

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

TO LOVERS OF JESUS: AN EXAMPLE.

A Sermon

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"She hath wrought a good work on me."—Mark xiv. 6.

THIS holy woman had *displeased the disciples*. She must have been very sorry to do that. She would not have wilfully grieved the least servant of her Lord. But she did so without the slightest blame on her part: it was the unexpected consequence of a most blessed action, and the fault lay with those who complained of her holy deed, and not with her. I do not know whether all the disciples felt grieved, but we are told by Matthew that "they had indignation," and he seems to speak of them as a body; from which I gather that those who love Jesus much must not measure their conduct by that of Christ's ordinary disciples, indeed it might fare ill with them even if apostles became their judges. They must not tone down the fervour of their zeal to the lukewarmness of the general order of Christian men: they must not measure the consecration of their lives by the little which many professors present upon the altar to God. No, my brother, or sister, you must not be too much distressed if the best of the household misjudge you, for it has happened to many favoured ones before you. Thou, O man, greatly beloved, canst not abide to be lukewarm, and be not thou surprised if the lukewarm cannot agree with thee! Count it no strange thing if, in thy ardour, thou shouldst come to be accused of fanaticism, want of prudence, rashness, forwardness. Do not break thy heart over it, if they should even call thee mad, or suspect that thou hast more zeal than knowledge; for Mary, whom we would be glad to imitate, came under this kind of censure; and David, and thy Lord, the Son of David, were each thought to be madmen.

This honoured woman performed a notable act, which is to be rehearsed wherever the gospel is preached, and yet thereby she stirred the wrath of the brotherhood of the disciples: of how small account is the judgment of men!

Chiefly she called down upon her head the censure of Judas. As far
No. 1,834.

as Judas was known to his brethren he was reckoned among the best of them. They never suspected him of playing the traitor, or they would have cavilled at his being their treasurer: they once had indignation at James and John, but the canny Judas had their respect. I should think he was the most business-like man of the whole company—which is not saying much for business, is it? He was a leading spirit among that little band. He was one who would be selected because of his prudence—and that is not saying much for prudence, is it? Doubtless Judas abounded in that cool, calculating shrewdness which makes a man fit to deal with moneys and purchases. He had far more business ability than impetuous Peter, or affectionate John, or thoughtful Thomas. He was the right man in the right place, if he had but happened to have been an honest man. Wonderful it was that he could conceal the deep meanness of his spirit from all his fellows during the years in which they lived together; but he had done so, and therefore his opinion carried weight with it. Among the apostles the censure of Judas meant the calm condemnation of a judicious person. His judgment was not what you and I would esteem it to be, for we should think nothing of his censure now, because we know that he betrayed his Lord; but the disciples could not foresee this, and in their judgment that which Judas would condemn must be very censurable; at least it must be unbusinesslike; it must lack common sense; it must be imprudent and wasteful. Was not Judas the perfect model of economy? Was he not the sort of man who in these days many a father would point out to his boy as an example? Hear him say, “Boy, if you want to get on in the world, imitate Judas Iscariot; he is the model man; he is a Christian, and yet he has a keen eye for his own advantage, and is a sharp man of business.”

It was a hard thing for a timid woman to bear such a censure from one so highly respected in the college of apostles; but she had this solace, which I will warrant you put quite out of her mind all care about the censure of disciples, even of the biggest of them: *she pleased her Master*. She could see by the very look of him that he accepted what his followers condemned. She knew in her conscience that she had the approbation of the Lord, even though she had the disapprobation of the servants. And oh, brothers and sisters, let us always carry our case into the highest court, and live before the Lord, and not as the slaves of men! If we are conscious that we have sincerely done what we have done as unto the Lord, and if we feel sure that *he* has approved our service, it is of the smallest consequence possible what men shall say of us. Let us never provoke our brethren to be ill-tempered to us, neither let us do anything that can be rightly censured; but if we have gone somewhat beyond common custom in the fervour of our spirit, let us reply with young David to his envious brethren, “Is there not a cause?” The opinions of other men are no rule to us: we have our own obligations to discharge, and as our debt of love is larger than usual, let us take liberty to be as full of love and zeal as we can be; only regretting that we cannot go still further in the way of sacred service.

