

The Sojourn in Mesech

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A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 25, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK, ON A LORD'S-DAY EVENING,
DURING THE SPRING OF 1860.

"Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!" [Psalm 120:5](#).

MESECH was the son of Japheth, from whom, according to history, were descended the men who inhabited that most barbarous of all regions, according to the opinion of the ancients, the northern parts of Muscovy or Moscow and Russia. The inhabitants of the tents of Kedar were the descendants of one of the sons of Abraham who had taken to nomadic habits and were continually wandering about over the deserts. They were thought to have and doubtless were, guilty of plundering travelers and were by no means the most respectable of mankind. We are to understand, then, by this verse, that the people among whom the Psalmist dwelt were, in his esteem, among the most barbarous, the most fierce and the most graceless of men. And, therefore, it is that he cries, "Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!" He felt a woe in his heart because of that evil companionship in which he was compelled to abide.

This has been the cry of the children of God in all ages. Lot had his ears vexed with the filthy conversation of the men of Sodom. Many of the woes of Micah sprang from those men who were sharper than a thorn hedge—every one of them ready to tear and scratch his neighbor. David's deepest griefs came from the men who surrounded him—on the one hand, the unfriendly sons of Zeruiah, who were too strong for him and, on the other hand, Shimei and the sons of Belial, who made a reproach of every word he uttered and every deed he did. Even Isaiah, himself, that happy-spirited Prophet, one day cried, "Woe is me, for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips!" And then he added another cause of his woe, "and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." And I expect I may truly say that, to this day, you, my Brothers and Sisters, who are followers of Jesus, have often had to cry out, "Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!" And you have longed to be far away from this dusky world, so full of sin, traps, pitfalls and everything that makes us stumble in our path—and of nothing that can help us onward towards Heaven.

I propose, on this occasion, first, to say a word or two in justification of the Psalmist's complaint Secondly, to justify God's dealings with us in having subjected us to this dwelling in the tents of Mesech. And thirdly, a few words, by way of comfort, to those who are sad at heart by reason of those ill times and those ill places in which they abide.

I. First, then, Brothers and Sisters, A WORD OR TWO IN JUSTIFICATION OF THE PSALMIST'S COMPLAINT. I will not say that it is thoroughly commendable, in a Christian,

to long to be away from the place where God's Providence has put him. But I will say, and must say, that it is not only excusable, but scarcely needs an apology, for that Christian to sometimes cry out, "My soul is weary. I am almost weary of my life because of the wicked men that surround me on every hand."

Think, my Brothers and Sisters, of what Christians have to suffer from the wicked world, and you will not wonder, you will not feel, I am sure, that they should excuse themselves when they cry, "Woe is me," for think how the wicked world slanders the Christian. There is no falsehood too base for men to utter against the followers of Jesus! There was a shameful slander that was circulated among the heathen, that the early Christians, when they came together, met for the most obscene and even cruel rites—whereas those holy men and women only gathered together to eat bread and drink wine in remembrance of Him whom they loved. And, to this day, the chosen weapon of Satan with which the Evil One does great mischief, and on which he relies as his masterpiece of hellish ammunition against the Church, is slander! And

this often wounds the Christian and cuts him to the quick when he finds his good name suddenly blasted and when filth is thrown upon his snow-white garments. It is but little marvel when he has sought studiously to avoid the very appearance of evil—when he has picked his steps, knowing the world is a miry place—when he has sought in everything to avoid giving offense to any man, and yet he sees himself abused on every hand! It is but little marvel, I say, that he should cry, "Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech!"

But if slander were all, though this might suffice to justify the complaint, yet would there be something lacking. For, alas, the Christian, dwelling as he does among wicked men, finds his good things are continually marred, so that he has to cry, "When I would do good, evil is present with me—not only here in my own heart, but in my own house and round about my neighborhood!" I know that some of you live in crowded places where you can scarcely pray without being overheard and laughed at and, if you have a meeting for prayer and friends join you in singing the songs of Zion, a crowd soon gathers round your little window and the mockers make all manner of discordant sounds. If you would learn a lascivious song, you have but to throw up your window and listen to what is being sung in the street—but if you would have thoughts of Heaven and sing of God, how hard it is when you have those about you who will cast these things in your teeth, suggest all manner of ribaldry and turn your best words into a reproach against you!

