

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE MESSAGES OF OUR LORD'S LOVE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

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“Go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you.”—Mark xvi. 7.

SEE, brethren! Jesus delights to meet his people. He is no sooner risen from the dead than he sends a message by an angel to say that he will meet his disciples. His delight is in them. He loves them with a very tender love, and he is happiest when he is in their midst. Do not think that you will have to entreat and persuade your Lord to come to you; he delights in near and dear fellowship. The heavenly Bridegroom finds solace in your company, if you be indeed espoused to him. Oh, that you were more anxious to be with him!

Our Lord knows that, to his true people, the greatest joy they ever have is for him to meet them. The disciples were at their saddest. Their Lord, as they thought, was dead. They had just passed the dreariest Sabbath of their lives, for he was in the tomb; and now, to comfort them, he sends no message but this—that he will meet them. He knew that there would be magic in that news to cheer their aching hearts. *He would meet them:* that would be all-sufficient consolation: “Go into Galilee; there shall ye see *him*.”

If all the sorrows of God's people could be poured out in one vast pile, what a mountain they would make! How varied our distresses! How diverse our depressions! But, beloved, if Jesus will meet us, all the sadness will fly away, and all the sorrow will grow light. Only give us his company, and we have all things. You know what I mean, many of you. Our Lord has made our hearts to leap for joy in sorrowful times. When we have been filled with physical pain, his company has made us forget the body's weakness; and when we have newly come from the grave, and our heart has been ready to break through bereavement, the sight of the Saviour has sweetened our bitter cup. In his presence we have felt resigned to the great Father's will, and content to say, “It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good.” Until the day break, and the shadows flee away for ever, we want nothing but our Well-beloved's company. “Abide

with me! Abide with me!"—this is our one prayer; and if we have that fulfilled, all other desires may wait their turn.

My subject is chosen with a view to our coming, as we always do on the first day of the week, to this table of communion. I want every child of God here to seek after, nay, to gain, full fellowship with Christ. I long to enjoy it myself, that I may preach a Saviour in whose presence I live. I long for you to enjoy it, that you may hear, not my voice, but his voice, which is sweeter than the music of angels' harps. Oh, that those who do not know our Lord may now be set a-hungering after his surpassing sweetness! He is willing to come to you. A prayer will find him; a tear will draw him; a look of faith will hold him fast. Cast yourself on Jesus, and his open arms will joyously receive you.

But now to the text. I shall take it just as it stands, and make five observations upon it.

I. The first is: JESUS, THAT HE MAY MEET HIS PEOPLE, ISSUES INVITATIONS, AND THE INVITATIONS ARE VERY GRACIOUS—"Go, tell his disciples and Peter." "*Tell his disciples.*" The invitation is most gracious as directed to them, for "they all forsook him, and fled." On that night, that doleful night, when he most needed company, they slept; and when he woke, and was taken off to the hall of Caiaphas, they fled—yes, every one of them; there was not a steadfast spirit among them. They all fled. "Shame on them!" say you? Yes, but Jesus was not ashamed of them; for in one of the first speeches of his glorious life on earth he specially mentions them. "Tell my disciples": not picking and choosing, here and there, a heart more faithful than the rest, but mentioning the whole coward company, he says, "Tell my disciples." Brethren, disciples of Christ, Jesus would meet us now; let us hasten to his presence. Not one among us dares plume himself upon his fidelity; we have all at times played the coward. We may each one of us hide our faces when we think of our Lord's most faithful love to us. We have never acted towards him according to his deserts. If he had banished us: if he had said, "I will no more acknowledge this dastard company," we could not have wondered; but he invites us all, all who are his disciples—invites us to himself. Will you stay away? Will any of you be satisfied without beholding that dear countenance, more marred than that of any man, and yet more lovely than the face of angels? Come ye, all who follow him, for he bids you come. Hear the address of the message—"Tell my disciples."