“Well,” says one, “but do those who love Christ encounter the frowns of men at this time?” Oh, yes, and of their own Christian brethren too! If you consort with the common ruck of brethren, and travel on

the road to heaven so slowly that it is a question whether you are going there at all, then you will escape criticism : if you keep with those who practise the snail's march they will call you a good easy man, a right respectable person. But if you run for it, if you put out all the energy of your nature, and are determined to live at a high pitch for Christ, you will get the cold shoulder, even from many of his disciples, for you will be practically condemning their half-heartedness ; and who are you to be such a troubler in Israel ? The more prudent among your brethren will say that your pride and the naughtiness of your heart make you so forward and presumptuous, and they will try to put you down, or put you out. You cannot commit a greater crime against some people than to be more useful than they are. When a person reckons himself to be the standard of holiness, he looks upon one who excels him as guilty of a kind of blasphemy. If you outrun others do not reckon upon smiles, but count upon black looks. You will be called impudent and thought impertinent. Bear it all and fret not. Go thou to thy Lord, and tell him that thou hast done and art doing all thou canst *as unto him*, and entreat him to smile upon thee. Crave his acceptance of thy poor doings, and then go thou about thy business, occupying till he shall come. Sow thou the seed of duty, and care not whether in human judgment it shines or rains. "He that regardeth the clouds shall not reap ;" if thou regardest not the clouds at all, thou wilt do thy sowing and thy reaping with the comfort of true faith, and God will bless thee.

I am going to talk about this blessed woman at this time with this hopeful desire—that you and I may imitate her ever-memorable example. I shall have nothing to say but to open up the meaning of our Lord, as far as I know it, when he said, "She hath wrought a good work on me," or "in me." The passage might be rendered—only the translators do not like to use the term—"She hath wrought a beautiful work on me"—a comely work. "A thing of beauty is a joy for ever." This was a thing of beauty, which is a joy for ever to the church of God, in that constant memorial of her which is blended with the preaching of the gospel of Christ ; for as long as the gospel is proclaimed this Mary of Bethany shall have a memorial, because of what she did.

What was there beautiful about her work—the breaking of the alabaster vase, and the pouring out of the liquid nard ? What was there beautiful about that ? I will try to show you.

I. There were seven beauties in it, and the first and chief beauty, perhaps, was that IT WAS ALTOGETHER A GLORIFYING OF JESUS. She meant when she poured that ointment on his head to honour *him* personally ; every drop of it was for himself, out of reverence for his actual personality.

She was not so much thinking of his deeds of love, or of his words of truth, as of his own unrivalled and most precious self. She had seen his deeds of love when Lazarus was raised, she had heard his words of truth when she sat at his feet : but now she felt an adoring reverence for his thrice blessed person, and she brought that box of precious spikenard, and offered it to him as her Teacher, her Friend, her Lord, her all. Suggestion was made that she should have sold it and given it to the poor ; but she longed to present one offering to *him* direct, and not by

any roundabout method. Doubtless she was not behindhand in her gifts to the poor, but she felt that when she had done *that* she had not satisfied the cravings of her grateful heart towards *him* who had become poorest of the poor for her sake. She wanted to give something *to him*—something suitable for such an One as she conceived him to be—something suitable for the time and circumstances then present with regard to him. I think this holy woman knew more about our Lord than all his apostles put together. Her eyes had peered within the veil. You remember that only a day or two after this he rode in triumph through Jerusalem a proclaimed King. Should he not first be anointed? And who would anoint him to the kingdom visibly with oil but this consecrated woman? She was come to give him a royal anointing preparatory to his proclamation in the streets of his capital city? At any rate her spikenard must be poured out alone *for him*. She forgot the poor just then as she quite forgot the disciples. Martha was busy at the table waiting upon them all, disciples and Master; but Mary had concentrated all her thoughts on Jesus. She “saw no man save Jesus only.” Blessed exclusiveness of vision! What she did must not be for Peter and James and John with Jesus, but it must be for him alone, who indeed is alone, above and beyond all others, worthy of a homage all his own. Because she had a love for him beyond all others that she had ever heard of, her heart must find expression in a deed of love which must be entirely, wholly, only towards himself.

