

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

“GOD WITH US.”

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 26TH, 1875, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“They shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.”
—Matthew i. 23.

THOSE words, “being interpreted,” salute my ear with much sweetness. Why should the word “Emmanuel” in the Hebrew, be interpreted at all? Was it not to show that it has reference to us Gentiles, and therefore it must needs be interpreted into one of the chief languages of the then existing Gentile world, namely, the Greek. This “being interpreted” at Christ’s birth, and the three languages employed in the inscription upon the cross at his death, show that he is not the Saviour of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles. As I walked along the quay at Marseilles, and marked the ships of all nations gathered in the port, I was very much interested by the inscriptions upon the shops and stores. The announcements of refreshments or of goods to be had within were not only printed in the French language, but in English, in Italian, in German, in Greek, sometimes in Russian and Swedish. Upon the shops of the sail-makers, the boat-builders, the ironmongers, or the dealers in ship stores, you read a polyglot announcement, setting forth the information to men of many lands. This was a clear indication that persons of all nations were invited to come and purchase, that they were expected to come, and that provision was made for their peculiar wants. “Being interpreted” must mean that different nations are addressed. We have the text put first in the Hebrew “Emmanuel,” and afterwards it is translated into the Gentile tongue, “God with us;” “being interpreted,” that we may know that we are invited, that we are welcome, that God has seen our necessities and has provided for us, and that now we may freely come, even we who were sinners of the Gentiles, and far off from God. Let us preserve with reverent love both forms of the precious name and wait the happy day when our Hebrew brethren shall unite their “Emmanuel” with our “God with us.”

Our text speaks of a *name* of our Lord Jesus. It is said, "They shall call his name Emmanuel." In these days we call children by names which have no particular meaning. They are the names, perhaps, of father or mother or some respected relative, but there is no special meaning as a general rule in our children's names. It was not so in the olden times. Then names meant something. Scriptural names, as a general rule, contain teaching, and especially is this the case in every name ascribed to the Lord Jesus. With him names indicate things. "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace," because he really is all these. His name is called Jesus, but not without a reason. By any other name Jesus would not be so sweet, because no other name could fairly describe his great work of saving his people from their sins. When he is said to be called this or that, it means that he really is so. I am not aware that anywhere in the New Testament our Lord is afterwards called Emmanuel. I do not find his apostles, or any of his disciples, calling him by that name literally; but we find them all doing so in effect, for they speak of him as "God manifest in the flesh", and they say, "The word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." They do not use the actual word, but they again interpret and give us free and instructive renderings, while they proclaim the sense of the august title and inform us in divers ways what is meant by God being with us in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a glorious fact, of the highest importance, that since Christ was born into the world God is with us.

You may divide the text, if you please, into two portions:—"God," and then "God WITH US." We must dwell with equal emphasis upon each word. Never let us for a moment hesitate as to the Godhead of our Lord Jesus Christ, for his Deity is a fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith. It may be we shall never understand fully how God and man could unite in one person, for who can by searching find out God. These great mysteries of godliness, these "deep things of God," are beyond our measurement: our little skiff might be lost if we ventured so far out upon this vast, this infinite ocean, as to lose sight of the shore of plainly revealed truth. But let it remain as a matter of faith that Jesus Christ, even he who lay in Bethlehem's manger, and was carried in a woman's arms, and lived a suffering life and died on a malefactor's cross, was, nevertheless, "God over all, blessed for ever," "upholding all things by the word of his power." He was not an angel—that the apostle has abundantly disproved in the first and second chapters of the epistle to the Hebrews: he could not have been an angel, for honours are ascribed to him which were never bestowed on angels. He was no subordinate deity or being elevated to the Godhead, as some have absurdly said—all these things are dreams and falsehoods; he was as surely God as God can be, one with the Father and the ever-blessed Spirit. If it were not so, not only would the great strength of our hope be gone, but as to this text the sweetness had evaporated altogether. The very essence and glory of the incarnation is that he was God who was veiled in human flesh: if it was any other being who thus came to us in

