

Majesty in Misery

(No. 2825)

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 5, 1903.

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 7, 1883.

"And the men that held Jesus mocked Him and struck Him. And when they had blind-folded Him, they struck Him on the face and asked Him saying, Prophecy, who is it that struck You? And many other things they blasphemously spoke against Him." [Luke 22:63-65](#).

I SUPPOSE that all this cruelty took place while our Lord was before Caiaphas, in the dead of night, before the Sanhedrim had been fully gathered together to hold their trial at daybreak. His enemies were in so great a hurry to condemn Him that as soon as He arrived at the high priest's house, they had a kind of preliminary examination that they might try the tack upon which they meant to sail in endeavoring to procure a conviction against Him. Thus, after He had been, in an informal and illegal way, condemned without any proper trial, they left Him in the custody of their officers until early in the morning when they summoned the rest of their companions, so as to go through again the farce of trying Him whom they knew to be innocent.

While these officials had Christ in their keeping, they might at least have left Him in peace and quietness. According to the rules of all civilized nations, a prisoner detained in custody should be guarded from insult and ill-treatment while in that condition. Whatever his ultimate punishment may be after he has been tried and found guilty, while he is as yet uncondemned, he is reckoned to be under the protection of the State that has arrested him—and he ought not to be subjected to insult or injury. But here, as if they had been so many savages, the judges of our Lord abandoned Him to those outcasts whom they employed to do their foul work—and those wretched creatures treated Him with mingled cruelty and scorn—"The men that held Jesus mocked Him and struck Him." Could they not have allowed Him a little time of rest? The traces of the bloody sweat must still have been upon Him. They could see, by the emaciation of His Person, that He was, as it had been long before foretold that He would be, "a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief." He must already have been ready to faint under the rough usage which had been meted out to Him both before and at His preliminary trials before Annas and Caiaphas. His tormentors must have seen how exhausted He was, yet they had no pity for Him in their hard, unfeeling hearts! They allowed Him no respite and gave Him no opportunity to prepare Himself to answer the charges that were about to be brought against Him. There were none found to vindicate His Character, or to plead His cause—and the intervals between the informal and the more formal trials were spent in mockery and in scorn.

These men were gross cowards. I am sure that they must have been because they were so cruel, for cruelty is one of the badges of cowardice wherever you find it. These are the very men who, in the garden, "went backward, and fell to the ground," when Christ did but say, "I am He," in answer to their declaration that they were seeking "Jesus of Nazareth." They went out, with swords and staves, to take Him prisoner, yet they fell to the ground when He did but speak a word or two to them! But now that they had Him in their power and perceived that He was, apparently, not inclined to exert the Divine energy with which He was endowed, but that He was as submissive as a sheep before her shearers, they determined to be as cruel as they could be to Him. God grant that the sin of cruelty to anything that lives may never be justly laid to the charge of any one of us! If you have acted cruelly, even though it is to the meanest thing in creation, despise yourself, for you are of a lower order than the creature that you tortured! And if these men could have judged themselves aright, they would have despised themselves. They seem to me to have been the very meanest of mankind who, having

such a gentle Sufferer in their power, instead of showing any humanity to Him, seemed as if they could not sufficiently abuse Him. And so they indulged their vile nature to the utmost in mocking and persecuting Him.

I. I hope that some spiritual profit may come to us while we are considering this terrible part of the suffering of our Lord. And, first, I want you, in imagination, to, gaze upon MAJESTY IN MISERY.

There stands Jesus of Nazareth. I will not attempt to picture Him. There has never yet been a painter who could portray the lineaments of that wondrous face! The highest art has never yet been able to satisfy itself upon that point even though it has borrowed its outline and its colors from the Scriptures themselves. The most skillful hand grows unsteady in the Presence of One so glorious in His griefs. I will not, therefore, attempt to draw a portrait of my Lord and Master, but will simply ask you, by faith, to behold Him, clothed with the garment that was without seam, bound, delivered over to the officers and surrounded by them while they mocked and scoffed at Him. Letting your eyes rest upon Him in a loving look, regarding Him as the great center of your heart's affection, what do you see—you who believe in His Deity— and who can say that He is "very God of very God" to you?

