

"The Garment of Praise"

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"The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." [Isaiah 61:3](#).

THE list of comforts which the Anointed has here prepared for His mourners is apparently inexhaustible. He seems as if He delighted to give "according to the multitude of His tender mercies" a very cloud of blessings. This is the third of His sacred exchanges—"the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." Grace, like its God, delights to be a trinity. This is also the broadest of the blessings, for whereas the first adorned the face with beauty, and the second anointed the head with joy, this last and widest covers the whole person with a garment of praise! Man's first vesture was of his own making and it could not cover his shame—but this garment is of God's making and it makes us comfortable in ourselves, and comely in the sight of God and man. They are better adorned than Solomon in all his glory, to whom God gives the garment of praise. May the blessed Spirit sweetly help us to bring out the rich meaning of this promise to mourners, for again I must remind you that these things are only given to them—and not to the thoughtless world.

We have already noticed the variety of the consolation which Jesus brings to mourners—the Plant of Renown produces many lovely flowers with rich perfume and a multitude of choice fruits of dainty taste. Now we would call your attention to their marvelous adaptation to our needs. Man has a spirit and the gifts of Grace are spiritual. His chief maladies lie in his soul and the blessings of the Covenant deal with his spiritual needs. Our text mentions "the spirit of heaviness" and gives a promise that it shall be removed. The blessings which Jesus gives to us are not surface blessings, but they touch the center of our being! At first we may not perceive their depth, but only know that beauty is given instead of ashes—this might seem to be an external change. Further on, however, joy is given, instead of mourning, and this is inward—the thought has advanced, we are getting nearer the heart. But in the words before us, the very spirit of heaviness, the fountain from which the mourning flows, the hearth whereon the ashes are burned is dealt with and taken away—and instead thereof we receive the garment of praise! What a mercy it is that the blessings of the Everlasting Covenant belong to the realm of the spirit for, after all, the outward is transient, the visible soon perishes. We are grateful for the food and raiment which our bodies require, but our sterner need is nourishment, consolation and protection for our spirits. The Covenant of Grace blesses the man, himself—the soul—which is the essence of his life. It puts away the sordid sackcloth of despondency and robes the spirit in royal garments of praise. Judge you your state by your estimation of such favors, for if you have learned to prize them, they

are yours! The worldling cares nothing for spiritual blessings. His beauty, joy, and praise are found in things which perish in the using. But those who know their preciousness have been taught of God and since they can appreciate them, they shall have them! Soul-mercy is the very soul of mercy and he whom the Lord blesses in his spirit, is blessed indeed!

I want you still further to notice how these blessings grow as we proceed. At first, out of the triplet of favors here bestowed there was beauty given, instead of ashes. There is much there—beauty of personal character before God is no mean thing—yet a man might have that, and by reason of his anxiety of heart he might scarcely be aware of it. Doubtless many who are lovely in the sight of God spend much of their time in bewailing their own uncomeliness. Many a saint sorrows over himself, while others are rejoicing in him! Therefore, the next mercy given to the mourner in Zion is the oil of joy, which is a personal and conscious delight. The man rejoices. He perceives that he is made beautiful before God and he begins to joy in what the Lord has done for him and in the Anointed One from whom the oil of gladness descends. This is an advance upon the other, but now we come to the highest of all! Seeing that God has made him glad, he perceives his obligations to God and he expresses them in thankfulness—and so stands before the Most High like a white-robed priest, putting on praise as the garment in which he appears in the courts of the Lord's House, and is seen by his Brothers and

Sisters. As you advance in the Divine Life, the blessings you receive will appear to be greater and greater. Some promising things become small by degrees and miserably less, but in the Kingdom of Heaven we go from strength to strength. The beginning of the Christian life is like the water in the pots at Cana, but in due time it blushes into wine. The pathway which we tread is, at first, bright as the dawn, but if we pursue it with sacred perseverance, its radiance will be as the perfect day! There shall be no going down of our sun, but it shall shine with increasing luster till it shall be as the light of seven days, and the days of our mourning shall be ended!

I beg you also to mark that when we reach the greatest mercy and stand on the summit of blessing, we have reached a condition of praise—praise to God invests our whole nature. To be wrapped in praise to God is the highest state of the soul. To receive the mercy for which we praise God is something, but to be wholly clothed with praise to God for the mercy received is far more! Why, praise is Heaven, and Heaven is praise! To pray is Heaven below, but praise is the essence of Heaven above! When you bow lowest in adoration, you are at your very highest. The soul full of joy takes a still higher step when it clothes itself with praise. Such a heart takes to itself no glory, for it is dressed in gratitude and so hides itself. Nothing is seen of the flesh and its self-exaltation, since the garment of praise hides the pride of man. May you all who are heavy in spirit be so clothed upon with delight in the Lord, who has covered you with the robe of righteousness, that you may be as wedding guests adorned for the palace of the King with glittering garments of adoring love!