The Christian is like an chained eagle. How often does he fret over that chain and bite it! He sees the stars up yonder and he knows that he is brother to the lightning and he wants to be aloft there in his own native element—how he frets and fumes at his captivity! His mighty spirit struggles within his body and he longs to stretch his wings and fly straight to yonder lofty heights! And when he sees those about him feeding upon the husks that swine eat, or when they hurl their carrion at him, how often does he long to be free—to break

down the bars of his cage and get away to his own companionship—to some associates that are fit for him, some spirits that are congenial with his spirit! How he pants to be with his own group—the cherubim and seraphim, the holy ones that day without night keep ceaseless watch and sing in unending harmony around the Throne of Jehovah who lives and abides forever! Were he a worldling, he would be satisfied with the world, but since he is of nobler blood, these things here below all tend to check the aspirations and the longings of his Heaven-born spirit. It is, indeed, no strange thing that he should cry, "Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!"

But, besides this, the Christian is conscious that evil companionship is damaging to him. If he is not burnt, he is at least blackened by contact with the ungodly. This world is to him a place where if he does not accumulate actual filth, it is hard to travel an hour along its roads without being covered with its dust. Though, by the Grace of God, he is kept upright, yet he feels, when he goes upon his knees again, he has suffered from contact with poor, fallen humanity. He goes up into his chamber for communion with Christ and his spirit seems to drink the dew of Heaven fresh from the Throne of God! But he has to go down into the world and the hot sun of business shines upon him—and then comes the dust of this world to mar him and he goes back to his chamber and feels like Samson when his hair was shorn away. He begins to cry, "My soul lies cleaving to the dust!" Sometimes he longs to get away from his fellows. He would, if he could, keep himself abstracted and alone that he might cultivate continual friendship with Christ and abide near to the bleeding side of Jesus. That is a foolish wish, as I shall have to show, by-and-by, but yet it is no wonder that he cries aloud, when he finds his spirit so confined and his best things so deteriorated, "Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of

Kedar!"

There are many other reasons, doubtless, why the Christian longs to be gone from the company of the ungodly and why he would be far away from them if he could. I shall be content, however, with mentioning one other, namely, the continual process of temptation which surrounds the Christian who is situated in the midst of men of unclean lips. Men lay traps for us and, sometimes, they lay them right warily and craftily—and unless our God has given us the wisdom of the serpent, as well as the harmlessness of the dove, we shall find our heels tripped up before we are aware. Often, in my own case, I am asked questions, apparently by enquirers who are anxious to know something about the Truth of God, only with the desire to entrap me in my words and make some capital out of my answer. And, doubtless, it is so with each one of you. You are questioned merely that your answer may become the theme of ridicule. Some temptation is put in your way—a supposed friend advises you to do this or to do that. Perhaps you do it—and he is the first man to accuse you of having done wrong. Before, he said, "Oh, it is just the thing I would do if I were in your place!"

Perhaps he would—but when he has seen you do it, he has become your accuser—your tempter has afterwards turned round to bring an accusation against you! The Christian will long to be out of a world like this, where there is a Satanic rifleman behind every bush, a devilish archer behind every crag and where, oftentimes, while we are going along some quiet vale of life, all secluded and peaceful, the Archfiend comes behind us and we hear his flattering words and, all of a sudden, he gives a shrill call and from every side, tempters rage! We see everyone of them armed to the teeth and with their arrows winged for flight and thirsty to destroy! And we wonder why we are brought into such a place, where all seemed so calm and secluded—but now we are surrounded by the enemy and we have to cry, "Good Lord, deliver us! Come from above and snatch us out of this danger! Cast down our foes and put our feet in a large place." Well may God's dove long to roost in Heaven when there are so many snares here and so many archers with their bows all ready, seeking its life! This made the Psalmist talk of fleeing as a bird to the mountain. Well may we sometimes wish we could do so and even begin to sing, in the language of the poet—

"Jerusalem, my happy home,
Name always dear to me,
When shall my labors have an end,
In joy, and peace, and thee?"