Now, this is as we have read the text—a beautiful thing. It will be beautiful on your part and mine if, having taken care of the poor according to our ability, having discharged the claims of our relationships to our fellow-men, we then feel that we must do something for Jesus,—distinctly for our Lord. Do you ask me what you shall do for him? Nay, but, sister, I must not tell you; your own heart must originate the thought, as your own hand must carry it out. “Oh,” cries a brother, “tell me what I could do for Jesus!” Nay, but, brother, I must not tell you. The better part of the whole matter will lie in the hallowed ingenuity of your spirit in inventing something for him out of your own fervent soul. The holy woman’s deed had been somewhat spoiled if there had been a command for her to bring the alabaster box, and pour the ointment on his head: her love commanded her, and that was better than a formal precept. Her deed had not possessed half its worth if Simon had suggested to her, “I have not sufficient spikenard to anoint our guests; fetch you a box from home.” The very glory of it lay in the spontaneous suggestion of her own heart that she must do a something which should be all for Jesus.

She must do it herself personally, and not by proxy; and she must do it unto him distinctly, directly, openly. Others might smell the spikenard. That she did not wish to prevent; but still the perfume was never meant for them, but for him exclusively. She poured it on *his* head; she poured it on *his* feet; she would anoint *him* from head to foot with this token of her intense and reverent gratitude, and her boundless love: she felt wrapped up in *him*, her Lord and her God; and so her willing offering was for him, and for him alone. What a joy to be permitted to do anything for him whose great love holds us fast! I feel as if I would fain at once retire from you all to indulge my heart in this rare luxury.

Alas, good Lord, how little hast thou of this devotion in these calculating days! Instead of "all for Jesus," how seldom we do anything for Jesus! Brethren, when you sing your hymns, do you "sing a hymn to Jesus"? When you are in prayer, do you pray *to* Jesus, and *for* Jesus? Is it not written, "Prayer also shall be made for him continually, and daily shall he be praised"? When you come to this communion table, I pray that you may forget all that are with you in this assembly, and cry, "I will remember *thee*." In the chief place, at any rate, let Jesus fill your thoughts. Set him alone upon the throne, and think only of eating his flesh and drinking his blood, and receiving him into your very self, that there may be a vital union between the Christ of God and your own souls. To my mind this is the beauty of our fellowship in the Holy Supper, that we feed on Jesus only. Let us make him our soul's sole meat and drink; and then let us live for him. My heart craves now to know what I shall do that I may imitate her who gave to "Jesus only" that box of spikenard, very costly. Oh, ye lovers of my Lord who have been washed in his precious blood, who owe your all to him, think of his matchless beauties now, and as ye look up into that face where shines your heaven, think to yourselves, "What can we do for him—for him absolutely, directly, and personally?" There is the first beauty of this woman's act of homage: it was for Jesus, for Jesus only, for Jesus wholly.

II. A second beauty lay in this: that IT WAS AN ACT OF PURE LOVE, altogether of love to Jesus. The other woman—blessed was she also among women—I refer to that woman who was a sinner: she also came and brought an alabaster box, and did much the same thing as this Mary of Bethany. But she did what Mary did not do: she mingled weeping with her ointment: she washed his feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. That was a beautiful act in its own way, but Mary's deed is a beautiful thing in another way. In this lies the distinction: there does not seem to have been in Mary's act any remembrance of personal sin, though, doubtless, that feeling was in her heart, and had brought her to the higher stage of adoration of her pardoning Lord. Her sin was put away long ago. Mary had sat at Jesus' feet, and had chosen the good part, and the matter of pardon for sin had been transacted a long while before; and now, although in her heart there is deep gratitude for it, and for the raising of her dear brother Lazarus, yet it seems to be quite absorbed in the deeper thought of her soul, for she had attained to an all-consuming love of himself. She never would have known that kind of love if she had not learned to sit at his feet; but to sit long there has a wonderful operation on the human mind: it causes even things that are good in themselves to be overshadowed by matters that are higher and less in relation to self. It is a blessed thing to love Christ because we escape from hell by him; it is a blessed thing to love Christ because he has opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers; but it is a still higher thing to forget yourself, and to contemplate with delight the ineffable perfections of him whom heaven and earth acknowledge to be chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely. "We love him because he first loved us;" here we begin, and this beginning always remains; but on it we pile tier after tier of precious stones of love, which are crowned with pinnacles of inexpressible affection for the great Lord himself. He

