if you do, provided that the reason shall be that you can say, "We have seen the Lord. He has manifested himself to us as he does not unto the world." "I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys." The best of the best, the fairest of the fair, the sweetest of the sweet, is Jesus Christ to you and to me if we are indeed his people. I cannot say more about the exceeding delightfulness of my Lord; I wish I could.

II. I must pass on, next, to notice THE SWEET VARIETY OF CHRIST'S DELIGHTFULNESS.

He is not only full of joy, and pleasure, and delight to our hearts, but he is full of all sorts of joy, and all sorts of pleasure, and all sorts of delights to us.

"Nature, to make his beauties known,  
Must mingle colours not her own."

The rose is not enough, you must have the lily also, and the two together fall far short of the glories of Christ, the true "Plant of renown."

"I am the rose." That is *the emblem of majesty*. The rose is the very queen of flowers; in the judgment of all who know what to admire it is enthroned above all the rest of the beauties of the garden. But the lily—what is that? That is *the emblem of love*. The psalmist hints at this in the title of the forty-fifth Psalm. "Upon Shoshannim, a Song of love." Shoshannim signifies lilies, so the lily-psalm is the love-song, for the lilies, with their beauty, their purity, their delicacy, are a very choice emblem of love. Are you not delighted when you put these two things together, majesty and love? A King upon a throne of love, a Prince, whose very eyes beam with love to those who put their trust in him, a real Head, united by living bonds of love to all his

members ;—such is our dear Lord and Saviour. A rose and yet a lily ; I do not know in which of the two I take the greater delight, I prefer to have the two together. When I think that my Saviour is King of kings and Lord of lords, I shout, “Hallelujah !” But when I remember that he loved me, and gave himself for me, and that still he loves me, and that he will keep on loving me for ever and ever, there is such a charm in this thought that nothing can excel it. Look at the lily, and sing,—

“Jesu, lover of my soul,  
Let me to thy bosom fly,  
While the nearer waters roll,  
While the tempest still is high !  
Hide me, O my Saviour, hide,  
Till the storm of life be past ;  
Safe into the haven guide ;  
Oh receive my soul at last.”

Then look at the rose, and sing,—

“All hail the power of Jesus' name !  
Let angels prostrate fall ;  
Bring forth the royal diadem,  
And crown him Lord of all ;”

then put the rose and the lily together, and let them remind you of Christ's majesty and love. The combination of these sweet flowers also suggests our Lord's *suffering and purity*.

“White is his soul, from blemish free,  
Red with the blood he shed for me.”

The rose, with its thorn, reminds us of his suffering, his bleeding love to us, his death on our behalf, his bearing of the thorns which our sin created. Christ is a royal rose beset with thorns ; but the lily shows that—

“For sins not his own,  
He died to atone.”

Jesus, when on earth, could say, “The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.” The devil himself could not see a spot or speck in that lovely lily. Jesus Christ is perfection itself, he is all purity ; so you must put the two together, the rose and the lily, to show Christ's suffering and perfection, the infinitely pure infinitely suffering. In which of the two do you take the greater delight ? Surely, in neither, but in the combination of both ; what would be the value of Christ's sufferings if he were not perfect ? And of what avail would his perfections be if he had not died, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God ? But the two together, the rose and the lily, suffering and purity, fill us with delight.

*Of both of these there is a great variety.* I wonder how many different sorts of roses there are, I should not like to have to tell you ; they vary exceedingly, perhaps there are as many kinds as there are days in the year. How many varieties of lilies are there ? Possibly, there are as many sorts of lilies as there are of roses, for both of them are wonder-

fully diversified ; but the joys that flow from our Lord Jesus Christ are as abundant and as varied as the roses and the lilies. Bring me which rose you please, and I will tell you that it smells sweet ; bring which lily you choose, and I will say, " Yes, that also has a delicate perfume ; that will do, with the rose, to serve as an emblem of Christ." Our Lord Jesus possesses every kind of beauty and fragrance. " He is all my salvation, and all my desire." All good things meet in Christ ; in him all the lines of beauty are focussed. Blessed are they who truly know him.