II. Having thus spoken a word of justification for the Psalmist's complaint, I am going, next, TO JUSTIFY THE WAYS OF GOD WITH US, IN HAVING SUBJECTED US TO THIS DWELLING IN THE TENTS OF KEDAR.

Well, Brothers and Sisters, whatever God does is right—we believe that once and for all—if He should do that which seemed, to our reason, to be the most wrong thing in the world, we would believe our reason to be a liar sooner than imagine that God would either be unkind or unwise. It is a happy thing when we can believe God to be right when we cannot see it, when we can trust Him even if we cannot trace Him. It is pleasant to believe that, but we would rather see it. Now, I think, in this case, we can see a little why God deals thus with us.

It is right, and just, and good that God has spared us to be here a little longer, for, in the first place, my Brothers and Sisters, has not God put us here to dwell in the tents of Kedar because these, though perilous places, are advantageous posts for service? The angels, those mighty spirits that serve God perfectly, seem to me to be like the soldiers in an army who bring up the rear. They are behind—there, the arrows do not reach them. When the volleys of Satanic malice are being fired off, the angels are behind and can scarcely hear their echoes. But we that are born of women must face the fire and lead the vanguard in the heavenly battle between the Son of God and that great traitor. We must go into the front rank and every shot must fall upon our harness and rattle upon our armor—and is it not a glorious thing to stand in the front? Who would care to be behind in such a battle as this? Angels

might long to come where we are and earnestly desire to stand in the front of the battle—for if this is a place of danger, it is the place of honor, too!

That was a noble speech of our old English king at Agincourt, when he was surrounded by multitudes of enemies, "Well, be it so. I would not lose so great an honor, or divide my triumph. I would not," he said, "have one man the fewer among my enemies, because then there would be a less glorious victory." So, in like manner, let us take heart even from our difficulties! The Lord of Hosts is with us. The God of Jacob is our refuge. Jehovah-Nissi is inscribed on our banner! We are privileged above all the creatures of God. We have a high and noble honor to fight for Jehovah and, standing out as the soldiers of the Cross—the Church militant of the Divine One—we can do what the angels have not the power to do and, therefore, we have great reason to bless God that He lets us stop here because we are doing something for Him that even they cannot do! If you had been an angel and never been a man, you might sit down, if such thoughts could ever pass through an angelic mind, on some sunny crag high up on the celestial hills and muse thus—"I am a glorious being. The great God has made me to be happy and blest, but, down yonder, on that little planet that is glittering in the light of the sun, there are glorious creatures living that are more blest than I am, for they can do what I must not. They tell of Jesus' love! They wipe the tears from the eyes of the mourner. I can carry the soul a-loft and I am glad when I have the commission to do so—but I cannot go and bring the wanderer back and tell him how Jesus Christ has bought him with His precious blood."

I think an angel might almost fold his wings and cherish that wish! If such a thought could ever go through a cherubic spirit, such a wish might be conceived to be quite natural. For really, my Brothers and Sisters, they cannot do what we can do. There are works of charity and resignation, and deeds of heroic suffering that those blessed spirits can never perform. "Give me a body," says the angel, "and let me be a martyr, for a martyr is greater than an angel. Give me a

tongue and let me be a preacher, for the noble army of the Apostles is more noble than the glorious hosts of cherubim and seraphim! They have suffered for God. They have testified for God. They have stood in the midst of a multitude of enemies, firm as a rock in the time of storm—and they have been kept steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." If there were nothing else to say upon this point, it should certainly be satisfactory enough to the Christian to remember that God has kept him here on purpose to do Him honor.