in himself has won our hearts, and carried our spirits by storm, and now we must do something which shall express our love to him. That love is not alone a gratitude for benefits received from him, but an intense affection for his glorious, adorable person.

Come, dear friends, do you feel that kind of emotion in your hearts at this time? Do you even now feel that so perfectly has Christ won the verdict of your understanding, so completely has he bound in silken fetters every movement of your affections, that you want to be doing something which shall have but this one aim, to express your love to him who has made you what you are? Indulge the emotion, crown it with action, continue it through life. In this point be not slow to be imitators of the sister of Martha and Lazarus. O sweet love of Jesus, come and fill our souls to the brim, and run over in delicate personal service!

III. The third beauty of the action was that IT WAS DONE WITH CONSIDERABLE SACRIFICE. There was an expense about it, and that of no trifling character to a woman who was neither queen nor princess. I shall always feel obliged to Judas for figuring up the price of that box of costly nard. He did it to blame her, but we will let his figures stand, and think the more of her the more he put down to the account of waste. I should never have known what it cost, nor would you either, if Judas had not marked down in his pocket-book that it "might have been sold for much." How he grudged that "much." He calculated the value at three hundred pence. He did well to put it in pence, for his sordid soul revelled in small moneys which make up the pounds. Pence, indeed, when the expense is for him to whom the silver and the gold belong! Yet I like his calculation in pence, for it is suggestive, since a Roman penny was a day's wages; and take a day's wages now—say 4s.—and you get some £60. It was a large sum of money for a woman in her state of life in Bethany. It was £10 of their money, but money then was of a different value from what it is now, and it was a great sum for her to expend in one single deed of love. Her gift was costly, and the Lord Jesus deserved to be served at the best rate, and at the highest cost. There was a woman who served the Lord at a higher rate than this: she only spent two mites in the doing of it, but then you know it was all that she had. I do not know how much Mary had, but I feel persuaded that it was pretty well all she had, and that all she could get together seemed to her to be far too little for the Lord Jesus Christ. If his head was to be anointed, plenty of ordinary oil might have been procured at Bethany. The Mount of Olives was hard by. But she would have scorned the thought of pouring common olive oil on him: she must find an imperial unguent such as Cæsar might have accepted. If he is to be anointed, there is nard to be bought in the bazaars at Jerusalem at a very reasonable rate. Why must you, Mary, seek after this liquid ointment of the East, this otto distilled from myriads of roses, of which it needs leagues of gardens to make a drop? Why must you buy the "very precious" nard, and spend such a deal of money upon that which will only last half an hour, and then the wind will have carried it away, and its perfume will have vanished? Ay, but the glory of service to Christ is to serve him with the best of the best! He deserves, if we serve him with sermons, that we preach the best discourses mind can frame or tongue

deliver; or if we serve him with teaching in the class, he deserves that we teach in the tenderest fashion, and feed his lambs with the best of the grass; or if we serve him with the pen, that we write not a line that may need to be erased; or if we serve him with money, that we give with liberality of the best we have, and much of it. We must see to it that in everything we do not serve Christ with the lean sheep of the flock, or with such as are wounded, and broken, and torn by beasts; but that he hath the fat of our offerings. We should not be content if we are rich to give him out of our estate the cheese-parings and candle-ends, such as we dare not keep back for very shame. Usual donations have little beauty in them—those moneys dragged out of people by importunity—that guinea dribbled out by custom because it is a respectable amount. There is nothing to satisfy love in the slender oblations which come forth like an unwilling taxation, which a miser could scarce withhold. But oh, to give to the Lord Jesus freely, richly, whatever it is with which he has entrusted us, whether it be gold or genius, time or words—whether it be the minted coinage of the purse, or the living courage of a loving heart, or the labour of an earnest hand! Let us give our Well-beloved the best we have, and he will call it beautiful. Mary's gift was all for him, and all for love, and it was done at great expense, and therefore it was beautiful.