If your eyes are opened by the Spirit of God, you will see Omnipotence held captive. "The men that held Jesus" did not really know who He was. He appeared to them to be a poor Galilean peasant. Speaking the country brogue, they saw that He was a humble, lowly, emaciated Man and, as He had been committed to their charge, they held Him as their prisoner. But they did not recognize that He was the Almighty God, the very Deity that created the heavens and the earth, for, "all things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made." He was, at that very moment, "upholding all things by the word of His power" and, amid all His weakness, and in all His sufferings, He was still

"over all, God blessed forever," whom all the holy angels continued to adore. Is it not a great mystery that Omnipotence should thus be held captive? What a marvelous thing it is that He who can create or who can destroy, according to the good pleasure of His own will, should take upon Himself our nature and in that Nature should sink so low as to become subject even to the very coarsest and most cruel of mankind! What a wondrous stoop of condescension is here! Omnipotence allows itself to be bound and never proves itself more truly Omnipotent than when it restrains itself and permits itself to be held as a prisoner by sinful men!

Look again at this Majesty in misery and you will see glory mocked, for "the men that held Jesus mocked Him." To them He seemed to be a fit subject for ridicule and derision in professing to be a king, when He had neither an armed host nor multitudes of followers who could hope to stand for a single second against the mighty Caesar who held Israel in bondage! Yes, but there was a Glory in Christ which He had deigned to veil and to conceal for a while, but which angels still beheld and adored—yet these men were mocking Him! There are some themes which seem to strike a speaker dumb and this subject has something like this effect upon me. It appears to me amazing that the God who had reigned in Glory over myriads of holy angels, should be mocked by miscreants who could not even have lived an instant longer in His Presence if He had not permitted them to do so! Yet I see, in my text that He who made the heavens and the earth stood there to be despised and rejected of men and to be treated with the utmost contumely and scorn. I can make that statement, but you cannot realize what it means. This is one of those great mysteries of the faith that seem to stagger you. You believe it without the slightest hesitation, yet, the more you try to really grasp and comprehend it, the more it seems to elude you and to tower above you!

Thus, we see Omnipotence held captive and Glory mocked.

Next, we see Goodness smitten—perfect, infinite, unutterable Goodness stricken, bruised, assailed, assaulted—"The men that held Jesus mocked Him and struck Him." To strike wickedness is an act of justice. And even to lift the sword against oppression may not always be a thing to be condemned. But to strike Him who never did any man a wrong, but who has done all men some measure of good and who has given to some men all conceivable good—ah, this is indeed brutish! The blessed Son of God who stood there, had within His soul that mercy which endures forever, yet they struck Him—there burned in His heart a love which many waters could not quench and which the floods could not drown, yet they struck Him! He had come here upon no errand of vengeance, but to bring peace and goodwill to men—and to set up a Kingdom of joy and love—yet they bound Him! Ah, me, it is amazing that Goodness should be so good as to submit to this shameful indignity! None but Divine Goodness would have submitted to it.

See what these mockers and smiters did next to our Lord. They produced a handkerchief, or a cloth of some kind, and they put it over His eyes. Omniscience must seem to be blinded, which, in truth, it cannot be. Yet, in the Christ there

was the Omniscience of the Godhead and, to the utmost of their power, these men blinded Him in the hope that He might not see what they were doing. I know some who are trying to act that way at this present time. The only god that they have is a blind god. They believe in what they call, "the forces of nature," and then they condescendingly talk as though God was only the aggregate of the forces of nature working according to certain mechanical laws that can never be altered. The god in whom they profess to believe is a god that does not see. They tell us that it is idle to pray, or to think that God takes any interest in such insignificant individuals as we are. Ah, I remember reading about those gods of the philosophers—"They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not: they have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not: they have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat. They that make them are like unto them; so is everyone that trusts in them." "But our God is in the heavens," seeing all that happens and doing as He pleases among the hosts above and among men below. He is not now to be blindfolded, as He was once, when He condescended to wear our nature and to bear our sin. Yet it is amazing that He should ever have permitted this indignity to be put upon Him. The spouse in the Canticles truly sings, "His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set"—exceeding the very stars of Heaven for brightness—yet they covered them over! His eyes flamed with love and in them there did gleam bright diamonds of pity for all the sorrows of mankind—yet those cruel men did hide those precious eyes of His, blindfolding the Christ of God!