Yet another thought, my Brothers and Sisters. You never will wish, I am sure, to get away from the tents of Kedar if you will recollect that it was through another Christian tarrying here—when, perhaps, he wanted to be gone—that you are this day a Christian. Look back upon the instrumentality that God used for your conversion. It may have been the teaching of some aged woman who herself had long ago wished to go Home to her Father

and her God. But she was kept here, pale and shivering with old age, in order to point you to the City of Refuge. Or, perhaps, it may have been some younger servant of God who preached the Gospel—and you heard it and were blessed. But that man of God had often wished to be in Heaven. Had he been in Heaven when he wished it, where would you have been? It is true, God might have found other instruments, but we are to speak, as men, after the manner of men. Have we not reason to thank God that these instruments were spared and still kept here, that we might be brought to Him by them?

And now, mark, is it not a fact and will you not look out and see whether it is so that there are many of God's elect ones, purchased with the precious blood of Christ, who are parts of Christ's mystical body, who are not yet brought in— and you are to bring them in? Brethren, if you were to go to Heaven, now, perhaps you would go almost alone—you must stay till there is a companion to go with you! There are two stars very prominent at this season of the year, the Gemini, the twins, glistening in the sky. You can see them, in about an hour's time, almost overhead. Yes, and you, perhaps, would have been a star, all alone, in the heavenly firmament, if you had had your own way, but, now, there will be two of you glittering together! And with some of us, blessed be God who has given us this honor, there will be a whole constellation of stars which, though they did not borrow their light from us, yet through us have been able to receive their light from Jesus Christ! And who would like to go to Heaven alone—to go through those bright fields of ether with no other redeemed spirit with him?

I sometimes think it would be a noble thing for the minister of God to have a host behind him and to look back and say, "Who are you that are following after me?" And to hear them reply, "We are they whom God has given you. As the sheaves come with the farmer in the day of harvest, so we are coming with you"—and then to enter Heaven, and cry, "Here am I, and the children that You have given me!" To say, "Here am I," is a blessed thing, but that other clause, "and those whom You have given me," that is a grand addition! What must it be to be in Heaven? Glory be to God if we are ever there, but to be in Heaven with others who are given to us—this shall be to multiply Heaven, to heap celestial mountains upon one another, to double the light of the sun, yes, to make it sevenfold, to make Heaven more than Heaven—Heaven multiplied in the Heaven of others! To not simply say, "I see the sun," but the sun reflected from a thousand glasses—the souls of others who have been led to Christ and then reflect that enjoyment upon the man who, through God, was the means of bringing them to glory! Well, Brothers and Sisters, this should make us willing to stay here.

There is, however, one other reason left, namely, perhaps our Master keeps us in the tents of Kedar because it will make Heaven all the sweeter. The old Romans—you hear a great deal of praise of the Greeks and Romans—but the Greeks were the biggest thieves who ever lived and the Romans were about the greatest gluttons and bullies that ever existed!

Well, the Romans were such gluttons that before they came to their meals, they were accustomed to drink all the most bitter things they could, that they might be thirsty and that they might drink as much as they could—very nasty things, such as one would not like to think of—but they always liked to get their palates in such a state that when they drank their wine, they would enjoy it. Verily, Brothers and Sisters, this is something like our case. After those draughts of wormwood which we have had to drink, how sweet Heaven's nectar will be! Yes, we have had to drink the gall, as we think, to the very dregs—but when that cup is drained and God gives us some of the new wine of the Kingdom, how sweet that will be!

Nothing makes a day of rest so sweet to a man as having long labored and long toiled. The tradesman who goes home to his little country house thinks, "Well, if ever I can make enough to always come and live in this house, I shall be so happy." He does it—and yet he doesn't like it—in a week he cannot stand it! The reason he used to enjoy the rest was

because the toil of the day sweetened it. Brothers and Sisters, it will be so with us when we get to Heaven—then, when our rest shall last eternally, it will be sweet, indeed! The long wilderness of drought shall make the joys of Heaven rare and real! The waters of the Nile were considered by the Egyptians to have an excellent flavor. Our travelers say it is not so, but the reason is because the Egyptians have never drunk any water but that of the Nile, while we, who have it in all our streets so abundantly, think but little of that turbid stream. Now, we who have had much, but not too much, of sorrow from the men that dwell in the tents of Kedar, how blessed will it be there when we shall be—

"Far from a world of grief and sin,

With God eternally shut in!"