human flesh, I see nothing very remarkable in it, nothing comforting, certainly. That an angel should become a man is a matter of no great consequence to me : that some other superior being should assume the nature of man brings no joy to my heart, and opens no well of consolation to me. But "God with us" is exquisite delight. "God with us": all that "God" means, the Deity, the infinite Jehovah with us ; this, this is worthy of the burst of midnight song, when angels started the shepherds with their carols, singing "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to men." This was worthy of the foresight of seers and prophets, worthy of a new star in the heavens, worthy of the care which inspiration has manifested to preserve the record. This, too, was worthy of the martyr deaths of apostles and confessors who counted not their lives dear unto them for the sake of the incarnate God ; and this, my brethren, is worthy at this day of your most earnest endeavours to spread the glad tidings, worthy of a holy life to illustrate its blessed influences, and worthy of a joyful death to prove its consoling power. Here is the first truth of our holy faith—"Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh." He who was born at Bethlehem is God, and "God with us." God—there lies the majesty ; "God with us," there lies the mercy. *God*—therein is glory ; "God *with us*," therein is grace. God alone might well strike us with terror ; but "God with us" inspires us with hope and confidence. Take my text as a whole, and carry it in your bosoms as a bundle of sweet spices to perfume your hearts with peace and joy. May the Holy Spirit open to you the truth, and the truth to you. I would joyfully say to you in the words of one of our poets—

"Veil'd in flesh the Godhead see ;
Hail the incarnate Deity !
Pleased as man with men to appear,
Jesus our Immanuel here."

First, *let us admire this truth ; then let us consider it more at length ; and after that let us endeavour personally to appropriate it.*

I. LET US ADMIRE THIS TRUTH. "God with us." Let us stand at a reverent distance from it as Moses when he saw God in the bush stood a little back, and put his shoes from off his feet, feeling that the place whereon he stood was holy ground. This is a wonderful fact, God the Infinite once dwelt in the frail body of a child, and tabernacled in the suffering form of a lowly man. "God was in Christ." "He made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men."

Observe first, the wonder of *condescension* contained in this fact, that God who made all things should assume the nature of one of his own creatures, that the self-existent should be united with the dependent and derived, and the Almighty linked with the feeble and mortal. In the case before us the Lord descended to the very depth of humiliation, and entered into alliance with a nature which did not occupy the chief place in the scale of existence. It would have been great condescension for the infinite and incomprehensible Jehovah to have taken upon himself the nature of some noble spiritual being, such as a seraph or a cherub ; the union of the divine with a created spirit would have been

an unmeasurable stoop, but for God to be one with man is far more. Remember that in the person of Christ manhood was not merely quickening spirit, but also suffering, hungering, dying, flesh and blood. There was taken to himself by our Lord all that materialism which makes up a body, and a body is after all but the dust of the earth, a structure fashioned from the materials around us. There is nothing in our bodily frame but what is to be found in the substance of the earth on which we live. We feed upon that which groweth out of the earth, and when we die we go back to the dust from whence we were taken. Is not this a strange thing that this grosser part of creation, this meaner part, this dust of it, should nevertheless be taken into union, with that pure, marvellous, incomprehensible, divine being of whom we know so little, and can comprehend nothing at all? Oh, the condescension of it! I leave it to the meditations of your quiet moments. Dwell on it with awe. I am persuaded that no man has any idea how wonderful a stoop it was for God thus to dwell in human flesh, and to be "God with us."

Yet, to make it appear still more remarkable, remember that the creature whose nature Christ took was a being that had sinned. I can more readily conceive the Lord's taking upon himself the nature of a race which had never fallen; but, lo, the race of man stood in rebellion against God, and yet a man did Christ become, that he might deliver us from the consequences of our rebellion, and lift us up to something higher than our pristine purity. "God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, has condemned sin in the flesh." "Oh, the depths," is all that we can say, as we look on and marvel at this stoop of divine love.