Now, surely, they had made Him suffer enough, far too much—yet again the infinite beauties of His blessed Countenance were to be marred, for "they struck Him on the face." "Oh, but had we been there," we say, "our indignation would have burned against them for striking that dear face!" Yet we had need lay aside our indignation and bring forward penitence, instead, for we, also, have sometimes struck that dear face of Jesus, which is as the Sun of Heaven, far brighter than the sun which lights up the world! All other beauties put together cannot equal the marvelous charms of that Countenance which was marred more than any man's. There is nothing under Heaven, or in Heaven, itself, that can rival the face of the Well-Beloved, yet these men struck it! I think an angel might well shiver with horror if, for the first time, he heard that men had struck the face of His Lord! It was but His Humanface, it is true, but therein they struck at all of Deity that they could reach. It was man striking God in the face! A slap in the face of Deity was what it really meant. Ah, me, that my Master should ever have had to endure such insult and pain—that He should ever have been willing to suffer such indignity as this—was there ever love like unto His?

Then the mockers said, "Prophecy, who is it that struck You!" That was Justice defied. They seemed to say to our Lord, as they struck Him, "Tell us what our name is; say who struck that blow. You cannot resist it. You cannot avenge Yourself, but, at least, see if You can tell the name of him that struck You. We defy You to do it." Ah, He had written down their names and they will find out, one day, that He knows them all, for there are none who strike the Savior who will not have their blows come back upon themselves unless they repent of their sin! There was Justice defied, as "they struck Him on the face and asked Him, saying, Prophecy, who is it that struck You?"

I say again that I am not worthily able to speak on such a theme as this. And I think I never shall be, however long I may live. It is not within the compass of lips of clay, with words of air, to describe the condescending sufferings of Him who, though He was rightly called, "Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace," nevertheless stooped so low as to be mocked, struck, blindfolded, and struck again for your sakes and mine—

"Vexed, I try and try again, Still my efforts are all in vain— Living tongues are dumb at best, We must die to speak of Christ."

The wonder of this Majesty in misery can be described in four words. The first wonder is that, under all this torture, our Lord was so patient. Not a flush of anger appeared on His cheek, not a flash of wrath from His eyes. He bore it all, bore it in His very soul, with Diving Patience, the very patience of "the God of Patience."

The next wonder is that He was silent under all this cruelty—not a word did He utter either in complaint or in condemnation of His assailants. This proved His true greatness. Eloquence is easy compared with silence and, perhaps, it would not have been true of Christ that "never man spoke like this Man," if it had not also been true of Him that never man was silent like this Man. He fulfilled to the letter the ancient prophecy, "He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter,

and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opens not His mouth." Lord, teach us how to imitate Your patience and Your silence!

Notice, in the third place, how eloquent He was by that very silence. He said more for us, and more to us, by holding His tongue than if He had delivered Himself of many burning sentences. It is matchless eloquence that is seen in the calm serenity of Christ in the presence of these cruel persecutors, in the forgiving Character of Christ under the most exasperating circumstances and in the patience of Christ under unparalleled sufferings!

And yet again, I see something so triumphant in our Savior's griefs that, while I call Him patient, silent, and eloquent, I must also call Him victorious. His persecutors could not make Him give way to anger. They could not destroy His mercy. They could not slay His love. They could not cause Him to think of Himself. They could not make Him declare that He would go no further with His work of saving sinners, now that men began to scoff

at Him, strike Him and des-pitefully use Him. No, the strong-souled Christ still perseveres in His merciful work, even as a mighty hunter pursues his game upon the mountain, leaping from crag to crag and cliff to cliff, defying danger and death that he may secure the creature on whose track he has gone. So, O mighty Christ, You did accomplish Your glorious purpose of love and mercy! You did lead captivity captive by suffering, to the bitter end, all that was inflicted upon You, even unto the death of the Cross!