Further, *Christ is the very essence of the sweetness both of the rose and of the lily.* When he says, " I am the rose," he means, not only that he is like the rose, but that he made all the sweetness there is in the rose, and it is still in him ; and all the sweetness there is in any creature comes to us from Christ, or else it is not sweetness such as we ought to love. I like to look upon the bread I eat as his gift to me, and to bless his providential hand that bestows it. I like to look upon all the landscape on such a fair day as this has been, and to say, " Christ is in all this, giving this charming view to such a poor, unworthy creature as I am." He is in all there is that is good, he is the goodness of all the good there is. He is the very soul of the universe, whatever there is in the universe that is worthy of our soul's love. All good for our soul comes from him, whether it be pardon of sin, or justification, or the sanctification that makes us fit for glory hereafter, Christ is the source of it all ; and in the infinite variety of delights that we get from him, he is himself the essence of it all. We can become tired of most things, I suppose that we can become tired of everything earthly ; but we shall never tire of Christ. I remember one who, when near his death-hour, forgot even his wife, and she was greatly grieved that he did not recognize her. They whispered in his ear the name of his favourite child ; but he shook his head. His oldest friend, who had known him from his boyhood, was not recognized. At last they asked him, " Do you know Jesus Christ ? " Then he said, " Ah, yes ! and I am going to him." The ruling passion was strong in death ; Christ was nearer and dearer to him than those he loved best here. All flowers will fade, even roses and lilies among them ; but not this blessed Rose of Sharon, and Lily of the valleys. Christ does not say, " I was a rose, and I was a lily ; " but " *I am the rose, and I am the lily.*" He is now all that he ever was, and he will be in life, in death, and throughout all eternity, to the soul that knows him, an infinite variety of everything that is delightful.

III. I must now very briefly take up the last head of my discourse, which is, THE EXCEEDING FREENESS OF OUR LORD'S DELIGHTFULNESS.

It is not very pleasant or satisfying for hungry people to stand in the street, and hear someone praising a good meal, of which they cannot get even a taste. I have often noticed boys standing outside a shop window, in which there have been all sorts of dainties ; they have flattened their noses against the window-pane, but they have not been able to get anything to eat.

I have been talking about my Master, and I want to show you that *he is accessible*, he is meant to be plucked and enjoyed as roses and lilies are. He says in the text, " I am the rose of Sharon." What

was Sharon? It was an open plain where anybody might wander, and where even cattle roamed at their own sweet will. Jesus is not like a rose in Solomon's garden, shut up within high walls, with broken glass all along the top. Oh, no! he says, "I am the rose of Sharon," everybody's rose, the flower for the common people to come and gather. "I am the lily." What lily? The lily of the palace of Shushan, enclosed and guarded from all approach? No; but, "I am the lily of the valleys," found in this glen, or the other ravine, growing here, there, and everywhere: "I am the lily of the valleys."

Then *Christ is as abundant as a common flower*. Whatever kind of rose it was, it was a common rose; whatever kind of lily it was, it was a well-known lily that grew freely in the valleys of that land. Oh, blessed be my Master's name, he has brought us a common salvation, and he is the common people's Christ! Men in general do not love him enough, or else they would have hedged him in with all sorts of restrictions; they would have made a franchise for him, and nobody would have been able to be saved except those who paid I know not how much a year in taxes. But they do not love our Lord enough to shut him in, and I am glad they have never tried to do so. There he stands, at the four-cross roads, so that everybody who comes by, and wants him, may have him. He is a fountain, bearing this inscription, "Let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." "I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys." Why do roses grow in Sharon? Why do lilies grow in the valleys? Why, to be plucked, of course! I like to see the children go down into the meadow when it is decked in grass, and adorned with flowers, gilded with buttercups, or white with the day's-eyes; I love to see the children pluck the flowers, and fill their pinafores with them, or make garlands, and twist them round their necks, or put them on their heads. "O children, children!" somebody might cry, "do not spoil those beautiful flowers, do not go and pick them." Oh, but they may! nobody says they may not; they may not go into our gardens, and steal the geraniums and the fuchsias; but they may get away into the meadows, or into the open fields, and pluck these common flowers to their heart's content. And now, poor soul, if you would like an apronful of roses, come and have them. If you would like to carry away a big handful of the lilies of the valleys, come and take them, as many as you will. May the Lord give you the will! That is, after all, what is wanted; if there be that grace-given will, the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the valleys will soon be yours. They are common flowers, growing in a common place, and there are plenty of them; will you not take them?

Even to those who do not pluck any, there is one strange thing that must not be forgotten. A man passes by a rose-bush, and says, "I cannot stop to think about roses," but as he goes along he exclaims, "Dear, dear, what a delicious perfume!" A man journeying in the East goes through a field that is full of lilies; he is in a great hurry, but, for all that, he cannot help seeing and smelling the lilies as he rushes through the field. And, do you know, the perfume of Christ has life in it? He is "a savour of life unto life." What does that mean but that the smell of him will save? Ah! if you do but glance