IV. Next, remember, that part of the beauty of Mary's action lay in this, that IT WAS DONE WITH PREPARATION. We are told by John what we should not else have known, "Against the day of my burying hath she kept this." "*Kept* this." It was not that seeing Jesus there at the feast, and being seized with a sudden thought, she rushed back to her stores, and fetched out the little vase of spikenard, and broke it in a passion of affection, which in cooler moments she might regret. Far from it: she was now consummating the long thought of weeks and months. We have known warm-spirited brethren and sisters both say and do and give grandly, under a certain spur and impulse, what they never thought of doing when they entered into the assembly. I shall not blame them; rather do I commend them for obeying gracious impulses; but it is not the best way of doing service to our ever-blessed Master. Passion seldom gives so acceptably as principle. Mary did not perform a thoughtless action under a tempestuous force of unusual zeal. No, she had *kept* this. She had kept this choice unguent on purpose till a fitting time should come for putting it to its most appropriate use. My own belief is that, when she sat at Jesus' feet, she learned much more than any of the disciples had ever gathered from his public preaching. She had heard him say that the Son of man would be delivered to the scribes and Pharisees, and that he would be spat upon and scourged, and they would put him to death, and the third day he would rise again; and she believed it. She thought it over, and she studied it, and made out more of the meaning of it than any one of the apostles had done. She said to herself—He is going to die as a sacrifice at the hands of wicked men, and I will, therefore, render him special honour. I should not wonder if she began to read the Old Testament with that light, "This is he whom God hath sent, upon whom he hath laid the iniquities of us all, and he shall be given up to judgment, and he shall bear the sin of many." Then she thought within herself, "If that is so, I will get the

spikenard ready to anoint him for his burial." Perhaps she intended as much as that, for so the Lord himself interpreted the deed. At any rate, she thought, "Alas, for my Lord! If he dies he will need to be embalmed, and I will be ready to aid in his burial." Therefore she *kept this*.

"Against the day of my burying hath she kept this." Brethren, there is great beauty in an action which is the outcome of a long time of loving careful consideration. It is ill to delay a good deed which might be done at once; but if a deed must be delayed, it is well to be doing it at once by preparing for it. When a person feels, "The time is not yet, but I will be prepared when it does come," it shows that the heart is occupied with a love of a very engrossing character. We sing—

"Oh, what shall I do
My Saviour to praise?"

And it were well if the question were constantly in our minds. Let each man resolve in his heart,—I will not offer my Lord the hasty fruit of impulse, or that which shall cost me nothing, but I will consider what I can do for him. Of what will there be a need? In what direction can I do him homage where else he might lack that honour? I will turn it over, and meditate, and consider, and then I will perform. This last the preacher would repeat with emphasis, for oh, my brothers, it is a custom with many of us to get a grand thought and then as we turn it over to let it evaporate without its leaving even a drop of practical result behind! This holy woman was no mere planner and purposer, but a doer of holy deeds. She could keep her alabaster box as long as was prudent, and yet she did not arrive at the tempting conclusion to keep it altogether. She allowed her heart to weigh the project; and the more she weighed it, she became the more resolved to do it—to do it when the due time came. When she believed that the hour had come she did not delay for an instant. She was as prompt as she had been thoughtful. The Passover was drawing very near; it was within six days, and so she brought out what she had held in reserve. Blessed are the punctualities of service which are the result of earnest endeavour to honour the Lord in the best possible way.