Note, next, as you view this marvel at a distance, what a *miracle of power* is before us. Have you ever thought of the power displayed in the Lord's fashioning a body capable of union with Godhead? Our Lord was incarnate in a body, which was truly a human body, but yet in some wondrous way was prepared to sustain the indwelling of Deity. Contact with God is terrible; "He looketh on the earth and it trembleth; he toucheth the hills and they smoke." He puts his feet on Paran, and it melts, and Sinai dissolves in flames of fire. So strongly was this truth inwrought into the minds of the early saints, that they said, "No man can see God's face and live;" and yet here was a manhood which did not merely see the face of God, but which was inhabited by Deity. What a human frame was this which could abide the presence of Jehovah! "A body hast thou prepared me." This was indeed a body curiously wrought, a holy thing, a special product of the Holy Spirit's power. It was a body like our own, with nerves as sensitive, and muscles as readily strained, with every organization as delicately fashioned as our own, and yet God was in it. It was a frail barque to bear such a freight. Oh, man Christ, how couldst thou bear the Deity within thee! We know not how it was, but God knoweth. Let us adore this hiding of the Almighty in human weakness, this comprehending of the Incomprehensible, this revealing of the Invisible, this localization of the Omnipresent. Alas, I do but babble! What are words when we deal with such an unutterable truth? Suffice it to say, that the divine power was wonderfully seen in the continued existence of

the materialism of Christ's body, which else had been consumed by such a wondrous contact with divinity. Admire the power which dwelt in "God with us."

Again, as you gaze upon the mystery, consider what *an ensign of good will* this must be to the sons of men. When the Lord takes manhood into union with himself in this matchless way it must mean good to man. God cannot mean to destroy that race which he thus weds unto himself. Such a marriage as this, between man and God, must mean peace; war and destruction are never thus predicted. God incarnate in Bethlehem, to be adored by shepherds, augurs nothing but "peace on earth and mercy mild." O ye sinners who tremble at the thought of the divine wrath, as well you may, lift up your heads with joyful hope of mercy and favour, for God must be full of grace and mercy to that race which he so distinguishes above all others by taking it into union with himself. Be of good cheer, O men of women born, and expect untold blessings for "unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given." If you look at rivers you can often tell whence they come, and the soil over which they have flowed by their colour: those which flow from melting glaciers are known at once. There is a text concerning a heavenly river which you will understand if you look at it in this light: "He showed me a pure river of the water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb." Where the throne is occupied by Godhead, and the appointed Mediator, the incarnate God, the once bleeding Lamb, then the river must be pure as crystal, and be a river, not of molten lava of devouring wrath, but a river of the water of life. Look you to "God with us" and you will see that the consequences of incarnation must be pleasant, profitable, saving, and ennobling to the sons of men.

I pray you to continue your admiring glance, and look upon God with us once more *as a pledge of our deliverance*. We are a fallen race, we are sunken in the mire, we are sold under sin, in bondage and in slavery to Satan; but if God comes to our race, and espouses its nature, why then we must retrieve our fall, it cannot be possible for the gates of hell to keep those down who have God with them. Slaves under sin and bondsmen beneath the law, hearken to the trump of jubilee, for one has come among you, born of a woman, made under the law, who is also mighty God, pledged to set you free. He is a Saviour, and a great one: able to save, for he is Almighty, and pledged to do it, for he has entered the lists and put on the harness for the battle. The champion of his people is one who will not fail nor be discouraged till the battle is fully fought and won. Jesus coming down from heaven is the pledge that he will take his people up to heaven, his taking our nature is the seal of our being lifted up to his throne. Were it an angel that had interposed, we might have some fears; were it a mere man, we might go beyond fear, and sit down in despair; but if it be "God with us," and God has actually taken manhood into union with himself, then let us "ring the bells of heaven" and be glad; there must be brighter and happier days, there must be salvation to man, there must be glory to God. Let us bask in the beams of the Sun of Righteousness, who now has risen upon us, a light to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the glory of his people Israel.

Thus we have admired at a distance.

II. And, now, in the second place, let us come nearer and CONSIDER THE SUBJECT MORE CLOSELY. What is this? What means this, "God with us"? I do not expect this morning to be able to set forth all the meaning of this short text, "God with us," for indeed, it seems to me to contain the whole history of redemption. It hints at man's being without God, and God's having removed from man on account of sin. It seems to tell me of man's spiritual life, by Christ's coming to him, and being formed in him the hope of glory. God communes with man, and man returns to God, and receives again the divine image as at the first. Yea, heaven itself is "God with us." This text might serve for a hundred sermons without any wire drawing; yea, one might continue to expatiate upon its manifold meanings for ever. I can only at this time give mere hints of lines of thought which you can pursue at your leisure, the Holy Spirit enabling you.