at him, though you were so busy that you could not come in till the sermon had begun, yet a glance at this Lily will bring you joy and peace, for he is so free that, often, even when men are not asking for him, he comes to them. "What?" say you, "is it so?" Yes, that it is; such is the freeness of Christ's grace that it is written, "I am found of them that sought me not." He sends his sweet perfume into nostrils that never sniffed after it. He puts himself in the way of eyes that never looked for him. How I wish that some man who has never sought for Christ, might find him even now! You remember the story that Christ tells of the man that was ploughing the field; he was only thinking of the field, and how much corn it would take to sow it; and he was ploughing up and down, when suddenly, his ploughshare hit upon something hard. He stopped the oxen, and took his spade, and dug, and there was an old crock, and it was full of gold. Somebody had hidden it away, and left it. This man had never looked for it, for he did not even know it was there, but he had stumbled on it, as men say, by accident. What did he do? He did not tell anybody, but he went off to the man who was the owner of the field, and he said, "What will you take for that field?" "Can you buy it?" "Yes, I want it, what will you take for it?" The price was so high that he had to sell the house he lived in, and his oxen, and his very clothes off his back; but he did not care about that, he bought the field, and he bought the treasure, and then he was able to buy back his clothes, his house, and his oxen, and everything else. If you find Christ, and if you have to sell the coat off your back in order to get him, if you have to give up everything you have that you may find him, you will have such a treasure in him that, for the joy of finding him, you would count all the riches of Egypt to be less than nothing and vanity; but you need not sell the coat off your back, Christ is to be had for nothing, only you must give him yourself. If he gives himself to you, and he becomes your Saviour, you must give yourself to him, and become his servant. Trust him, I beseech you, the Lord help you so to do, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

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### Expositions by C. H. Spurgeon.

GENESIS VIII. 15—22; AND JEREMIAH XXXIII. 15—26.

Genesis viii. Verses 15—21. *And God spake unto Noah, saying, Go forth of the ark, thou, and thy wife, and thy sons, and thy sons' wives with thee. Bring forth with thee every living thing that is with thee, of all flesh, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth; that they may breed abundantly in the earth, and be fruitful, and multiply upon the earth. And Noah went forth, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him: every beast, every creeping thing, and every fowl, and whatsoever creepeth upon the earth, after their kinds, went forth out of the ark. And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And the LORD smelled a sweet savour;*

Until then, the earth had been obnoxious to Jehovah. He had put it away from him as a foul thing, drowned beneath the flood; but after the offering of Noah's sacrifice, the Lord smelled "a savour of rest."

21, 22. *And the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done. While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.*

Thus we see what we may expect so long as the earth remains, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

Now let us read a few verses from Jeremiah's prophecy.

Jeremiah xxxiii. Verse 15. *In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land.*

In the latter days, at the glorious appointed time, Jesus Christ will grow up like a Branch out of the stem of Jesse. The dynasty of David now seems like a tree cut down, whose stock is buried under the ground; but "the Branch of righteousness" shall appear in due time, and Jesus, the Son of David, "shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land."

16. *In those days shall Juāah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The LORD our righteousness.*

What a wonderful unity there is between Christ and his Church! She actually takes his name: "The Lord our righteousness."

17, 18. *For thus saith the LORD; David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel; neither shall the priests the Levites want a man before me to offer burnt offerings, and to kindle meat offerings, and to do sacrifice continually.*

This shows that the covenant was not a literal and fleshly one, made with David and his seed according to the flesh, or with the priests and their seed according to the flesh. There is a Kingdom that can never be moved, and our Lord sits on that throne; there is a Priesthood which is everlasting, it is held by that great High Priest who hath offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, and who abides a Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

19, 22. *And the word of the LORD came unto Jeremiah, saying, Thus saith the LORD; If ye can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night, and that there should not be day and night in their season; then may also my covenant be broken with David my servant, that he should not have a son to reign upon his throne; and with the Levites the priests, my ministers. As the host of heaven cannot be numbered, neither the sand of the sea measured: so will I multiply the seed of David my servant, and the Levites that minister unto me.*

So that they are at this day the seed of Jesus, the Son of David, who shall count them? And the company of those whom he hath made to be kings and priests unto God, who but he can number them?

23—26. *Moreover the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, saying, Considerest thou not what this people have spoken, saying, The two families which the LORD hath chosen, he hath even cast them off? thus they have despised my people, that they should be no more a nation before them. Thus saith the LORD; If my covenant be not with day and night, and if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth; then will I cast away the seed of Jacob, and David my servant, so that I will not take any of his seed to be rulers over the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: for I will cause their captivity to return, and have mercy on them.*

This shall be literally fulfilled in the latter days, I doubt not; but it is even now being fulfilled to the spiritual seed of Jacob and David. The covenant of grace is made sure to all the seed, even to as many as have believed on Christ's name.