

A Song Among the Lilies

A Sermon

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'My beloved is mine, and I am his: he feedeth among the lilies.'"Song of Solomon 2:16.

LAST SABBATH, in our morning's sermon, we began at the beginning and described the turning point in which the sinner sets his face towards his God, and for the first time gives practical evidence of spiritual life in his soul. He bestirs himself, he goes to his Father's house, and speedily is pressed to his Father's bosom, forgiven, accepted, and rejoiced over. This morning we are going far beyond that stage, to a position which I may call the very crown and summit of the spiritual life. We would conduct you from the door-step to the innermost chamber, from the outer court to the Holy of Holies, and we pray the Holy Spirit to enable each one of us who have entered in by Christ Jesus, the door, to pass boldly into the secret place of the tabernacles of the Host High, and sing with joyful heart the words of our text, 'My beloved is mine, and I am his.'

'For he is mine and I am his,

The God whom I adore;

My Father, Savior, Comforter,

Now and for evermore.'

The passage describes a high state of grace, and it is worthy of note that the description is full of Christ. This is instructive, for this is not an exceptional case, it is only one fulfillment of a general rule. Our estimate of Christ is the best gauge of our spiritual condition; as the thermometer rises in proportion to the increased warmth of the air, so does our estimate of Jesus rise as our spiritual life increases in vigor and fervency. Tell me what you think of Jesus and I will tell you what to think of yourself. Christ us, yea, more than all when we are thoroughly sanctified and filled with the Holy Ghost. When pride of self fills up the soul, there is little room for Jesus; but when Jesus is fully loved, self is subdued, and sin driven out of the throne. If we think little of the Lord Jesus we have very great cause to account ourselves spiritually blind, and naked, and poor, and miserable. The rebel despises his lawful sovereign, but the favored courtier is enthusiastic in his praise. Christ crucified is the revealer of many hearts, the touchstone by which the pure gold and the counterfeit metal are discerned; his very name is as a refiner's fire and like fuller's soap; false professors cannot endure it, but true believers triumph therein. We are growing in grace when we grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Let everything else be gone, and let Christ fill up

the entire space of our soul, then, and only then, are we rising out of the vanity of the flesh into the real life of God.

Beloved, the grandest facts in all the world to a truly spiritual man are not the rise and fall of empires, the marches of victory, or the desolations of defeat; he cares neither for crowns nor mitres, swords nor shields; his admiring gaze is wholly fixed upon Christ and his cross and cause. To him Jesus is the center of history, the soul and core of providence. He desires no knowledge so much as that which concerns his Redeemer and Lord; his science deals with what Jesus is and what he is to be, what he has done, what he is doing, and what he will do. The believer is mainly anxious as to how Jesus can be glorified, and how sinners can be brought to know him. That which concerns the honor of Jesus is our chief concern from day to day; as for other matters let the Lord do as he wills with them, only let Jesus Christ be magnified, and all the rest of the world's story has small significance for us. The Beloved is the head and front, the heart and soul of the Christian's delight when his heart is in its best state. Our text is the portrait of a heavenly-minded child of God, or rather, it is the music of his well stringed harp when love as minstrel touches the tenderest chords: 'My beloved is mine, and I am his; he feedeth among the lilies.'

We shall note then, first, that here is *a delighting to have Christ*; secondly, *a delighting to belong to Christ*; and thirdly, *a delighting at the very thought of Christ*.

I. First, here is A DELIGHTED TO HAVE CHRIST. 'My beloved is mine.' The spouse makes this the first of her joy notes, the cornerstone of her peace, the fountain of her bliss, the crown of her glory. Observe here that where such an expression is truthfully used the existence of *the Beloved is matter of fact*. Scepticism, and questioning have no place with those who thus sing. There are dreamers now-adays who cast doubt on everything; taking to themselves the name of philosophers, and professing to know something of science, they make statements worthy only of idiots, and demand for their self-evidently false assertions the assent of rational men. The word 'philosopher' will soon come to mean a lover of ignorance, and the term 'a scientific man' will be understood as meaning a fool, who has said in his heart there is no God. Such attacks upon the eternal verities of our holy faith can have no effect upon hearts enamoured of the Son of God, for, dwelling in his immediate presence, they have passed the stage of doubt, left the region of questioning far behind, and in this matter have entered into rest. The power of love has convinced us; to entertain a doubt as to the reality and glory of our Well-beloved would be torment to us, and therefore love has cast it out. We use no perhapses, buts, or ifs concerning our Beloved, but we say positively that he is, and that he is ours. We believe that we have better evidence of his being, power, Godhead, and love to us than can be given for any other fact. So far from being abashed by the cavils of sceptics, or quailing beneath the question, 'Is there such a Beloved?' we are not careful to answer in this matter, for we know that there is; our love laughs at the question, and does not condescend to answer it save by bidding those who seriously inquire to 'come