But the bounty and beauty of his grace lay in this—that one had been worse than the rest, and, therefore, for him there is a special finger to beckon him, a special word to call him: "Tell my disciples AND PETER." He that denied his Lord, he that cursed as he denied, he who, after boisterous self-confidence, trembled at the jest of a maid, is he to be called? Yes, "Tell my disciples *and Peter.*" If any of you have behaved worse to your Master than others, you are peculiarly called to come to him now. You have grieved him, and you have been grieving because you have grieved him. You have been brought to repentance after having slidden away from him, and now he seals your pardon by inviting you to himself. He bids you not to stand

in the background, but to come in with the rest and commune with him.

Peter, where art thou? The crowing of the cock is still in thine ear, and the tear is still in thine eye, yet come and welcome, for thou lovest him. He knows thou dost. Thou art grieved that a doubt should be put upon thy love. Come, he has forgiven thee; he has given thee tokens of it in thy broken heart and tearful eye. Come, Peter! Come thou, if nobody else should come. Jesus Christ invites thee by name before any other. In this place may be believers who have acted strangely, and have even forsaken the Lord, and they are now bemoaning themselves. Go on with your holy sorrow, but come to your Lord. Be not content till you have seen him, till you have laid hold upon him by a fresh grip of faith, and till you can say, "My beloved is mine, and I am his."

Most tender, then, are the invitations which Jesus issues. Part of the tenderness now lies in *the lips which deliver the message* on the Lord's behalf. The women came, and said—Jesus has said to us, by an angel, he will go before us into Galilee, and there shall ye see him. I am always thankful that God has committed the ministry of the Word, not to angels, but to us poor men. As I told you a little while ago, you may grow tired of me and my stammerings; but yet they are more suitable for you than nobler strains might be. I have no doubt that if you had an angel to preach to you, there would be a very great crowd, and for a time you would say, "It is wonderful"; but it would be so cold from lack of human sympathy, that you would soon weary of the lofty style. An angel would try to be kind, as became his heavenly nature, but he would not be *kinned*, and you must necessarily miss the kindness which comes of kinship. I speak to you as bone of your bone, and flesh of your flesh: I speak to you, teacher, for I am a teacher. I speak to you, disciple, for I am a disciple, and I dare not think myself greater than the least of you. Let us come hand in hand to our dear Saviour, and all together let us pray him to manifest himself to us as he doth not unto the world. This, then, is my first point—his invitations are gracious.

II. Secondly, we see in our text that JESUS KEEPS HIS TRYST. "I will go before you into Galilee." If you turn to Mark xiv. 27, 28, you will see that he told them before he died, "All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered. But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee." He will be where he says he will be. Jesus never breaks a promise. It is a great vexation, especially to us who are very busy, when somebody says, "Will you meet me at such and such a place?" "Yes; at what hour?" The hour is appointed. We are there. Thank God, we never were a half minute behind time when it was possible to be punctual; but punctuality is a lesson which very few persons as yet have learned. We wait, and wait wearily, and perhaps we leave the place to let our dilatory friends know that if they are in eternity we are in time, and cannot afford to lose any of it. Many people make an engagement and break it, as if it were just nothing at all to be guilty of a practical lie. It is not so with Jesus: he says, "I will go before you into Galilee"; and into Galilee he will go.

When he promises to meet his people he will meet with them without fail, and without delay.

Let us dwell on this appointment for a minute. Why did our Lord say that he would go to Galilee? Was it because *it was his old haunt*, and being risen from the dead, he desired to go back to the spot where he had been accustomed to be—to the lake, and to the hillside? Surely there is something in that. It was *their* old haunt, too: they were fishermen on that lake, and he would take them back to the place where a thousand memories would be awakened by their voices, like echoes which lie asleep among the hills. Besides it would provide witnesses to his identity, for the Galileans knew him well: since there he had been brought up. He would go where he was known, and show himself in his former places of resort.

Perhaps, too, it was because *the place was despised*. He has risen, and he will go to Galilee. He is not ashamed to be called the Galilean and the Nazarene. The risen One does not go to the halls of princes, but to the villages of peasants and fishermen. There was no pride in Jesus: not even the smell of that fire had passed upon him. He was ever meek and lowly in heart.