Thus have I tried to picture Majesty in misery, but I have not been able to describe either Christ's Majesty or His misery as they deserve to be described. Meditate on them and pray the Spirit of God to give you such a sight of them as human nature, by itself, can never afford you!

II. Now I pass on to notice, secondly, that my text seems to me to show us SIN AT ITS SPORT.

All this sad scene represents what sin did when it had the opportunity—when all restraining bands were loosed and it could act according to its own evil will. It also represents what sin is still doing, as far as it can, and what would always be the action of sin if it were not hindered by the almighty power of God.

What, then, does sin do in the hour of its liberty? I invite you to notice, first—and to pay particular attention to any part that may come home to yourself—the levity of sin. These men are grossly insulting the Christ of God, but, to them, it is a sport, a game. They play at blindfolding Him—it is simply mirth and amusement to them. Sad, indeed, is it that sin should ever be what men call sport, yet I need scarcely remind you how often it is so, even now, to many. They run after it with the utmost eagerness and they call it pleasure—they call that which is provoking God pleasure—they call that which crucified Christ pleasure! They say that "they must see life," and they call that, "life," which forced from Jesus a bloody sweat and which afterwards dragged Him to a cruel death! And, alas, they say of many a sin, "What a delight it is to us! Would you make our life miserable by taking away our enjoyments?" So it becomes a matter of enjoyment to them to strike Christ on the face and to mock Him! Perhaps I am addressing some who have even made the Bible into a jest-book—their puns and mirth have been pointed with passages of Holy Writ. Possibly others have made rare fun out of some venerable Christian, some faithful servant of the living and true God. Well, Sirs, if you have done so, I would have you know how heinous is your sin in thus making sport of the godly—such "sport" as that, unless you repent of it, will damn you forever! As surely as you live, it will shut you out from the great Father's love and close the door of Mercy against you, world without end! Yet that is how sin acts when it has its liberty. Yes, and it sports even with the wounds of a Crucified God! Alas, that it should ever do so!

Notice, next, the utter wantonness of sin. If these men really wanted to get amusement out of Christ, they were able to get it, but what need was there for them to also strike Him?

What need was there of all that superfluity of cruelty by which they put Him to such shame and pain? If Christ must die, at least let Him die in peace—why that spitting in His face, that terrible scourging, that awful aggravation of His griefs? It was because men will sin out of sheer wantonness! I have known some persons sin in such strange ways that I have wondered why they did it. It was not for pleasure—at least I could not see any pleasure in it. It caused the man's own family to be utterly miserable and brought them and himself, too, down to poverty—what mirth or merriment could there be in that? There are some who seem as if they could never be happy unless they were engaged in making themselves unhappy forever and ever. They are not content without committing some extravagance in sin and making their whole lives an outrageous series of rebellions against God. If any of you have ever been guilty of such wantonness in sin, may the Holy Spirit cause a gracious influence to steal over you so

that you will no longer grieve the Christ of God, but will, yourself, grieve that you should ever have sinned so shamefully against Him!

Then note, next, the cruelty of sin. I have already asked and I repeat the question—What need was there for these men to strike the Savior? What pleasure could they derive from all the pain they caused Him? By the mouth of His ancient Prophets, the Lord said, "Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate!" It was in their own interests that He thus pleaded with men, for He would not have them injure themselves—and sin is always self-injury—it is a sort of suicide. Whenever a man does wrong, mischief must certainly come of it, and God knows this, so He beseeches men not to act so foolishly. And, oh, when a man mocks at true religion, rejects Christ and postpones the day of repentance, He is piercing again that dear heart that bled for the unworthy, and grieving that blessed Spirit who still strives with the sons of men, though He is often vexed and grievously provoked by them. Why are you so unkind to your God? Surely, there can be no necessity for committing such a sin as this!