III. My third topic is A WORD OF COMFORT TO THE CHRISTIAN WHILE PLACED IN THESE APPARENTLY EVIL CIRCUMSTANCES.

Well, there is one word in the text that ought to console him in a case like this. "Woe is me, that I sojourn"—thank God for that word, "sojourn." Yes, I do not live here forever—I am only a stranger and a sojourner here, as all my fathers were, and though the next sentence does say, "I dwell," yet, thank God, it is a tent I dwell in and that will come down, by-and-by—"I dwell in the tents of Kedar." You men of this world, you may have your day, but your day will soon be over! And I will have my nights, but my nights will soon be over, too. It is not for long, Christian, it is not for long. They may laugh at you, but every day they laugh, that is one day less for you to be laughed at. They may scoff and mock, and set you in the pillory with cruelty, but you will not be there forever. Perhaps tomorrow you may be in Heaven—we never know how near we are to the gates of Paradise. But, at any rate, suppose we should live to the longest period of human life? It is not long, after all.

When we get home to Heaven and come to look back, what a short way it will seem! While we are travelling in it, and our feet are covered with blisters and sores, we think all the inches are miles, but when we get up there, we shall say, "Why, that light affliction was

but for a moment. I thought 'twas half a century, but, 'twas but for a moment—yet it has worked out for me a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." We say, sometimes, "God has appointed unto us wearisome days and nights of weeping." But when we are in Heaven, we shall say, "Weeping endured but for a night, but joy came in the morning." I say to the Christian—

"The way may be rough, but it cannot be long, So let's smooth it with hope, and cheer it with song." Up, Christian! A few successful struggles and you will not have one more conflict! Another blow or two and your foot shall be on your opponent's neck! What? Give up the battle when it is near its termination? Would you sit down in the shade when the sun is rising and the morning star of promise is giving you the first token of the dawn? Cheer up, cheer up, I beseech you! The end will make amends for all that you endure and you will thank God that He kept you, and blessed you, and enabled you to suffer and endure and, at last, brought you safely Home!

This, however, is not all the comfort I have for you, because that would look like something at the end, like the child who has the promise of something while it is taking its medicine. No, there is something to comfort you during your trials. Remember that even while you are in the tents of Kedar, you have blessed company, for God is with you! And though you sojourn with the sons of Mesech, yet there is Another with whom you sojourn, namely, your blessed Lord and Master! You are not alone, for Christ is with you! It is true that those who are around you are uncongenial companions, but then, there is One who walks through the midst of all these scenes and snares, who says to you, "Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God." There may be a noise in the street, but Christ is with you in your chamber. There may be a storm within your very doors—a husband who will not let you rest and children who cast your religion in your teeth—but there is another Husband in that house, too, a heavenly Husband—and His consolations are far more powerful than all the sneers of the other husband—the manna that He gives is so sweet that it can take all the bitterness out of the sarcasms of your foes!

Surely, when Christ is with us, the bitterness of death is past. Much more, then, the bitterness of those little trials which daily come to us from those sons of Mesech and those inhabitants of the tents of Kedar. If, my Lord, You will go with me, I will not choose the path. If I must go alone, alas, alas for me, though the road is grassy, the sky is clear, the sun is bright and the brooks are flowing on every side! Though the birds are singing on the trees and though my own eyes have a luster in them, yet I am miserable, I am wretched, I am unsafe, I am in danger if You are not with me! But come, my Master, if the sun is set, if no moon or stars appear, if all around me there are found those that would devour me. If

there is a ditch on this side and a yawning gulf or a quagmire on the other. If there are all kinds of horrible things and evil spirits—if under my feet there are dead men's bones, snares, chains and pitfalls—if over me there is the shadow of death that keeps the sunlight

from reaching me and if within my heart there is fear, yet, if You are with me, into the very gates of Hell, itself, my soul should enter unharmed! Through the wall of fire, amidst the blazing of Divine Vengeance my soul may walk unscathed! Nothing can harm me if Jesus is near. Does not this make the tents of Kedar as white and fair as the tents of Solomon if Jesus has visited them? And are not the men of Mesech, with their rough beards, their stern faces and their unknown tongues, as friendly angels when we know that Jesus Christ is with us forevermore?