There is something beautiful in seeing, as we have seen, some poor woman saving her littles, and putting them by for years till she could accomplish a secret purpose by which Jesus would be glorified. It is striking to see, as you and I did see, a woman of moderate wealth discarding all the comforts of life that she might save sufficient that there might be an orphanage in which children might be cared for; not, as she said, for the children's sake, but for Christ's sake, that *he* might be glorified. The Stockwell Orphanage is the alabaster box which a devout woman presented to her Lord. Her memory is blessed. Its perfume is recognized in all parts of the earth at this moment, to the glory of the Lord she loved. Such a thoughtful deed is what Jesus would call a beautiful thing. Let us abound in such beautiful things. For a man to say, "There will come a crisis when I shall have to stand out for God and his truth, and it will be a serious loss to me," and then so to ponder it as to be almost eager for the occasion, is a beautiful thing. To feel like the Lord Jesus, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and

how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" is a beautiful thing. Courageous, self-sacrificing decision for the truth is a beautiful thing, when its action is well considered, and carried out with enthusiasm. God give us to mix thought and impulse, reason and affection, and thus serve him both with the mind and the heart!

V. There is a fifth point of beauty. **MARY DID HER GREAT DEED WITHOUT A WORD.** Dear sisters, you will pardon me for commending this holy woman for her wise and fitting silence all through her gracious act. She did not talk about it beforehand, she said not a word while she did it, and she said nothing afterwards. Martha was the worker, and rather the talker too; but I think that all you will find Mary saying is, "Lord, if thou hadst been here my brother had not died;" and she was so scant of words that she had to borrow those from Martha. Martha said a great deal more than that; but Mary was quite satisfied to be as brief as possible. She was a great thinker, a great sitter at Jesus' feet, and a great learner, but not a great talker. When the time came she was a great worker, for it is very curious, though Martha bears the palm for work in our ordinary talk, yet Mary, the thinker, did more than Martha, the worker. "She," said Christ, "hath wrought a good work on me," which he never said of Martha, good as Martha was. He a little censured the elder sister for being cumbered with much serving; but Mary's work he commended, and decreed that it should be remembered as long as the world stands. Though she does not bear the name of a worker in the vulgar judgment, yet is she the queen in the kingdom of good works. Yet, I remind you, she did not say a word. There is such a thing as spoiling what you do by making so great a fuss before you do it, that when the mouse is born people are only astonished that such a small creature should be the only fruit of the dreadful throes of the mountain. Moreover, there is such a thing as talking so much afterwards of what we have done that it spoils it all. It seems as if we must let all the world know something about ourselves; whereas the joy and bliss of it all is not to let yourself be seen, but to let the oil go streaming upon the Master till he is anointed with perfume, and we ourselves sink back into our natural insignificance. Silent acts of love have musical voices in the ear of Jesus. Sound no trumpet before thee, or Jesus will take warning and be gone.

If we could all *do* more and *talk* less it might be a blessing to ourselves at least, perhaps to others. Let us labour in our service for the Lord to be more and more hidden; as much as the proud desire to catch the eye of man, let us endeavour to avoid it.

"I should like to know," says one, "how to do holy work." Go and do it, and consult not with flesh and blood. "I have done my work, and now I should dearly like to hear what you think of it." You should rise above such idle dependence upon man's opinion; what matters it to you what your fellow-servant thinks? To your own Master you stand or fall. If you have done a good thing do it again. You know the story of the man who comes riding up to the captain, and says, "Sir, we have taken a gun from the enemy." "Go and take another," said the matter-of-fact officer. That is the best advice which I can render to a friend who is elated with his own success. So much remains to be accomplished that we have no time to consider what has been done. If

we have done holy service, let us do it a second time, and do it a third time, and continue to do it, ever praying the Lord to accept our persevering service. In any case let our consecrated life be for our Lord's eye alone, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed. Anything like sounding a trumpet before us is hateful to the lowly Lord; secrecy has a charm for Jesus, and the more carefully we preserve it the better.