Then, observe the desperate unbelief that there often is in sin. These men would not have blindfolded Christ if they had really believed Him to be the Son of God. They acted as they did because they had no faith whatever in Him. This is the great evil that lies at the root of most men's sins—they believe not in Jesus Christ whom God has sent. It is this of which the Spirit of God convinces men, as our Savior foretold concerning Him—"He will convince the world of sin...because they believe not on Me." Yet there is nothing more reasonable, nothing more worthy to be believed, than the Revelation of God as given to us in the Holy Scriptures! A man has only to test and try for himself whether it is true, or not, and he shall soon have the proof of its verity in his own bosom. Let him really believe it and then see whether it does not make him both holy and happy—that shall be to him the test of its truth.

Notice, again, how often there is in sin a kind of defiance of God. If a boy were to come to his father and were to say to him, "I will do all manner of rude and unkind things to you,

yet you will not chastise me," it would not be long before that father would make his son smart if he were, himself, worthy to be a father! But sinners act towards God in that kind of way. They often do to God what these persecutors did to Christ, as far as they can. They mock Him, strike Him and defy Him. Am I addressing anyone who has ever called down upon himself the curse of God? Beware lest that blasphemous prayer of yours be answered the next time you utter it, for it is God's way to answer prayer and, perhaps, He will answer yours—and then where will you be? Some have even dared to defy God thus—"Well, even if it is as you say, I am willing to take my chances—I will not submit to God." Ah, Sir, Pharaoh tried that plan and he repented of it, I think, when it was too late! In the midst of the Red Sea, when the waters began to overwhelm him and all his mighty host, then he learned what were the consequences of saying, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice?" Every sin has in it a measure of defiance of God—it is like these men striking Christ upon the face and saying to Him—"Prophecy, who is it that struck You?"

I will not linger longer upon this part of my theme except just to say that there is one more thing about sin that is peculiarly lamentable, namely, the multiplicity of sin. Read the 65th verse—"And many other things they blasphemously spoke against Him." One thing, two things, 20 things will not content them—they must say "many other things" against Him! When a man once gives himself up to sin, it is like getting into a current which bears him onward where, at first, he had no thought of going. If you wade into the waters of sin, it will not be long that you will be able to retain a foothold and, by-and-by, unless the Lord shall, in His Grace, prevent such a calamity, the rapid current will bear you away to your everlasting destruction! It is no use for you to say, "This far will I go in sin, but no farther." You cannot stop when you please—if you once commit yourself to the influence of sin, you know not where it will carry you. Alas, alas, some men seem as if they never could sin enough to satisfy themselves! They multiply their transgressions beyond all count. Every iron of iniquity that they have is thrust into the fire. Both hands are diligently engaged in doing mischief. Sometimes they rise up early, but, more often, they sit up late—possibly all through the night, that they may waste the more precious hours in their wickedness! So God is grieved and Christ is wounded afresh by the sin of man. It is a sad, sad picture. I cast a veil over it and turn to something brighter and better.

III. We have seen Majesty in misery, and sin at its sport. Now, thirdly, let us see LOVE AT ITS LABOR.

All that shame and suffering was endured by our Savior for love of each of us who can truly say, "He loved me, and gave Himself for me." All this blindfolding, mocking, and striking was borne by Christ for your sake, Beloved, and mine. I will not try to describe it further, but I will ask you to just spend a minute or two in trying to realize that sad scene. For

you—as much as if there were no other person in the whole universe—for you the King of Glory became the King of Scorn and bore all this despising and rejection of men! For you, John. For you, Mary. For you, old friend. For you, in your youth. If you, whoever you are, believe in Him, He was your Substitute. Your faith gives you the assurance that He was enduring all this for you—for you, I say, as much as if He had no other redeemed one, but had paid the ransom price all for you. Less than this would not have sufficed for you, though it is, indeed, sufficient for all the innumerable host redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus!

Let us, then, see love at its labor. I mean, our love to our Lord, though I might also speak of our Lord's love to us, and what it did for us. What shall our love do to show how grateful we are to Jesus for all that He endured for us? Well, first, let it set penitence to confess. Come, my Heart, here is room for the display of your grief. Why was Christ mocked in Jerusalem? Surely it was because you have mocked God with prayers that were no prayers, with hymns carelessly sung, with Scripture read as if they were merely the writings of men, with professions of religion that were hollow and empty! Brothers and Sisters, have you not some of these things to repent of? If you have mocked Him thus, the mocking that He endured in the hall of the high priest was on your account.