Looking carefully into the words before us, we will dwell, first, upon the spirit of heaviness. Secondly, upon the promise implied in the text—that this shall be removed. And then, thirdly, upon the garment of praise which is to be bestowed. First, let us muse upon—

I. THE SPIRIT OF HEAVINESS.

We would not make this meditation doleful and yet it may be as well to set forth the night side of the soul, for thus we may the better show a sympathetic spirit and come more truly home to those who are in heaviness through manifold temptations. Some of us know by experience what the spirit of heaviness means. It comes upon us at times even now. There are many things in the body. There are many things in the family. There are many things in daily life which make us sad. Facts connected with the past and with the future cause us, at times, to hang our heads. We shall just now dwell upon those former times when we were under the spirit of heaviness on account of unpardoned sin. We cannot forget that we were in bondage in a spiritual Egypt. We would awaken our memories to remember the wormwood and the gall, the place of dragons and of owls.

Observe that this heaviness is an inward matter and it is usually a grief which a man tries to keep to himself. It is not that he is sick in body, though his unbelieving friends fancy that he must surely be ailing, or he would not seem so melancholy. "He sits alone and keeps silent," and they say that he has a low fit upon him and they invite him out into company and try, if they can, to jest him out of his distress. The fact is that sin is pressing upon him, and well may the spirit be heavy when it has that awful load to carry! Day and night God's hand is also heavy upon him and well may his spirit be loaded down. Conviction of sin makes us as a cart that is loaded with sheaves—but it is intensely inward and, therefore, not to be understood by careless minds. "The heart knows its own bitterness and a stranger intermeddles not therewith."

I have known persons who have been the subject of this heaviness most sedulously endeavor to conceal from others even the slightest appearance of it. And I cannot say that there has not been some wisdom in so doing, for ungodly men despise those who tremble at the Word of God. What do they care about sin? They can sin and rejoice in it as the swine can roll in the mire and feel itself at home. Those who weep in secret places because the arrows of the Lord have wounded them, are shunned by those who forget God, and they need not be sorry for it, since such company can furnish no balm for their wounds. Mourner, you are wise to keep your sorrow to yourself as far as the wicked are concerned, but remember, though perhaps you think not so, there are hundreds of God's children who know all about your condition, and if you could be bold enough to open your mind to them and tell them of your heaviness of spirit, you would be surprised to find how thoroughly they would sympathize with you and how accurately some of them could describe the maze through which you are wandering! All are not tender of heart, but there are Believers who would enter into your experience and who might, by God's blessing, give you the clue to the

labyrinth of your grief. The Lord comforted Paul by Ananias, and you may be sure that there is an Ananias for you! If you feel, as many do, that you could not unburden your soul to your parents or relatives, go to some other experienced Believers and tell them as far as you can your painful condition. I know, for I have felt the same, that all hope that you shall be saved is taken away and that you are utterly prostrate—but yet THERE IS HOPE!

While this heaviness is inward, notice in the next place that it is real. Heaviness of spirit is one of the most terribly true of all our griefs. He who is cheerful and light-hearted too often contemns and even ridicules him who is sad of soul. He says that he is "nervous," calls him "fanciful.. .almost out of his mind," "very excitable.. .quite a monomaniac," and so on. The current idea being that there is really no need for alarm and that sorrow for sin is mere fanaticism! If some persons had suffered half an hour of conviction of sin, themselves, they would look with different eyes upon those who feel the spirit of heaviness, for I say it, and know what I am saying, that next to the torment of Hell, itself, there is but one sorrow which is more severe than that of a broken and a contrite spirit that trembles at God's Word, but does not dare to suck comfort out of it! The bitterness of remorse and despair is worse, but yet it is unspeakably heartbreaking to bow at the Mercy Seat, and to fear that no answer will ever come—to lie at the feet of Jesus, but to be afraid to look up to Him for salvation! To be conscious of nothing but abounding sin and raging unbelief and to expect nothing but sudden destruction—this is an earthly Tophet! There are worse wounds than those which torture the flesh, but more cruel pangs arise from the broken bones of the soul than from those of the body. Sharp is that cut which goes to the very heart and yet does not kill, but makes men wish that they could die or cease to be. There is a prison such as no iron bars can make and a fetter such as no smith can forge. Sickness is a trifle compared to it—it is to some men less endurable than the rack or the stake. To be impaled upon your own sins, pilloried by your own conscience, shot at by your own judgment as with barbed arrows—this is anguish and torment!