This glorious word Emmanuel means, first, that God in Christ is *with us in very near association*. The Greek particle here used is very forcible, and expresses the strongest form of "with." It is not merely "in company with us" as another Greek word would signify, but "with," "together with," and "sharing with." This preposition is a close rivet, a firm bond, implying, if not declaring, close fellowship. God is peculiarly and closely "with us." Now, think for a while, and you will see that God has in very deed come near to us in very close association. He must have done so, for *he has taken upon himself our nature*, literally our nature,—flesh, blood, bone, everything that made a body; mind, heart, soul, memory, imagination, judgment, everything that makes a rational man. Christ Jesus was the man of men, the second Adam, the model representative man. Think not of him as a deified man any more than you would dare to regard him as a humanized God, or demigod. Do not confound the natures nor divide the person: he is but one person, yet very man as he is also very God. Think of this truth then, and say, "He who sits on the throne is such as I am, sin alone excepted." No, 'tis too much for speech, I will not speak of it; it is a theme which masters me, and I fear to utter rash expressions. Turn the truth over and over, and see if it be not sweeter than honey and the honey-comb.

"Oh joy! there sitteth in our flesh,
Upon a throne of light,
One of a human mother born,
In perfect Godhead bright!"

Being with us in our nature, God was with us in *all our life's pilgrimage*. Scarcely can you find a halting-place in the march of life at which Jesus has not paused, or a weary league which he has not traversed. From the gate of entrance even to the door which closes life's way the footprints of Jesus may be traced. Were you in the cradle? He was there. Were you a child under parental authority? Christ was also a boy in the home at Nazareth. Have you entered upon life's battle? Your Lord and Master did the same; and though he lived not to old age, yet through incessant toil and suffering he bore the marred visage which attends a battered old age. Are you alone? So was he, in the wilderness, and on the mountain's side, and in the

garden's gloom. Do you mix in public society? So did he labour in the thickest press. Where can you find yourself, on the hill top, or in the valley, on the land or on the sea, in the daylight or in darkness,—where, I say, can you be without discovering that Jesus has been there before you? What the world has said of her great poet we might with far more truth say of our Redeemer—

“A man so various that he seemed to be
Not one, but all mankind's epitome.”

One harmonious man he was, and yet all saintly lives seem to be condensed in his. Two believers may be very unlike each other, and yet both will find that Christ's life has in it points of likeness to their own. One shall be rich and another shall be poor, one actively laborious and another patiently suffering, and yet each man in studying the history of the Saviour shall be able to say—his pathway ran hard by my own. He was made in all points like unto his brethren. How charming is the fact that our Lord is “God with us,” not here and there, and now and then, but evermore.

Especially does this come out with sweetness in his being “God with us” *in our sorrows*. There is no pang that rends the heart, I might almost say not one which disturbs the body, but what Jesus Christ has been with us in it all. Feel you the sorrows of poverty? He “had not where to lay his head.” Do you endure the griefs of bereavement? Jesus “wept” at the tomb of Lazarus. Have you been slandered for righteousness' sake, and has it vexed your spirit? He said “Reproach hath broken mine heart.” Have you been betrayed? Do not forget that he too had his familiar friend, who sold him for the price of a slave. On what stormy seas have you been tossed which have not also roared around his boat? Never glen of adversity so dark, so deep, apparently so pathless, but what in stooping down you may discover the footprints of the Crucified One. In the fires and in the rivers, in the cold night and under the burning sun, he cries, “I am with thee. Be not dismayed, for I am both thy companion and thy God.”