And as He was blindfolded, let us weep because our unbelief has often blindfolded Him. We imagined that He did not know about us, or that He had forgotten us. We thought that He could not see the end from the beginning and that He would not be able to bring good out of evil. Let me ask you, dear Friends—have you not often made Christ to be a blindfolded Christ so far as your apprehension of Him was concerned? If so, because you have thus blindfolded God by your unbelief, you are, by your sin, imitating the guilt of these men who literally blindfolded Christ.

And as we behold Him struck, let us again grieve as we remember how it was written of Him, "He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed." Every sin that we have ever committed made a gory furrow upon His precious back! Those black and blue bruises that alternate upon His sacred shoulders were caused by the cruel scourging to which each of us contributed our share by our transgressions. O Beloved, weep as you see Him bearing what you ought to have borne!

And when you read that they asked Him taunting questions while His eyes were blindfolded, ask yourself, O child of God, whether you have not often done the same! Have you never asked for a sign, instead of walking by faith? I confess that I have sometimes wished that I could have some token or indication of what my Lord thought. Ah, that is what these cruel men sought from Christ—they tried to get Him to convince them that He knew them when His eyes were blinded. O Brothers and Sisters, let us never seek a sign as that wicked and adulterous generation did! Let us walk by faith, not by sight, and implicitly trust our Lord! Because we have not trusted Him as we should have done, but have demanded of Him

signs and tokens, we have been too much like these men who asked Him, "Prophecy, who is it that struck You?"

I said that we would see love at its labor, so I want you, next, to let your love urge faith to confide in Christ. Come, dear Friends, in all this suffering of our Savior, let us see fresh reasons for trusting ourselves more entirely in the hands of Christ. Those men held Jesus in order that neither death nor Hell might ever be able to hold us. He was held in our place, so He says concerning us, as He said concerning His disciples in the garden, "If, therefore, you seek Me, let these go their way." The great Substitute is held as a prisoner so that all for whom He stood as Surety might be set at liberty forever!

He also was mocked. And to what end? We deserve eternal shame and contempt because of our sin, but He took all that shame upon Himself and made this wonderful exchange. As He put on the rags of our shame, He said to us, "Take My glittering vesture and wear it!" And now, the Glory which He had with the Father from eternity, He has put upon His people, that they may be like He and may be with Him where He is forever and ever! What a wonderful exchange is this! As Thomas read the Deity of Christ in His wounds, so do I read the eternal glory of His people in the mockery which He endured on their behalf.

When you see your Lord struck, why is that but that there may be no striking and no wounds for you, now or forever? You shall go free, for Jesus has borne all that you deserved to bear! He bore blow after blow that not one might ever fall upon you.

Why, too, was Jesus blindfolded but that we might be able to see? Our sin had blinded us to all that was worth seeing, but His death has taken away the scales and we can now see because He was caused not to see. Because He suffered these miserable miscreants to bind His eyes, therefore are our eyes unbound, today, and they shall be yet more unbound in that day when we shall behold Him face to face and be no more parted from Him.

And why was Jesus blasphemed by the "many other things" which they falsely laid to His charge? He was blasphemed that we might be justified! He was unrighteously accused and slandered in order that we might be able to boldly say, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died." Therefore, be glad, Beloved—while you sorrow over your Lord's griefs, rejoice over what those griefs have brought to you and what they will continue to bring to you throughout eternity!

Now, lastly, let our love at its labor awaken our zeal to consecration to our Lord. Was He held captive? Then come, my most burning zeal, and inflame me with devotion to His cause! Was He held thus for me? Then He shall hold me fast and never let me go! My Lord, I do surrender myself, my life, my all, to You, to be Your willing captive forever! Take these eyes, these lips, these hands, these feet, this heart—and as you were and are altogether mine, so let me be altogether Yours. Is not this a fair requital? Does any child of God object to that?