This heaviness of spirit puts a weight upon the man's activity and clogs him in all things. He is weighted heavily who bears the weight of sin. You put before him the precious Promises, but he does not understand them, for the heaviness presses upon his mental faculties. You assure him that these Promises are meant for him, but he cannot believe you, for heaviness of spirit palsies the grasping hand by which he might appropriate the blessing. "Their soul abhors all manner of meat, and they draw near to the gates of death." Troubled minds at times lose all their appetite. They need spiritual food and yet turn from it. The most wholesome meat of the Gospel they are afraid to feed upon, for their sadness makes them fearful of presumption. Heaviness brings on amazement and this is but another word for saying that the mind is in a maze and cannot find its way out.

They are weighted as to their understanding and their faith, for "the spirit of heaviness" also presses there. Their memory, too, is quick enough at recollecting sin, but to anything

that might minister comfort, it is strangely weak, even as Jeremiah said, "You have removed my soul far off from peace: I forget prosperity." Indeed, David was still more oblivious, for he says, "My heart is smitten and withered like grass, so that I forget to eat my bread." All the faculties become dull and inert, and the man is like one in a deadly swoon. I have heard persons, under conviction of sin, say, "I seem absolutely stupid about Divine things." Like one that is stunned by a severe blow, they fall down and scarcely know what they feel or do not feel. Were they in their clear senses, we could set the Gospel before them and point out the way of salvation and they would soon lay hold of it! But, alas, they seem to have no capacity to understand the Promise, or to grasp its consolation.

Now, this heaviness of spirit also renders everything around the man heavy. The external is generally painted from within. A merry heart makes mirth in the dull November fog under a leaden sky, but a dull heart finds sorrow amidst May blossoms, and June flowers. A man colors the world he lives in to the tint of his own soul. "Things are not what they seem," yet what they seem has often more influence upon us than what they are! Find a man, then, with heaviness of spirit, and you will find that his sorrows appear to be greater than he can bear. The common-place worries of life which cheerfulness sports with, are a load to a sad heart—yes, the grasshopper is a burden! The ordinary duties of life become a weariness and slight domestic cares a torture. He trembles lest he should commit sin even in going in and out of his house. A man who bears the weight of sin has small strength for any other load. Even the joys of life become somber. It matters not how much God has blessed a man in his family, in his basket, or in his store, for as long as his heart is oppressed and his soul bowed down with sin, what are the bursting barns and what are the overflowing wine vats to him? He pines for a peace and rest which these things cannot yield. If the eyes are dark, the sun, itself, affords no light!

There is one thing, however, which we would say to mourners pressed down with guilt—whatever heaviness you feel, it is no greater heaviness than sin ought to bring upon a man, for it is an awful thing to have sinned against God. If the sense of sin should drive you to distraction—and cavilers often say that religion does this—it might reasonably do so if there were no other matters to think upon—no forgiving love and atoning blood. That which is the result of sin ought not to be charged upon religion, but true religion should be praised, because it brings relief to all this woe! Sin is the

most horrible thing in the universe—and when a man sees how foully he has transgressed—it is no wonder that he is greatly troubled. To think that I, a creature that God has made, which He could crush as easily as a moth, have dared to live in enmity to Him for many years, and have even become so hardened as to forget Him and perhaps defy Him! This is terrible! When I have been told of His great love, I have turned on my heels and rejected it. Yes, and when I have even seen that love in the bleeding body of His dear Son, I have been unbelieving and have done despite even to boundless Grace, and gone from bad

to worse, greedy after sin! Is it marvelous that when they have seen the guilt of all this, men have felt their moisture turned into the drought of summer and cried in desperation, "My soul chooses strangling rather than life"? However low you are, beloved Mourner, you are not exaggerating your guilt! Apart from the Grace of God, your case is, indeed, as hopeless as you suppose. Though you lie in the very dust and dare not look up, the position is not lower than you ought to take. You richly deserve the anger of God and when you have some sense of what that wrath must be, you are not more fearful of it than there is just need to be, for it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. "He touches the hills and they smoke."—

"The pillars of Heaven's starry roof Tremble and start at His reproof." What will His wrath be when He puts on His robes of justice and comes forth to mete out justice to the rebellious? O God, how terrible is Your wrath! Well may we be crushed at the very thought of it!