I have but one thing more to say, and with that I shall conclude. Brothers and Sisters, you may be comforted yet again with this sweet thought—that not only is God with you, but your Master was once in the tents of Keddar—not merely spiritually, but personally, even as you are—and inasmuch as you are here, too, this, instead of being painful, should be comforting to you! Have you not received a promise that you shall be like your Head? Thank God that promise has begun to be fulfilled! If you were happy in the tents of Kedar, you might think, "I am not like my Master, for He was a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief." But inasmuch as you have evil things thrown at you and your way is hard and rough, you may say, "Now I know what it is to have fellowship with Him in suffering, in some feeble measure. As I was buried with Him in Baptism unto death, so with Him I trust I have had conformity unto His death." When any pang from slander or misrepresentation rends your heart, then you can say, "Now I know what He meant when He said, 'Reproach has broken My heart.'" When you find yourself abused and misrepresented, you can say, "Now I understand what Christ endured when they said He is a gluttonous Man and a winebibber; a friend of publicans and sinners."

It is worthwhile to be like Christ in the worst of times because that is an assurance that we shall be like He in the best of times! If I carry a cross as He carried one, I shall wear a crown as He wears one. If I have been with Him in the degradation of the flesh, I shall be with Him in the glory of the Spirit. If I have been with Him when men hooted and hissed, and dogs compassed Him, and the bulls of Bashan beset Him around, I shall be with Him, too, when angelic hosts are around Him and He shall be admired of all that love Him—and adored of all creation! You shall be like your Head, poor sufferer—like your Head! Then what more can you want? Is not this a sufficient honor, that the servant is as his Master and the subject is as his Sovereign?

This may seem strange language in the ears of some hearers. All that they know is that they sometimes sneer at Christians themselves. Well, Sir, you have spoken ill of your wife and children because they follow Christ. I would not be in your shoes for half the world, nor for the whole of it! Do you see that man there with the millstone around his neck? He is going to be cast into the midst of the sea—that man is better off than you are, for Christ has said it, "Whoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in Me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and he were cast into the sea." Don't laugh

at a Christian or a professing Christian, even if he is a beggar, for he may be a child of God—and it will be an ill thing for you to be caught laughing at a child of God! There is nothing that makes a man so angry as to laugh at his children. There is nothing which brings a man's spirit up like touching his children. "Say what you like against me, but don't say anything against them. Touch them," says the man, "and you touch me. Touch them and you shall feel my wrath." Our Father loves them and he that touches them touches the apple of His eye. If you want to be damned, go and do something else, but don't do that! But if you want to go to Hell and to the hottest fire of Hell, go and vent your spleen on God's people! If you do it, you shall surely be punished for it.

Herod shall be eaten of worms, though his voice is as the voice of a god and not of a king. There shall be creatures who, like Antiochus, shall have their very bowels burnt because they hurt the people of God—and you who touch them with your little finger shall feel the weight of the Divine arm! And if you have smitten them with the arm, you shall find His loins crushing you to the very lowest Hell! But, remember, there is mercy for the persecutor. Did not the Lord say, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me? It is hard for you to kick against the pricks." "John, John, why do you persecute Me?" "Lord, I only laugh at my little daughter." "You have persecuted Me—it is hard for you to kick against the pricks." "Thomas, Thomas, why do you persecute Me?" "But, Lord, I only told my wife I would shut her out if she went to the weeknight services." "You have done it unto Me, inasmuch as you have done it unto the least of these, My people." And He cries to you and says, "It is hard for you to kick with naked feet against these pricks." And do you say, "Who are You, Lord?" His answer is, "I am Jesus, whom you persecute." And then, if you say, "Can You forgive me, Lord?" His answer is, "I am ready and willing to forgive. 'Come now, and let us reason together, though your sins are as scarlet,

they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.'" Trust in Jesus and you are safe! Cast yourself, once and for all on Him, and you cannot be lost, for he that relies on Jesus is a saved man! May God add the blessing of His Spirit, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: MARK 16.