VI. Next, and sixthly, there was this beauty about the action of Mary—that **SHE DID IT IN REFERENCE TO OUR LORD'S DEATH**. The disciples shrank from thinking of that sad subject. Peter said, "That be far from thee, Lord." But Mary, bearing her Master's heart very near her own, and sympathizing with him in his glorious enterprise, instead of drawing back from the thought of that death, performed her work in connection with it. I am not certain to what degree she was conscious that it was so, but there is the fact,—the anointing had reference to the burial of the Lord. It seems to me that the best and tenderest duty that Christians do for their Lord Jesus is that which is touched with the blood-mark—which bears the stamp of the cross. The best preaching is, "We preach Christ crucified." The best living is, "We are crucified with Christ." The best man is a crucified man. The best style is a crucified style: may we drop into it! The more we live beholding our Lord's unutterable griefs, and understanding how he has fully put away our sin, the more holiness shall we produce. The more we dwell where the cries of Calvary can be heard, where we can view heaven, and earth, and hell, all moved by his wondrous passion—the more noble will our lives become. Nothing puts life into men like a dying Saviour. Get you close to Christ, and carry the remembrance of him about you from day to day, and you will do right royal deeds. Come, let us slay sin, for Christ was slain. Come, let us bury all our pride, for Christ was buried. Come, let us rise to newness of life, for Christ has risen. Let us be united with our crucified Lord in his one great object; let us live and die with him, and then every action of our lives will be very beautiful.

VII. The seventh beauty, to my mind, is this: you may think it a little far fetched, but I cannot help mentioning it, for it touches my heart. I believe that **MARY HAD IN THIS ANOINTING OF THE SAVIOUR SOME LITTLE GLIMPSE OF HIS RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD**, and of his after existence. For I would ask of you,—Why do nations at all embalm their dead? Why not consume them in the fire? A mysterious something makes the ordinary Christian man shudder at the thought of cremation. That must surely be an acquired taste: unsophisticated nature does not court the furnace, or covet the flame; we prefer to lie beneath the green hillock with our fathers. Many nations of antiquity, and especially the Egyptians and other orientals, took great care to anoint the bodies of the departed with precious perfumes, and to lay them asleep in gums and fine linen. What for? Because there darkly shone upon their minds some thought of the hereafter. There remained with man, long after the fall, a glimmering, undefined belief in immortality. That truth was so universally received that the Old Testament takes it for granted. The existence of God and the immortality of the soul lie at the basis of Old Testament teaching. The after-life of the body was accepted also in a manner more or less clear. Immortality was not brought to light, but there

it was, and they who reject that doctrine go back into a darkness denser than that in which the heathens themselves dwelt. Why did the Egyptian king embalm his father, and lay him in spices, but that he thought that somehow or other there was another life, and he would, therefore, take care of the body? They would not have wasted precious linen, and gums, and spices, if they had thought that the body was mere rottenness for worms to consume for ever. Mary had deeper and clearer thoughts than that, for she expected that something would happen to that blessed body after Christ had died; and she must, therefore, anoint it, and bring the most precious spices that she could procure for his burial. At any rate, let your service of the Lord Jesus be the service of a risen Christ. Come not hither to worship one who died years ago—a hero of the past; but come to adore the ever-living Jesus.

“He lives, your great Redeemer lives.”

He will certainly come in his own person to reward his saints; and ere he comes he sees what you are doing. “We live,” said one, “in the great Taskmaster’s eye.” I care not for that title. I have no Taskmaster. It is far more an impulse to my life that I live within the sight of him whom, having not seen, I love, because he loved me and gave himself for me. If this does not quicken you, what will? If this does not nerve you to tireless diligence in holy service, what can? Our Lord Jesus Christ lives. Let us find some way of anointing his dear and reverend head—some way of crowning him who wore the crown of thorns for our sake. Ours it is to know that he lives, and that we live in him. On him would we expend the full force of our being, counting it all joy to spend and to be spent for his sake.