and see' for themselves. We have ever found, beloved, that when a time of chilling doubt has come over us' and such ague fits will come' we have only to return to meditations upon Jesus and he becomes his own evidence by making our hearts burn within us with love of his character and person, and then doubt is doomed. We do not slay our unbelief by reason, but we annihilate it by affection. The influence of love to Jesus upon the soul is so magical' I wish I had a better word' so elevating, so ravishing, so transporting, it gives such a peace, and withal inspires such holy and lofty aspirations, that the effect proves the cause. That which is holy is true, and that which is true cannot rise out of that which is false. We may safely judge a tree by its fruit, and a doctrine by its result: that which produces in us self-denial, purity, righteousness, and truth, cannot itself be false, and yet the love of Jesus does this beyond everything else. There must be truth for a cause where truth is the effect; and thus love, by the savor which it spreads over the soul by contemplation of Christ, puts its foot upon the neck of doubt and triumphantly utters bold, confident declarations, which reveal the full assurance of faith. New-born love to Jesus, while yet in its cradle, like a young Hercules, takes the serpents of doubt and strangles them. He who can say from his heart 'My Beloved,' is the man who is in the way to confirmed faith. Love cannot, will not doubt; it casts away the crutches of argument and flies on the wings of conscious enjoyment, singing her nuptial hymn, 'My Beloved is mine, and I *am* his.'

In the case before us *the love of the heavenly-minded one is perceived and acknowledged by herself*. 'My beloved,' saith she; it is no latent affection, she knows that she loves him, and solemnly avows it. She does not whisper, 'I hope I love the peerless one,' but she sings, 'My beloved.' There is no doubt in her soul about her passion for the altogether lovely one. Ah, dear friends, when you feel the flame of love within your soul, and give it practical expression, you will no longer inquire, 'Do I love the Lord or no?' 'Then your inner consciousness will dispense with evidences. Those are dark days when we require evidences; well may we then fast, for the Bridegroom is not with us; but when he abides with us, enjoyment of his fellowship supersedes all evidences. I want no evidence to prove that food is sweet when it is still in my month; I want no evidence of the existence of the sun when I am basking in his beams, and enjoying his light, and even so we need no evidence that Jesus is precious to us when, like a bundle of myrrh, he perfumes our bosom. We are anxious doubters as to our safety, and questioners of our own condition, because we are not living with Jesus as we ought to be; but when he brings us to his banqueting house, and we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with him and with the Father, and then we believe and are sure, and our love to Jesus is indisputable, because it burns within too fervently to be denied. Why, when a Christian is in a right state, his love to Jesus is the mightiest force in his nature, it is an affection which, like Aaron's rod, swallows up all other rods; it is the mainspring of his action, and sways his whole body, soul, and spirit. As the wind sweeps over all the strings of the Alolian harp, and causes them all to vibrate, so does the love of Jesus move every

power and passion of our soul, and we feel in our entire being that our Beloved is indeed ours, and that we love him with all our hearts. Here, then, is the Beloved realized, and our love realised too.