Verse 1. And when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary, the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint Him. True love had made a mistake, but it was true love for all that, and the Lord accepted it, although He had no need of the sweet spices that the women brought.

2. And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulcher at the rising of the sun. There had already been another rising of the sun that morning, for the Sun of Righteousness had risen and, with His rising, our hopes had risen and eternal life had come to light! These holy women proved their affection to their Lord by being there

so early. Love will not wait—it delights to render its service as speedily as it can—"they came unto the se-pulcher at the rising of the sun."

3, 4. And they said among themselves, Who shall roll away the stone from the door of the sepulcher for us? And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great. Take comfort from this verse, you who are seeking to serve your Lord. There will be sure to be stones in your way and some of them may be very great ones, but they will be rolled away in the Lord's good time. And in the rolling away you often will have all the greater joy. If the effort shall need the strength of an angel, then an angel will be sent from Heaven for the purpose. There might have been no angel if there had been no stone—and you might have no revelation of the power of Heaven to help you if you had not first had a revelation of your own weakness and inability to roll away the stone.

5. And entering into the sepulcher, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were frightened. An angel had assumed the appearance of a young man sitting inside the sepulcher.

6. And he said unto them, Be not afraid. Why should they be afraid? They had come to serve their Lord and so had the angel, so there was no cause for fear. Those who love Jesus need never be afraid of angels, nor, for that matter, of devils either, for the Lord, whom they serve, will take care of them.

6. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. This was the first Gospel sermon preached after the Resurrection, so note particularly how the angel describes Christ. He calls Him by His lowly name, "Jesus of Nazareth," and does not speak of Him as the risen or reigning Christ, but as "Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified." The angels are evidently not ashamed of the Cross of Christ—they do not attempt to hide the shame of it—for this one speaks of "Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified."

6. He is risen; He is not here. That is the epitaph inscribed on Christ's tomb—"He is not here." On other people's graves it is written, "Here lies so-and-so," but on Christ's sepulcher it is recorded, "He is not here." He is everywhere else, but, "He is not here." He is with us in our solitude. He is with us in our public assemblies. But there is one place where He is not and that is, in the empty tomb! Thank God that He is not there! we do not worship a dead man lying in the grave. He, on whom we rely, has risen from the dead and gone up into Glory where He always lives to carry out the great design of salvation! "He is not here."

6-8. Behold the place where they laid Him. But go your way, tell His disciples and Peter that He goes before you into Galilee: there shall you see Him, as He said unto you. And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulcher; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they anything to any man; for they were afraid. There was a mixture of joy with their fear, and of fear with their joy—and that tended to keep them silent for a while. Some people tell all they know, even when it would be wiser not to speak. But these godly women waited till they reached those to whom they were bid to speak. They said nothing to anybody by

the way, but hurried on to find the disciples, that they might give them the blessed tidings of their Lord's Resurrection!

9. Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven devils. Where Grace had worked its greatest wonders, there Christ paid His first visit—"He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven devils."

10, 11. And she went and told them that had been with Him, as they mourned and wept. And they, when they had heard that He was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not. I can imagine that scene—the weeping and mourning disciples—and this eager woman telling her story, and telling it with evident truthfulness and deep pathos, but they believed her not. Do you expect to be believed whenever you tell the story of your Lord's Resurrection, or any other part of the Gospel message? You have to tell it, not to Christ's disciples, but to those who are aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and, probably, you do not tell it as well as Mary Magdalene did. Marvel not, therefore, if many a time those who hear your message believe it not! Mind that you believe it yourself and keep on telling it whether others believe it or not—and God will bless it to some of them, by-and-by.

12, 13. After that He appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country. And they went and told it unto the rest, but they did not believe them. Either Unbelief is not easily driven out of even true disciples, but let none of us ever harbor it in our hearts. As we see how unbelieving these disciples were and know how wrong their unbelief was, let us not be like they were.

14-20. Afterward He appeared unto the eleven as they sat at the table, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen Him after He was risen. And He said unto them, Go you into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe. In My name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, He was received up into Heaven, and sat at the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the Word with accompanying signs. Amen. God bless to us the reading of His holy Word! Amen.