Did he not also go to Galilee, because *it was some little distance* from Jerusalem, that those who would meet him might take a little trouble? Our Beloved would be sought after. A journey after him will endear his society. He will not meet you at Jerusalem, perhaps—at least, not the whole company of you; but he will show himself by the sea in distant Galilee.

Do you think he went to Galilee because *it was "Galilee of the Gentiles,"* that he might get as near to us Gentiles as his mission allowed? He was sent as a preacher only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel; but he travelled to the very edge of his diocese to get as near to the Gentiles (I mean to ourselves) as he could. Oh, happy word for us aliens!—"I will go before you into Galilee." So he said; and when he left the tomb, he kept his word.

Now, beloved, we have his word for it, that he will come and meet us where we are met together. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them"; and does he not keep his word? How many times in our assemblies, great and small, have we said, "The Lord was there"! How frequently have we forgotten preacher and fellow-worshippers, feeling ourselves in the presence of a greater than mortal man! Our eyes of faith have seen the King in his beauty, revealing his love to us. Oh, yes! he keeps his tryst. He comes to his people, and he never disappoints them. I think this is particularly true of the table of communion. How often he has met us there! I am compelled to repeat my personal testimony. I have never omitted being at the Lord's table on any Sabbath of my life for many years past, except when I have been ill, or unable to attend; and I am therefore able to answer the question—Does not frequency diminish the solemnity of the ordinance? I have not found it so; but the rather it grows upon me. That broken bread, that poured out wine, the emblems of his flesh and blood—these bring him very near. It seems as if sense lent aid to faith; and through these two windows of agates, and gates of carbuncles, we come very near to our

Lord. What have we here but himself, under instructive emblems? What do we here but remember him? What is our business here but to show his death until he come? And so, though we may not have seen him in converse by the way, for our eyes have been holden, yet we have seen him in the breaking of bread. May it be always so! May we prove that Jesus keeps his pledge. He will be with us even now. Suppose Jesus had said that he would come into this place to-night in literal flesh and blood, you would be all sitting in expectation, and saying to each other, "When will he come?" The preacher would be waiting to drop back, or fall upon his knees in adoration, while his Master stood in the front. You will not see him *so*; but may your faith, which is much better than eyesight, realize him as the present Christ, near to each one of you. If he were here in the flesh, he might stand *here*, and then he might be near to me, but far off from my friends yonder; but coming in spirit he can be equally near to us all, and speak to each one of us personally, as though each one were the only person present.

III. My third observation is, JESUS IS ALWAYS FIRST AT EVERY APPOINTED MEETING. So runs the text: "*He goeth before you into Galilee.*" Remember that promise, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there *am I*"—not "there will I be." Jesus is there before his disciples reach the place. The first to reach the house is he who is first in the house. We come to him: it is not that we meet, and then he comes to us; but he goes before us, and we gather to him.

Does it not teach us that *he is the shepherd*? He said, "Smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered; but after I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee." He would take up the shepherd's place again, and go before the flock, and the sheep would take up the position of the flock again, no longer scattered, but following at the Shepherd's heel. Great Master, come to-night; call thy sheep to thyself! Speak to us, look upon us, and we will arise, and follow thee.

Is he not first, next, because *he is the centre*? We gather to him. You must choose a centre before you can mark the circumference. When Israel travelled through the wilderness, the first place to pitch upon for an encampment was the place where the tabernacle and the ark should rest, and then the tents were set around it. Jesus is our centre; he must therefore be first, and we rejoice to hear him say, "I will go before you into Galilee." He will take the first place, and we will cluster about him as bees around their queen. Do you always gather to the name of Christ, beloved? If you gather to the name of any minister, or any sect, you gather amiss. Our gatherings must be unto the Lord Jesus: he must be the centre, and he alone; let us take care of that.