But the pith of the text lies here, *our possession of him is proven*, we know it, and we know it on good evidence”My beloved *is mine*.’ You know it is not a very easy thing to reach this point. Have you ever thought of the fact that to claim the Lord and call him ‘my God,’ is a very wonderful thing? Who was the first man in the Old Testament who is recorded as saying ‘My God’? Was it not Jacob, when he slept at Bethel, and saw the ladder which reached to heaven? Even after that heavenly vision it took him touch effort to reach to ‘My God.’ He said ‘If God will be with me and will keep me in the way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and raiment to put On, so that I come again to my father’s house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God.’ Only after long experience of divine goodness could he climb up to the height of saying ‘My God.’ And who is the first man in the New Testament that calls Jesus ‘My Lord and My God’? It was Thomas, and he must needs have abundant proofs before he can speak thus: ‘Except I see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.’ Only when he had received such proofs could he exclaim ‘My Lord and my God.’ Blessed are they who reach it by simpler faith, who have not seen and yet have believed. ‘My Beloved’ is a strong expression. ‘Beloved’ is sweet, but ‘MY Beloved’ is sweetest of all. If you think of it, it is no little thing to claim God as ours, to claim Jesus the Beloved as ours, yea, to put it in the singular, and call him *mine*; and yet, when the believer’s heart is in the right condition, he makes the claim, and is warranted in so doing; for Jesus Christ is the portion of all believers. His Father gave him to us, and he has given himself to us. Jesus was made over to every believing soul, as his personal possession, in the eternal covenant ordered in all things and sure; Jesus actually gave himself for us in his incarnation, becoming bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh; he has made himself ours by his passion and death, loving us and giving himself for us, to save us from our sins; he has also given us power to appropriate him by the gracious gift of faith, by which we are in very deed married to him, and are enabled to call him the husband of our souls, who is ours to have and to hold, for better for worse, for life and for death, by a bond of marriage union which neither death nor hell, time nor eternity, can break. Jesus is ours by the promise, the covenant, and oath of God; a thousand assurances and pledges, bonds and seals, secure him to us as our portion and everlasting heritage.

This precious possession becomes to the believer his sole treasure. ‘My beloved is mine,’ saith he, and in that sentence he has summed up all his wealth. He does not say ‘My wife, my children, my home, my earthly comforts are mine.’ He is almost afraid to say so, because while he is yet speaking, they may cease to be his: the beloved wife may sicken before his eyes, the child may need a tiny coffin, the friend may prove a traitor, and the riches may

take to themselves wings, therefore the wise man does not care to say too positively that anything here below is his; indexed, he feels that in very truth they are not his, but only lent to him 'to be returned anon'; but the Beloved is his own, and his possession of him is most firm. Neither doth the believer when his soul is in the best state so much rejoice even in his spiritual privileges as in the Lord from whom they come. He has righteousness, wisdom, sanctification and redemption; he has both grace and glory secured to him, but he prefers rather to claim the fountain than the streams. He clearly sees that these choice mercies are only his because they are Christ's, and only his because Christ is his. Oh, what would all the treasures of the covenant be to us if it were possible to have them without Christ? Their very sap and sweetness would be gone. Having our Beloved to be ours, we have all things in him, and therefore our main treasure, yea, our sole treasure, is our Beloved. O ye saints of God, was there ever possession like this? You have your beloveds, ye daughters of earth, but what are your beloveds compared with ours? He is the Son of God and the Son of Man! The darling of heaven and the delight of earth! The lily of the valley and the rose of Sharon! Perfect in his character, powerful in his atoning death, mighty in his living plea! He is such a lover that all earthly loves put together are not worthy to touch the hem of his garment, or loose the latchet of his shoes. He is so dear, so precious, that words cannot describe him nor pencil depict him, but this we will say of him, he is 'the chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely,' and he is ours. Do you wonder that we glory in this fact, and count this the crowning delight of our lives, 'My beloved is mine'?

The very tenure upon which we hold this priceless possession is a matter to glory in. O worldlings, you cannot hold your treasures as we hold ours. If you knew all, you would never say of anything, 'It is mine,' for your holding is too precarious to constitute possession. It is yours till that frail thread of life shall snap, or that bubble of time shall burst. You have only a leasehold of your treasures, terminable at the end of one frail life; whereas ours is an eternal freehold, an everlasting entail. 'My beloved is mine,' I cannot lose him, nor can he be taken from me; he is mine for ever, for 'who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord? 'So that, while the possession is rare, the tenure is rare also, and it the life of our life, and the light of our delight that we can sing'

'Yea, thou art mine, my blessed Lord,
O my Beloved, thou art mine!
And, purchased with thy precious blood,
My God and Savior, I am thine.
'MY CHRIST! Oh, sing it in the heavens,
Let every angel lift his voice;
Sound with ten thousand harps his praise,
With me, ye heavenly hosts, rejoice.
'The gift unspeakable is given,

The grace of God has made him mine;
And, now, before both earth and heaven,
Lord, I will own that I am thine.'