Another reflection we would suggest here and that is, that if you have great heaviness of spirit on account of sin, you are by no means alone in it, for some of the best servants of God have endured hard struggling before they have found peace with God. Read their biographies and you will find that even those who have really believed in Christ have at some time or other felt the burden of sin pressing with intolerable weight upon their souls. Certain of them have recorded their experience in terrible sentences, but others have felt what they have not dared to commit to writing. "Weeping Cross," as the old writers call it, is a much-frequented spot—many roads meet at that point, and most pilgrims have left a pool of tears there.

There is this to be added. Your Lord and Master, He to whom you must look for hope, knew what heaviness meant on account of sin. He had no sin of His own, but He bore the iniquity of His people and, therefore, He was prostrate in Gethsemane. We read that "He began to be sorrowful and to be very heavy." The spirit of heaviness was upon Him and He sweat, as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground! This same heaviness made Him cry upon the Cross, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Jesus was sorely amazed and very heavy—and it is to Him as passing through that awful heaviness that I would bid you look in your hour of terror, for He alone is your door of hope. Through His heaviness, yours shall be removed, for "the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed." So much, then, concerning heaviness of spirit. And now, secondly, let us—

II. SEE THE HEAVINESS REMOVED, for of this the text contains a Divine Promise—the anointed Savior will take it away. Only a word or two upon this.

Brothers and Sisters, do you enquire how Jesus removes the spirit of heaviness? We answer, He does it thus—by revealing to us with clearness and certainty that our sin is pardoned. The Holy Spirit brings us to trust in Christ and the Inspired Word assures us

that Christ suffered in the place of all Believers and, therefore, we perceive that He died for us. And also that nothing remains for us to suffer because sin, having been laid upon the Substitute, it is no more upon us. We rejoice in the fact of our Lord's Substitution and the transfer of our sins to Him. We see that if He stood in our place, we stand in His—and if He was rejected, we are "accepted in the Beloved." Then straight away this spirit of heaviness disappears because the reason for it is gone—

"I will praise You every day! Now Your anger's turned away, Comfortable thoughts arise From the bleeding Sacrifice."

Moreover, in the new birth the Holy Spirit infuses into us a new nature—and that new nature knows not the spirit of heaviness—it is a thing of light, and life, and joy in the Holy Spirit! The newborn nature looks up and perceives its kinship with God. It rejoices in the favor of the Holy One from whom it came. It rests in the Lord, yes, it joys and rejoices in Him! And whereas, the old sin-spirit still sinks us down according to its power, there still being in us the evil heart of unbelief, this new life wells up within us as a living fountain of crystal and buoys us up with the peace and joy which comes of the Holy Spirit's indwelling! Thus the inner life becomes a constant remedy for heaviness of spirit.

And faith, too, that blessed gift of God, wherever it resides, works to the clearing away of heaviness, for faith sings, "All things are mine, why should I sorrow? All my sin is gone, why should I pine and moan? All things as to the present life are supplied me by the God of Providence and Grace—and the future is guaranteed to me by the Covenant ordered in all things and sure." Faith takes the telescope and looks beyond the narrow range of time into the eternal heavens, and sees a crown laid up for the faithful. Yes, and her ears are opened so that she hears the songs of the redeemed by blood before the Throne of God—thus she bears away the spirit of heaviness! If I see no joy with these poor optics, faith has other eyes with which she discovers rivers of delight! If flesh and blood afford me nothing but causes for dismay, faith knows more and sees more—and she perceives causes for overflowing gratitude and delight! Hope also enters with her silver light, borrowed from faithful promises. She expects the future glory, at which we hinted just now, and begins to anticipate it all. And so, again, she drives away the gloom of the heart. Love, also, the sweetest of the three, comes in and teaches us to be resigned to the will of God and then sweetly charms us into acquiescence with all the Divine Purposes. And when we reach that point, and so love God that whatever He may do with us, we are resolved to trust Him and praise His name, then the spirit of heaviness must vanish!