Next, he goes before us naturally, because *he is the host*. If there is to be a feast, the first person to be there is the one who provides it—the master or mistress who sits at the head of the table. It would never do for the guests to be there first, and then for the master to come hurrying home, crying, "Excuse me: I quite forgot that you were to be here at six o'clock!" Oh no, the host must be first! When Jesus bids us come to him, and says he will sup with us, and

we with him, he will be sure to be first, so as to prepare the feast. He goes before us into Galilee.

But surely, the reason why he is first is this—that *he is more ready for us than we are for him*. It takes us time to get ready for communion, to dress our souls, and collect our thoughts. Are you all ready for the Lord's Supper to-night? Some of you, perhaps, have come carelessly here, and yet you are members of the church, and mean to stay to the Supper. Beloved, try to come with a prepared heart, for the communion will be to you very much what you make it; and if your thoughts and desires are not right, what can the outward emblems be to you? On our Lord's part all things are ready, and he waits to receive you, and to bless you. Therefore he is first at the appointed meeting-place.

I may also add that *he is much more eager to have fellowship with you than you are to have fellowship with him*. It is a strange thing that it should be so, but so it is. He, the great lover of our souls, burns with a passionate desire to press his people to his heart; and we, the objects of such a matchless love, start back, and reward the ardour of his affection with lukewarmness. It must not be so on this occasion. I have said to my Lord, "Let me either feast upon thee or hunger after thee." I pray that you may have such a burning thirst for Jesus at this hour that you *must* drink of his cup or pine with thirst for him.

IV. The fourth observation is this: THE LORD JESUS REVEALS HIMSELF TO HIS PEOPLE. How does the text run? "He goeth before you into Galilee. *There shall ye see him.*" The main object is to *see him*. He will go to Galilee on purpose that he may reveal himself to them. My dear brethren, this is what they needed beyond all else. Their sorrow was because they thought him dead; their joy would be because they saw him alive. Their griefs were multiform, but this one consolation would end them all. If they could but see Jesus, they would look their fears away. What have you come here for to-night, children of God? I trust that you can answer, "Sir, we would see Jesus." If our Master will come, and we shall feel his presence, it will not matter how feebly I speak, or how poor the service may be in itself; you will say, "It was good to be there, for the Lord drew near to us in all the glory of his love." *His presence is what you want.*

And *this is what he readily gives*. Jesus is very familiar with his people. Some worship a Saviour who sits enthroned above in the stately dignity of indifference; but our Lord is not so. Though reigning in heaven, he is still conversant with his people below. He is a brother born for adversity. Spiritually he communes with us. Do you know what the company of Christ is? Are you altogether taken up with doctrines about him, or with ceremonies that concern him? If so, yours is a poor life; but the joy of the inner life is to know, and to speak with, and to dwell with the Lord Jesus. Do you understand this? I charge you, be not satisfied till you come to personal and intimate intercourse with your Lord. Short of this, you are short of the privilege which he sees you need, for this is his great promise, "There shall ye see me."

What is more, this sight of him *is what our Lord effectually bestows*. Jesus not only exhibits himself, but he opens our eyes, that we may enjoy the sight. "There *shall* ye see me." He may be manifest, and yet blind eyes will not see him. Blessed Master, come and take the scales away and make our hearts capable of spiritual perception! It is not everybody that can see God, and yet God is everywhere. The eye must first be cleansed. Jesus says, "There shall ye see me"; and he knows how to open our eyes, so that we do see him. Our Lord can make this to be the absorbing occupation of his people. "He goeth before you into Galilee"—and what then? "There shall ye see him." Why, they went fishing, did they not? Yes, but they were called off from that. "There shall ye see him." They took a great haul of fish, did they not? Yes, yes, yes; but that was a mere incident: the grand fact was, that they *saw him*. I pray the Lord to make the one occupation of our lives the seeing of HIM. May all the lower lights grow dim. Where are the stars at midday? They are all in their places, but you only see the sun. Where are a thousand things when Christ appears? They are all where they should be, but you only see *him*. May the Lord cause all other loves to vanish, and himself alone to fill our hearts, so that it may be true of us, "There shall ye see him"!