Now, beloved friends, I cannot talk about this as I feel, I can only give you hints of that which fills me to the full with joy. I beg you to contemplate for a single moment the delight which is stored up in this fact, that the blessed Son of God, the 'brightness of the Father's glory,' is all our own. Whatever else we may have, or may not have, he is ours. I may not exhibit in my character all the grace I could wish, but 'My beloved is mine'; I may have only one talent, but 'My beloved is mine'; I may be very poor and very obscure, but 'My beloved is mine'; I may have neither health nor wealth, but 'My beloved is mine'; I may not be what I want to be, but 'My beloved is mine.' Yea, he is altogether mine, his Godhead and his manhood, his life, his death, his attributes, and prerogatives, yea, all he is, all he was, all he ever will be, all he has done, and all he ever will do, is mine. I possess not a portion in Christ, but the whole of him. All his saints own him, but I own him as much as if there were never another saint to claim him. Child of God, do you see this? In other inheritances, if there are many heirs, there is so much the less for each, but in this great possession every one who has Christ has a whole Christ all to himself, from the head of much fine gold, down to his legs, which are as pillars of marble. The whole of his boundless heart of love, his whole arm of infinite might, and his whole head of matchless wisdom,' all is for thee, beloved. Whoever thou mayst be, if thou dost indeed trust in Jesus, he is all thine own.

My beloved is all mine, and absolutely mine; not mine to look at and talk about merely, but mine to trust in, to speak to, to depend upon, to fly to in every troublous hour, yea, mine to feed upon, for his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed. Our beloved is not ours only to use in certain ways, but ours outright, without restriction. I may draw what I will from him, and both what I take and what I leave are mine. He himself in his ever glorious person is mine, and mine always; mine when I know it, and mine when I do not know it, mine when I am sure of it, and mine when I doubt it; mine by day, and mine by night; mine when I walk in holiness, ay, and mine when I sin, for 'if any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.' He is mine on the hill Mizar, and mine in the swellings of Jordan; mine by the grave where I bury those I love, mine when I shall be buried there myself, mine when I rise again; mine in judgment, and mine in glory; for ever mine.

Note well that it is written, 'My beloved is *mine*,' in the singular. He is yours, I am glad of it; but still to me it is most sweet that he is mine. It is well to bless God that others have a possession in Christ, but what would that avail if we were strangers to him ourselves? The marrow and the fatness lie in the personal pronoun singular, 'My beloved is *mine*. 'I am so glad that Jesus loves *me*.' Oh for a blessed grip with both hands on such a Christ as this! Observe well that he is ours *as our Beloved*, so that he is ours as whatever our love makes of him. Our love can never praise him enough, or speak well enough of him, she thinks all

descriptions fall short of his deservings; well, then, Jesus is ours at his best; if we think him so glorious, he is ours in all that glory. Our love says that he is a fair, lovely, sweet, and precious Christ, and let us be sure that, however lovely, sweet, and precious he is, he is all ours. Our love says there is none like him, he is King of kings and Lord of lords, he is the ever blessed; well, as the King of kings and Lord of lords he is yours. You cannot think too much of him, but when you think your best he is yours at that best. He has not a glory so high that it is not yours, nor a lustre so brilliant that it is not yours. He is my beloved, and I would fain extol him, but never can I get beyond this golden circle, when I most extol him he is still mine.

Here, then, is the basis of Christian life, the foundation on which it rests: to know that most surely Christ is altogether ours is the beginning of wisdom, the source of strength, the star of hope, the dawn of heaven.

II. The second portion of the text deals with DELIGHTING TO BELONG TO CHRIST. *'I am his.'* This is as sweet as the former sentence. I would venture to put a question to each loving wife here present when you were married which was the sweetest thought to you, that you were your husband's, or that he was yours? Why, you feel that neither sentence would be sweet alone: they are necessary to each other. Ask any fond, loving heart which of these declarations could best be parted with, and they will tell you that neither can be given up. Christ is mine, but if I were not his it would be a sorry case, and if I were his and he were not mine it would be a wretched business. These two things are joined together with diamond rivets. *'My beloved is mine, and I am his.'* Put the two together, and you have reached the summit of delight.