Mysteriously true is it that when you and I shall come to *the last, the closing scene*, we shall find that Emmanuel has been there. He felt the pangs and throes of death, he endured the bloody sweat of agony and the parching thirst of fever. He knew the separation of the tortured spirit from the poor fainting flesh, and cried, as we shall, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.” Ay, and the grave he knew, for there he slept, and left the sepulchre perfumed and furnished to be a couch of rest, and not a charnel-house of corruption. That new tomb in the garden makes him God with us till the resurrection shall call us from our beds of clay to find him God with us in newness of life. We shall be raised up in his likeness, and the first sight our opening eyes shall see shall be the incarnate God. “I know that my Redeemer liveth, and though after my skin worms devour this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.” “God with us.” I in my flesh shall see him as the man, the God. And so *to all eternity* he will maintain the most intimate association with us. As long as ages roll he shall be “God with us.” Has he not said, “Because I live ye shall live also”? Both his human and divine life will last on for ever, and

so shall our life endure. He shall dwell among us and lead us to living fountains of waters, and so shall we be for ever with the Lord.

Now, my brethren, if you will review these thoughts, you shall find good store of food; in fact, a feast even under that one head. God in Christ is with us in the nearest possible association.

But, secondly, *God in Christ is with us in the fullest reconciliation.* This, of course, is true, if the former be true. There was a time when we were parted from God; we were without God, being alienated from him by wicked works, and God also was removed from us by reason of the natural rectitude of character which thrusts iniquity far from him. He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, neither can evil dwell with him. That strict justice with which he rules the world requires that he should hide his face from a sinful generation. A God who looks with complacency upon guilty men is not the God of the Bible, who is in multitudes of places set forth as burning with indignation against the wicked. "The wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth." But, now the sin which separated us from God has been put away by the blessed sacrifice of Christ upon the tree, and the righteousness, the absence of which must have caused a gulf between unrighteous man and righteous God, that righteousness, I say, has been found, for Jesus has brought in everlasting righteousness. So that now in Jesus God is with us, reconciled to us, the sin which caused his wrath being for ever put away from his people. There are some who object to this view of the case, and I, for one, will not yield one jot to their objections. I do not wonder that they cavil at certain unwise statements, which I like no better than they do; but, nevertheless, if they oppose the atonement as making a recompense to injured justice, their objections shall have no force with me. It is most true that God is always love, but his stern justice is not opposed thereto. It is also most certainly true that towards his people he always was, in the highest sense, love, and the atonement is the result and not the cause of divine love; yet, still viewed in his rectoral character, as a judge and lawgiver, God is "angry with the wicked every day," and apart from the reconciling sacrifice of Christ, his own people were "heirs of wrath even as others." There was anger in the heart of God, as a righteous judge, against those who have broken his holy law, and the reconciliation has a bearing upon the position of the judge of all the earth as well as upon man. I for one shall never cease to say, "O Lord, I will praise thee, for though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me." God can now be with man, and embrace sinners as his children, as he could not have righteously done had not Jesus died. In this sense, and in this sense only, did Dr. Watts write some of his hymns which have been so fiercely condemned. I take leave to quote two verses, and to commend them as setting forth a great truth if the Lord be viewed as a judge, and represented as the awakened conscience of man rightly perceives him. Our poet says of the throne of God:

"Once 'twas the seat of dreadful wrath,
And shot devouring flame;
Our God appeared, consuming fire,
And vengeance was his name.

“Rich were the drops of Jesus' blood,
Which calmed his frowning face,
Which sprinkled o'er the burning throne,
And turn'd the wrath to grace.”

So that now Jehovah is not God against us, but “God with us,” he has “reconciled us to himself by the death of his Son.”

A third meaning of the text “God with us” is this, *God in Christ is with us in blessed communication*. That is to say, now he has come so near to us as to enter into commerce with us, and this he does in part by hallowed conversation. Now he speaks to us and in us. He has in these last days spoken to us by his Son and by the Divine Spirit with the still small voice of warning, consolation, instruction, and direction. Are you not conscious of this? Since your souls have come to know Christ, have you not also enjoyed intercourse with the Most High? Now, like Enoch, you “walk with God,” and, like Abraham, you talk with him as a man talketh with his friend. What are those prayers and praises of yours but the speech which you are permitted to have with the Most High; and he replies to you when his Spirit seals home the promise or applies the precept, when with fresh light he leads you into the doctrine or bestows brighter confidence as to good things to come. Oh yes, God is with us now, so that when he cries, “Seek ye my face” our heart says to him, “Thy face, Lord, will I seek.” These Sabbath gatherings, what mean they to many of us but “God with us.” That communion table, what means it but “God with us”? Oh, how often in the breaking of bread and the pouring forth of the wine in the memory of his atoning death have we enjoyed his real presence, not in a superstitious, but in a spiritual sense, and found the Lord Jesus to be “God with us.” Yes, in every holy ordinance, in every sacred act of worship, we now find that there is a door opened in heaven and a new and living way by which we may come to the throne of grace. Is not this a joy better than all the riches of earth could buy?