I have thus far proceeded, crying to the Holy Ghost for help, and now comes the fifth observation, with which we close.

V. OUR LORD REMEMBERS HIS OWN PROMISES. It was before he died that he said he would go before them into Galilee, and now that he has risen from the dead, he says, by the mouth of his angel, "There shall ye see him, *as he said unto you*." The rule of Christ's action is his own word. What he has said he will perform. You and I forget his promises, but *he* never does. "As he said unto you" is the remembrance of all that he has spoken. Why does our Lord remember and repeat what he has so graciously spoken?

He does so because *he spoke with foresight*, and forethought, and care. We make promises and forget them because we did not consider well the matter before we spoke; but if we have thought, calculated, weighed, estimated, and come to a deliberate resolve before we speak, then we earnestly remember what we resolved upon. No promise of our Lord Jesus has been spoken in haste, to be repented of afterwards. Infinite wisdom directs infinite love; and when infinite love takes the pen to write a promise, infallible wisdom dictates every syllable.

Jesus does not forget, because *he spoke the promise with his whole heart*. It is not every tongue that represents a heart at all; but even though true people, we say many things which we mean, but there is no depth of feeling, no potent emotion, no stirring of the heart's centre. Our Lord, when he said, "Ye shall be scattered; but after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee," spoke with a heavy heart, with many a melting sigh; and his whole soul went with the promise which closed the mournful scene. He has purchased what he promised, purchased it with his blood, and therefore he speaks most solemnly, and with his whole heart. There is no trifling on Christ's part with one to whom he makes a promise, and therefore he never forgets.

And, once more, *his honour is bound up with every promise*. If he

had said that he would go to Galilee, and he had not gone, his disciples would have felt that he had made a mistake, or that he had failed. Brethren, if Christ's promise were to fail, what should we think of it? But he will never jeopardize his faithfulness and veracity.

“As well might he his being quit,
As break his promise or forget,”

Let the words of man be blown away like the chaff; but the words of Jesus must stand, for he will not tarnish his truth, which is one of the choicest of his crown-jewels.

I want you to turn over this thought in your quietude. Jesus remembers all that he has spoken; let not our hearts forget. Go to him with his covenant bonds and gracious promises: he will recognize his own signature. He will honour his own promises to the utmost, and none that trust in him shall complain of his having exaggerated.

I have done when I have said just this. I am very anxious that at this time we should come into real fellowship with Christ, at the table. Jesus, thou hast made us hunger after thee; wilt thou not feed us? Thou hast made us thirst after thee; wilt thou not supply that thirst? Do you think that our Beloved means to tantalize us? Our hunger is such that it would break through stone walls; shall we find his heart hard as a stone wall? No; he will clear the way, and we on our part will burst through all obstacles to come to him. “But,” says one, “how can I come to him, poor, unknown, unworthy one that I am?” Such were the disciples at the lake. They were fishermen; and when he came to them, they had been toiling all night. Are you working for him? Then he will come to you. Expect him now. “Ah!” says one, “I have been working without success”—you are a poor minister whose congregation is falling off, whose church is not increased by conversions—you have toiled all the night, and taken nothing. Or you are a Sunday-school teacher, who cannot see her girls converted; or a brother who mourns that his boys are not coming to Christ. Well, I see who you are; you are just the sort of people that Jesus came to, for they had toiled all night in vain. Are you hungry? Jesus cries, “Children, have you any meat?” He comes to you and enquires about your hunger; while on the shore he has a fire of coals, and fish laid thereon, and bread. “Come and dine,” says he. The table is spread. Come to himself! He is your food, your hope, your joy, your heaven. Come to him; give him no rest till he reveals himself to you, and you know of a surety that it is your Lord who embraces you. So may he do, to each of us just now, for his sweet love's sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Mark xvi. 1—14.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—385, 784, 785.