That we are his is a fact that may be proved yea, it should need no proving, but be manifest to all that *'I am his.'* Certainly we are his by creation: he who made us should have us. We are his because his Father gave us to him, and we are his because he chose us. Creation, donation, election are his triple hold upon us. We are his because he bought us with his blood, his because he called us by his grace, his because he is married to us, and we are his spouse. We are his, moreover, to our own consciousness, because we have heartily, from the inmost depths of our being, given ourselves up to him, bound by love to him for ever. We feel we must have Christ, and be Christ's, or die. *'For me to live is Christ.'* Brethren and sisters, mind you attend to this clause, I am sure you will if the former one is true to you. If you can say, *'My beloved is mine,'* you will be sure to add, *'I am his, I must be his, I will be his: I live not unless I am his, for I count that wherein I am not his I am dead, and I only live wherein I live to him.'* My very soul is conscious that I am his.

Now *this puts very great honor upon us.* I have known the time when I could say *'My beloved is mine'* in a very humble trembling manner, but I did not dare to add *'I am his'* because I did not think I was worth his having. I dared not hope that *'I am his'* would ever be written in the same book side by side with *'My beloved is mine.'* Poor sinner, first lay

hold on Jesus, and then you will discover that Jesus values you. You will prize him first, and then you will find out that he prizes you, and that though you do not feel worthy to be flung on a dunghill, yet Jesus has put a value upon you, saying 'Since thou wert precious in my sight thou hast been honorable, and I have loved thee.' It is no small joy to know that we poor sinners are worth Christ's having, and that he has even said, 'They shall be mine in the day when I make up my jewels.'

This second part of the text is true as *absolutely* as the first. 'I am his' not my goods only, nor my time, nor my talents, nor what I can spare, but 'I am his.' I fear that some Christians have never understood this. They give the Lord a little of their surplus, which they never miss. The poor widow who gave all her living, had the true idea of her relation to her Lord. She would have put herself into the treasury if she could, for she felt 'I am his.' As for myself, I wish I could be dropped bodily through the little slit of Christ's treasure box, and be in his casket for ever, never to be heard of any more as my own, but to be wholly my Lord's. Paul desired to spend and be spent. It is not easy to do those two things distinctly with money, for when you spend a thing it is spent at one and the same time, but the apostle meant that he would spend himself by activity, and then when he could do no more, he would be glad to be spent by passive endurance for Christ's sake. The believer feels that he belongs to Jesus absolutely; let the Lord employ him as he may, or try him as he pleases; let him take away all earthly friends from him or surround him with comforts; let him either depress him or exalt him, let him use him for little things or great things, or not use him at all, but lay him on the shelf; it is enough that the Lord does it, and the true heart is content, for it truthfully confesses, 'I am his. I have no mortgage or lien upon myself, so that I can call a part of my being my own, but I am absolutely and unreservedly my Lord's sole property.' Do you feel this, brethren and sisters? I pray God you may.

Blessed be God, this is true *evermore* "I am his," his to-day, in the house of worship, and his to-morrow in the house of business; his as a singer in the sanctuary, and his as a toiler in the workshop; his when I am preaching, and equally his when I am walking the streets; his while I live, his when I die; his when my soul ascends and my body lies mouldering in the grave; the whole personality of my manhood is altogether his for ever and for ever.

This belonging to the Well-beloved is a matter of fact and practice, not a thing to be talked about only, but really to be acted on. I am treading on tender ground now, but I would to God that every Christian could really say this without lying: 'I do live unto Christ in all things, for I am his. When I rise in the morning I wake up as his, when I sit down to a meal I eat as his, and drink as his. I eat, and drink, and sleep unto the Lord, in everything giving thanks unto him. It is blessed even to sleep as the Lord's beloved, to dream as his Abrahams and Jacobs do, to awake at night and sing like David, and then drop off to 'sleep in Jesus.' 'It is a high condition,' say you. I grant it, but it is where we ought to abide. The whole of our time and energy should be consecrated by this great master principle, 'I am his.' Can

you say it? Never rest till you can. And if you can, beloved, it involves great privilege. 'I am his,' then am I honored by having such an owner. If a horse or a sheep is said to belong to the Queen, everybody thinks much of it: now you are not the Queen's, but you are the Lord's, and that is far more. Through belonging to Christ you are safe, for he will surely keep his own. He will not lose his own sheep, he paid too dear a price for them to lose them. Against all the powers of earth and hell the Redeemer will hold his own and keep them to the end. If you are his he will provide for you. A good husband careth for his spouse, and even thus the Lord Jesus Christ cares for those who are betrothed unto him. You will be perfected too, for whatever Christ has he will make worthy of himself and bring it to glory. It is because we are his that we shall get to heaven, for he has said, 'Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am.' Because they are his he would have them with him.