I am not going to stir you up, my fellow Christians, to do anything for Christ, for I fear to spoil the freeness of your love’s life. I do not want to be pleading with you to enter into his service more fully; for the work of pressed men is never so much prized as that of happy volunteers. Yet as I love you I would have you love your Lord more and more. It is so sweet to belong to Christ, that the more fully we can belong to him the more free we are. I like that of Paul, where he calls himself the *doulos* of Christ, the slave of Jesus. He says exultingly, “Let no man trouble me. I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus,” as if he gloried to think of himself as the branded slave of his Lord. He had been beaten and scourged, and he retained upon his back the marks of his lashings, and therefore he was wont to say to himself, and smile all the while, “these are my Master’s marks. I am branded with his name.” Oh, sweet service, in which if it could be slavery it would be joy! I would not have a hair of my head that was not my Lord’s if I could help it, nor a drop of my blood that did not flow for him if I could help it. My liberty—and I speak for you all—my liberty, if I might choose it, would be liberty never to sin again; freedom to do Christ’s bidding, and that alone. I would fain lose my free will in his sweet will, and find it again as I never found it before in having yielded it up completely to his command.

I will not, therefore, so much intrude upon the sanctity of your heart’s love as to suggest what you can do for Jesus. As the best juice flows from the cluster with the least pressure, so shall the best service

be that which is most spontaneous. Do not let me push you on, or draw you on, or drag you on; but be eager on your own account. Say to the Lord himself, "Draw me: I will run after thee." Have you not a certain private reason why you should love your Lord better than any other of his redeemed? I repeat it, I will not pry into your sacred secrets, but leave you to commune with your own heart, and with your Lord. Only let us so love him that when we look at him he shall say, "Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck." Then shall we know what to do for our Well-beloved, and, what is better, we shall do it without further exhortation.

There I leave it. May the Holy Ghost bless the word!

As for you that do not love the Lord Jesus, God be merciful to you! I will not pronounce upon you an Anathema Maranatha, but I tremble lest it fall upon you. I am sore grieved for your sakes. I am, moreover, sore vexed for Christ's sake that he should be deprived of your love and service. What has he done that you should slight him? Oh, blind eyes, that cannot see his beauties, and deaf ears, that cannot hear the charms of his voice! God be merciful to you, and help you to trust your Saviour, and then you will love him for his salvation! It is no wonder that the saved ones love their Lord: it is a marvel that they do not love him ten thousand times more. The Lord be with you for Christ's sake! Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Mark xiv., John xii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—797, 788.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON.

DEAR FRIENDS,—When this letter reaches you I hope I shall have returned to my family, and my people, much refreshed. I can hardly hope to be very long quite free from the disease which afflicts me; yet I do confidently expect a few months of steady service, and I am anxious that upon these the divine blessing may richly descend. I beseech you pray for me.

For more than thirty years these sermons have been published week by week; may I not entreat your supplications that I may be enabled to maintain their freshness, fulness, and power? For this I shall need great help from on high. My own resources are slender enough, but the divine fountain can never run dry.

The church over which I preside is large beyond all precedent, containing more than five thousand members. I entreat your prayers that wisdom and grace may be given me as the Pastor of such a flock. I tremble as I think of my responsibility. Who is sufficient for these things?

Beside all this,—there are the Orphanage with its hundreds of little ones, the College with its students for the ministry, the Colportage with its book-selling missionaries, the Evangelists travelling from place to place and proclaiming the living word, and many other minor enterprises. The burden is too great for me unless the Lord's own power be revealed in my weakness. For these institutions I need money in large measure, and grace beyond all measure. Those who profit by these sermons would act kindly if they would help me with their prayers and their contributions. I need both, and both at this time, in a special manner.

On my return I shall have to prepare for the gathering of the clan, in the form of the College Conference. A great host of ministers will come together to spend a week in holy fellowship and united devotion. If the Lord be with us, it will be a soul-refreshing season, and the brethren will return to their flocks prepared for a great blessing: but without the Spirit of the Lord all will be in vain. By the love of Jesus I implore the special prayers of faithful brethren and sisters. O Lord, send now prosperity! Revive thy work! Revive our own souls, for Jesus' sake!

Your servant for Christ's sake,

C. H. SPURGEON.

Mentone, April 5, 1885.