And it is not merely in speech that the Lord is with us, but God is with us now by powerful *acts* as well as words. “God with us,” why it is the inscription upon our royal standard which strikes terror to the heart of the foe, and cheers the sacramental host of God's elect. Is not this our war cry, “The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge.” As to our foes within, God is with us to overcome our corruptions and frailties; and as to the adversaries of truth without, God is with his church, and Christ has promised that he ever will be with her “even to the end of the world.” We have not merely God's word and promises, but we have seen his acts of grace on our behalf, both in providence and in the working of his blessed Spirit. “The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the people.” “In Judah is God known: his name is great in Israel. In Salem also is his tabernacle, and his dwelling place in Zion. There brake he the arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the battle.” “God with us”—oh, my brethren, it makes our hearts leap for joy, it fills us with dauntless courage. How can we be dismayed when the Lord of hosts is on our side?

Nor is it merely that God is with us in acts of power on our behalf,

but in emanations of his own life into our nature by which we are at first new born, and afterwards sustained in spiritual life. This is more wonderful still. By the Holy Spirit the divine seed which "liveth and abideth for ever" is sown in our souls, and from day to day we are strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man.

Nor is this all, for as the masterpiece of grace, the Lord, by his Spirit, even dwells in his people. God is not incarnate in us as in Christ Jesus, but only second in wonder to the incarnation is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in believers. Now is it "God with us" indeed, for God dwelleth in us. "Know ye not," says the apostle, "that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost." "As it is written, I will dwell in them, and I will walk in them." Oh, the heights and depths then comprehended in those few words, "God with us."

I had many more things to say unto you, but time compels me to sum them up in brief. The Lord becomes "God with us" *by the restoration of his image in us*. "God with us" was seen in Adam when he was perfectly pure, but Adam died when he sinned, and God is not the God of the dead but of the living. Now we, in receiving back the new life and being reconciled to God in Christ Jesus, receive also the restored image of God, and are renewed in knowledge and true holiness. "God with us" means sanctification, the image of Jesus Christ imprinted upon all his brethren.

God is with us, too, let us remember, and leave the point, *in deepest sympathy*. Brethren, are you in sorrow? God is in Christ sympathetic to your grief. Brethren, have you a grand object? I know what it is, it is God's glory; therein also you are sympathetic with God, and God with you. What, let me inquire, is your greatest joy? Have you not learned to rejoice in the Lord? Do you not joy in God by Jesus Christ? Then God also joyeth in you. He rests in his love, and rejoices over you with singing, so that there is God with us in a very wonderful respect, inasmuch as through Christ our aims and desires are like those of God. We desire the same thing, press forward with the same aim, and rejoice in the same objects of delight. When the Lord says, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," our heart answers, "Ay, and in him we are well pleased too." The pleasure of the Father is the pleasure of his own chosen children, for we also joy in Christ; our very soul exults at the sound of his name.

III. I must leave this delightful theme when I have said two or three things about OUR PERSONAL APPROPRIATION of the truth before us.

"God with us." Then, if Jesus Christ be "God with us," let us come to God without any question or hesitancy. Whoever you may be you need no priest or intercessor to introduce you to God, for God has introduced himself to you. Are you children? Then come to God in the child Jesus, who slept in Bethlehem's manger. Oh, ye grey-heads, ye need not keep back, but like Simeon come and take him in your arms, and say, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." God sends an ambassador who inspires no fear: not with helmet and coat of mail, bearing lance, does heaven's herald approach us, but the white