Now, give your thoughts licence to wonder that any one of us should be able to say, 'I am his.' 'I who used to be so giddy and thought' less, So sceptical, and perhaps profane, I am his.' Ay, and some of you can say, 'I who used to be passionate and proud, I who was a drunkard, I whose lips were black with blasphemy, I am his.' Glory be unto thee, O Jesus Christ, for this, that thou hast taken up such worthless things as we are and made us thine. No longer do we belong to this present evil world, we live for the world to come. We do not even belong to the church, so as to make it our master; we are part of the flock, but like all the rest we belong to the Great Shepherd. We will not give ourselves up to any party, or become the slave of any denomination, for we belong to Christ. We do not belong to sin, or self, or Satan; we belong entirely, exclusively, and irrevocably to the Lord Jesus Christ. Another master waits upon us and asks us to give our energies to his services, but our answer is, 'I am already engaged.' 'How is that?' 'I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus, and therefore from henceforth trouble me no more.' 'But can you not serve me in part?' 'No, sir, I cannot serve two masters; I am not like a man who can do as he pleases, I have no time to call my own.' 'How is that?' 'I belong to Christ, I am wholly his. If there is anything to be done for him I am his man to the best of my ability; I decline no service to which he calls me, but I can serve no other Lord.' Lord Jesus, help each one of us now to say'

'I am thine, and thine alone,
This I gladly, fully own;
And in all my works and ways,
Only now would seek thy praise.'

III. To conclude: the saint feels DELIGHT IN THE VERY THOUGHT OF CHRIST. '*He feedeth among the lilies.*' When we love any persons, and we are away from home, we delight to think of them, and to remember what they are doing. You are a husband travelling in a foreign land; this morning you said to yourself, 'At this time they are just getting up at home.' Perhaps the time is different, for you are in another longitude, and you say to yourself,

‘Ah, now the dear children are just getting ready to go to the Sabbath-school;’ and by-and-by you think they are at dinner. So delight in the thought of Christ made the church say, ‘He feedeth among the lilies.’ She was pleased to think of where he was and what he was doing.

Now, *where is Jesus?* What are these lilies? Do not these lilies represent the pure in heart, with whom Jesus dwells? The spouse used the imagery which her Lord had put into her mouth. He said ‘As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters,’ and she appropriates the symbol to all the saints. A preacher who is great at spiritualizing has well said on this verse, ‘The straight stalk, standing up erect from the earth, its flowers as high from the ground as possible, do they not tell us of heavenly-mindedness? Do they not seem to say, ‘set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth’? And if the spotless snow of the leaves teaches us of grace, then the gold of the anthers tells us of that crown which shall be the reward of grace.’ The violet and the primrose in spring nestle close to the earth, as if in sympathy with her chill condition, but the lily lifts up itself towards heaven in sympathy with the summer’s light and splendor. The lily is frail, and such are the saints of God; were not Jesus among them to protect them the wild beast would soon tread them down. Frail as they are, they are surpassingly lovely, and their beauty is not that which is made with hands. It is a beauty put upon them by the Lord, for ‘they toil not, neither do they spin, yet Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.’ The saints work not for life, and spin no righteousness of their own, and yet the royal righteousness which adorns them far surpasses all that wisdom could devise or wealth procure.

Where, then, is my Lord to-day? He is up and away, among the lilies of Paradise. In imagination I see those stately rows of milkwhite lilies growing no longer among thorns: lilies which are never soiled with the dust of earth, which for ever glisten with the eternal dews of fellowship, while their roots drink in unfading life from the river of the water of life which waters the garden of the Lord. There is Jesus! Can you see him? He is fairer even than the lilies which bow their heads around him. But he is here too where we are, like lilies which have scarce opened yet, lily buds as yet, but still watered by the same river, and yielding in our measure the same perfume. O ye lilies of Christ’s own planting, he is among you; Jesus is in this house to-day, the unction which has made his garments so fragrant is discerned among us.