Then, next, as they despised Him, come, my Soul, what do you say to this? Why, that I will despise the world that did despise my Lord and Savior! O world, world, world, you are a blind, blear-eyed, black-hearted thing to have treated my Master so! Shall I conform to your customs? Shall I flatter you? Shall I ask for your applause? No, you are crucified to me. As a felon nailed up to the cross, so, O world, are you to me because you have crucified the Christ, the infinitely-lovely Son of God! Henceforth, the world is crucified to us and we to the world!

And as they blindfolded Jesus, what then? Why, I will be blindfolded, too! I will henceforth see no charm, no attraction anywhere but in my Lord. My eyes shall behold Him and no other in the glory that is yet to be revealed and, today, I can say with the Psalmist, "Whom have I in Heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire but You." Go through the world, Beloved, blindfolded to all but Christ, and you shall do well!

And, as they struck Jesus on the face, what will you and I do to show how much we love that face which was so shamefully ill-treated? My heart brings up before me a vision of that "sacred head, once wounded," encircled by the crown of thorns—that dear face, so bruised and battered, yet even then more beautiful than all the other loveliness of Heaven besides! Jesus, Son of God, and Son of Man, we adore You and we hasten to kiss those blessed feet of Yours, in loving adoration, and we do it all the more because wicked men did strike You upon the cheek! Reverence and love we gladly give to Him who once was struck by outcasts and who afterwards was nailed to the accursed tree!

And, inasmuch as these men said "many other things blasphemously against Him," come, my Brothers, let us say many things in His praise! And, Sisters, join us in the holy exercise! No one shall close our lips, faulty as they are, from speaking in honor of our dear Lord! Sometimes, with the Prophet, we are ready to confess that we are men of unclean lips and that we dwell in the midst of people of unclean lips, but, such as we are, we will render to Him the calves of our lips and give glory to His holy name! Never be ashamed to speak up for your Lord, Beloved. Never blush to acknowledge that you belong to Him. No, if you blush at all, blush with shame that you do not love Him more and serve Him better! By the memory of that dear face, blindfolded and struck, while cruel men all around slander Him with their blasphemous accusations, I charge you to—

"Stand up, stand up for Jesus, You soldiers of the Cross!"

God help you to do so!

Oh, that some here who have never believed in Jesus Christ would now begin to trust Him! I do not invite you, just now, so much to believe in Him in His glory as to believe in Him in His shame. Was He really the Son of God and did He suffer for guilty men all that we have been talking of, and far more than that? Then I must believe in Him! To me, Jesus Christ seems to be a Character that men could never have invented. He must be historical for He is so original. Unaided human minds could never have thought out such a Character!

There are strange things in Buddhism and other false religions, and men with wild imaginations have conceived curious notions concerning their gods, but I challenge anyone to show me, in any book except God's Book, anything that can parallel the story of the Eternal God, Himself, becoming Man in order to make atonement for the sins of His creatures, that is, the sins committed by them against Him. Yes, Brothers and Sisters, I must believe in Him! What is more, I must believe that He died for me—

"That on the Cross Be shed His blood
From sin to set me free."

Having so believed—I speak as God's witness to all who can hear me—I feel an inward peace that nothing can break, a holy joy that nothing can disturb and a sacred calm which death, itself, shall not be able to destroy. I have been at the deathbeds of many of our Brothers and Sisters who have been accustomed to worship here and who have been members of this Church. And—note this testimony, I pray you—I have never seen one of them afraid to die! I have not met with one coward among them all! But I have heard some of them singing triumphantly in their last hours, as merrily as though it were their marriage day—while others have been as calm and quiet as if to die were but to go to bed, sleep a while and wake again in the morning!

Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ—in this very Lord who stooped from the heights of Glory to the depths of shame and suffering—and you, also, shall find that your confidence in Him shall be rewarded even in this life! While, as for the world to come—ah then, when there shall be no blindfolded eyes for Him—no mockery and scorn and smiting for Him—but all shall be Glory forever and ever, then you and I, if we are believers in Him, shall eternally share His Glory! God grant it, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.