flag is held in the hand of a child, in the hand of one chosen out of the people, in the hand of one who died, in the hand of one who though he sits in glory wears the nail-print still. O man, God comes to you as one like yourself. Do not be afraid to come to the gentle Jesus. Do not imagine that you need to be prepared for an audience with him, or that you want the intercession of a saint, or the intervention of priest or minister. Anyone could have come to the babe in Bethlehem. The horned oxen, methinks, ate of the hay on which he slept and feared not. Jesus is the friend of each one of us, sinful and unworthy though we be. You, poor ones, you need not fear to come, for, see, in a stable he is born, and in a manger he is cradled. You have not worse accommodation than his, you are not poorer than he. Come and welcome to the poor man's Prince, to the peasants' Saviour. Stay not back through fear of your unfitness; the shepherds came to him in all their deshabelle. I read not that they tarried to put on their best garments, but in the clothes in which they wrapped themselves that cold midnight they hastened just as they were to the young child's presence. God looks not at garments, but at hearts, and accepts men when they come to him with willing spirits, whether they be rich or poor. Come, then; come, and welcome, for God indeed is "God with us."

But, oh, let there be no delay about it. It did seem to me, as I turned this subject over, yesterday, that for any man to say, "I will not come to God," after God has come to man in such a form as this, were an unpardonable act of treason. Peradventure, you knew not God's love when you sinned, as you did; peradventure, though you persecuted his saints, you did it ignorantly in unbelief; but, behold your God extends the olive branch of peace to you, extends it in a wondrous way, for he himself comes here to be born of a woman, that he may meet with you who were born of women too, and save you from your sin. Will you not hearken now that he speaks by his Son? I can understand that you ask to hear no more of his words when he speaks with the sound of a trumpet, waxing exceeding loud and long, from amidst the flaming crags of Sinai; I do not wonder that you are afraid to draw near when the earth rocks and reels before his awful presence; but now he restrains himself and veils the splendour of his face, and comes to you as a child of humble mien, a carpenter's son. Oh, if he comes so, will you turn your backs upon him? Can ye spurn him? What better ambassador could you desire? This embassy of peace is so tenderly, so gently, so kindly, so touchingly put, that surely you cannot have the heart to resist it. Nay, do not turn away, let not your ears refuse the language of his grace, but say, "If God is with us, we will be with him." Say it, sinner, say, "I will arise and go to my Father and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned."

And as for you who have given up all hope, you that think yourselves so degraded and fallen that there can be no future for you,—there is hope for you yet, for you are a man, and the next being to God is a man. He that is God is also man, and there is something about that fact which ought to make you say, "Yes, I may yet discover, mayhap, brotherhood to the Son of man who is the Son of God, I, even I, may yet be lifted up to be set among princes, even the princes of his

people, by virtue of my regenerated manhood which brings me into relation with the manhood of Christ, and so into relation with the Godhead." Fling not yourself away, oh man, you are something too hopeful after all to be meat for the worm that never dies, and fuel for the fire that never can be quenched. Turn you to your God with full purpose of heart, and you shall find a grand destiny in store for you.

And now, my brethren, to you the last word is, let us be with God since God is with us. I give you for a watchword through the year to come, "Emmanuel, God with us." You, the saints redeemed by blood, have a right to all this in its fullest sense, drink into it and be filled with courage. Do not say, "We can do nothing." Who are ye that can do nothing? God is with you. Do not say "The church is feeble and fallen upon evil times,"—nay, "God is with us." We need the courage of those ancient soldiers who were wont to regard difficulties only as whetstones upon which to sharpen their swords. I like Alexander's talk—when they said there were so many thousands, so many millions perhaps of Persians. "Very well," says he, "it is good reaping where the corn is thick. One butcher is not afraid of a thousand sheep." I like even the talk of the old Gascon, who said when they asked him, "Can you and your troops get into that fortress? it is impregnable." "Can the sun enter it?" said he. "Yes." "Well, where the sun can go we can enter." Whatever is possible or whatever is impossible, Christians can do at God's command, for God is with us. Do you not see that the word, "God with us," puts impossibility out of all existence? Hearts that never could else be broken will be broken if God be with us. Errors which never else could be confuted can be overthrown by "God with us." Things impossible with men are possible with God. John Wesley died with that upon his tongue, and let us live with it upon our hearts.—"The best of all is God with us." Blessed Son of God, we thank thee that thou hast brought us that word. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Hebrews i. ii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—249, 256 (vers. 3, 4), 260.