But *what is he doing* among the lilies? It is said, ‘He feedeth among the lilies.’ He is feeding himself, not *on* the lilies, but *among* them. Our Lord finds solace among his people. His delights are with the sons of men; he joys to see the graces of his people, to receive their love, and to discern his own image in their faces. As he said to the woman of Samaria, ‘Give me to drink,’ so does he say to each one of his people, ‘Give me to drink,’ and he is refreshed by their loving fellowship. But the text means that he is feeding his people. He feedeth that part of his flock redeemed by blood of which we read that ‘the Lamb which is in the midst

of the throne shall feed them and shall lead them into living fountains of waters.’ Nor does he forget that part of his flock which is in the low lands of earth, but he gives them also their portion of food. He has fed us this morning, for he is the good Shepherd, and leaves none of his sheep to famish.

Then *what shall I do?* Well, I will abide among the lilies. His saints shall be my companions. Where they flourish I will try to grow. I will be often in their assemblies. Ay, and I will be a lily too. By faith I will neither toil nor spin in a legal fashion, but I will live by faith upon the Son of God, rooted in him. I would be pure in life, and I would have the golden anther of looking to the recompense of the reward. I would lift up my soul aloft’ towards heaven as the lily lifts up its flower. Jesus will come and feed by my side if I am a lily, and even I may yield him some pleasure by my humble gratitude.

Beloved, this is a choice subject, but it is more sweet as a matter of fact than mere hearing can make it. ‘He feedeth among the lilies.’ This is our joy, that Christ is in his church, and the pith of all I want to say is this; never think of yourself or of the church apart from Jesus. The spouse says, ‘My beloved is mine, and I am his’, she weaves the two into one. The cause of the church is the cause of Christ; the work of God will never be accomplished by the church apart from Christ, her power lies in his being in her midst. He feedeth among the lilies, and therefore those lilies shall never be destroyed, but their sweetness shall make fragrant all the earth. The church of Christ, working with her Lord, must conquer, but never if she tries to stand alone or to compass any end apart from him.

As for each one of us personally, let us not think of ourselves apart from Christ, nor of Christ apart from us. Let George Herbert’s prayer be ours.

‘Oh, be mine still, still make me thine,
Or rather make nor mine nor thine.’

Let *mine* melt into *thine*. Oh, to have joint stock with Christ, and to trade under one name; to be married to Christ and lose our old name, and wist his name, and say, ‘I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.’ As the wife is lost in the husband, and the stone in the building, and the branch in the vine, and the member in the head, we would be so amalgamated with Christ, and have such fellowship with him that there shall be no more mine nor thine.

Last of all, poor sinner, you will say, ‘There is nothing in all this for me,’ and I should not like to send you away without a word. You are saying ‘This is a day of good tidings, but it is only for God’s own people.’ I beg you to read through the first and second chapters of the Song, and see who it was that said, ‘My beloved is mine,’ because I should not wonder but what you are very like her. She was one who confessed, ‘I am black’, and so are you. Perhaps grace will, one of these days, help you to say, ‘I am comely.’ She was one with whom her mother’s children were angry’ perhaps you, too, are a speckled bird. She had done servile work, for they made her a keeper of the vineyards. I should not wonder but what you are

doing servile work, too, trying to save yourself instead of accepting the salvation which Jesus has already wrought out for sinners. So it came to pass that she became very sorrowful and passed through a winter of rain and cold. Perhaps you are there; and yet you know she came out of it her winter was past, and the birds began to sing. She had been hidden in the secret places of the stairs, as you are now; but she was called out from the dust and cobwebs to see the face of her Lord.

One thing I wish to whisper in your ears'she was in the clefts of the rock. O soul, if thou canst but get there, if thou canst shelter in the riven side of our Beloved, that deep gash of the spear from which flowed blood and water, 'to be of sin the double cure'; if thou canst get there, I say, though thou be black and grimed with sin, and an accursed sinner, only fit to be a firebrand in hell, yet shalt thou, even thou, be able to sing with all the rapture of the liveliest saint on earth, and one day with all the transport of the brightest ones above, 'My beloved is mine, and I am his: he feedeth among the lilies.' There, go your way with those silver bells ringing in your ears; they ring a marriage peal to saints, but they ring also a cheery invitation to sinners, and this is the tune they are set to'Come and welcome! Come and welcome! Come and welcome! Sinner, come! God bless you, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON'Song of Solomon 2.

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'The Turning Point.'