Now, beloved Mourners, I trust you know what this great uplifting means. It is a work in which the Lord is greatly glorified when He raises a poor, begrimed soul out of the sordid potsherds among which it has lain, and gives it to soar aloft as on the silver wings of a dove! Some of us can never forget the hour of our great deliverance—it was the day of our espousals, the time of love—and it must forever remain as the beginning of days unto us. All glory be

to Him who has loosed our bonds and set our feet in a large room! But now we come to the third and most prominent point of the text, which is—

III. THE GARMENT OF PRAISE BESTOWED, which takes the place of the spirit of heaviness. We suppose this may mean, and probably does mean, that the Lord gives us a garment that is honorable and worthy of praise—and what is this garment but the righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ? The Lord arrays His poor people in a robe which causes them to be no more worthy of shame, but fit to be praised. They become unblameable in His sight. What a blessing this is! Did not the father, when he received the prodigal, say, "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him"? That was a praiseful garment, instead of the spirit of heaviness—and whenever a child of God begins to perceive his adoption and to say, "Abba, Father," then He puts on a fit garment for a child to wear, an honorable dress, a garment of praise! When we realize that Christ has made us priests unto God and we, therefore, put on the priestly garment of sanctification by beginning to offer the sacrifice of prayer and praise, then, again, we wear a praiseful garment! When we exercise the high prerogative of kings, for we are kings as well as priests, then, again, we wear not a sordid vesture of dishonor, nor the costume of a prison, nor the rags of beggary, nor the black robe of condemnation, but a garment of honor and of praise! Every child of God should be clothed with the garments of salvation—his Savior has prepared them for this end—let him wrap them about him and be glad, for these garments make him beautiful in the sight of God!

But I choose, rather, to follow the exact words of our version tonight and speak of the garment of praise as meaning gratitude, thanksgiving, and adoration. The anointed Comforter takes away the spirit of heaviness and He robes His people in the garment of praise.

Now, this is something outward as well as inward. A wise man endeavors to hide the heaviness of his spirit, but when the Lord takes that away, he does not wish to conceal his gratitude. I could not help telling those I lived with, when I found the Lord! Master John Bunyan informs us that he was so anxious to let someone know of his conversion that he wanted to tell the crows on the plowed land all about it! I do not wonder. It is a piece of news which it would be hard to withhold. Whenever a man's inward heaviness is graciously removed, he puts on the outward manifestation of joy and walks abroad in the silken robes of praise!

As we have already said, a garment is a thing which covers a man, so when a man learns to thank God aright, His praise covers him—he, himself, is hidden while he gives all the glory to God. The man is seen as clothed in praise from head to foot. Many persons very unfairly judge Christians when they begin to speak of the love and mercy of God to them, for they cry out that they are egotistical—but how can it be egotistical to talk of what the Lord has done for you? If you speak with any sort of confidence, captious individuals say that you are presumptuous. How can it be presumptuous to believe what God, Himself, declares? It is presumptuous to doubt what God says, but it is not presumption to believe

God! Neither is it egotism to state the truth. If I were to say that God has not blessed me abundantly, the pulpit on which I stand would cry out against me! Shall I conceal the mercy of God as if it were stolen goods? Never! But rather

I will speak the more boldly of the measureless love which has kept my soul from going down to the pit! "He that glories, let him glory in the Lord." Bless the Lord, O you saints of His, and give thanks to His holy name. Show forth His salvation, compel men to see it, gird it about your loins and wear it for your adorning in all companies! While speaking of this garment of praise, let us enquire of what it is made.

Is not praise composed in a large measure of an attentive observation of God's mercy? Thousands of blessings come to us without our knowledge. We take them in at the back door, and put them away in the cellar. Now, praise takes note of them, preserves the invoice of favors received and records the goodness of the Lord. O Friends, if you do this, you will never be short of reasons for praise!. He who notices God's mercy will never be without a mercy to notice. This is the chief material of the garment of praise—attentive consideration of Divine Grace is the broadcloth out of which the garment of praise is made.

The next thing is grateful memory. Very much that God does for us we bury alive in the grave of oblivion. We receive His mercies as if they were common trash. They are no sooner come than they are gone, and the proverb truthfully says, "Bread eaten is soon forgotten." Why, my Brothers and Sisters, the Lord may give you a thousand favors and you will not praise Him. But if He smites you with one little stroke of the whip, you grumble at Him! You write His mercies on the water and your own trials you engrave on granite! These things ought not to be. Maintain the memory of His great goodness. "Forget not all His benefits." Call to remembrance your song in the night and remember the loving kindnesses of the Lord. In this, also, we find rich material for the garment of praise.

We are further aided by rightly estimating mercy. Is it not a great mercy to be alive and not in Hell? To be in your senses and not in the lunatic asylum? To be in health and not in the hospital? To be in one's own room, and not in the workhouse? These are great favors, and yet, perhaps, we seldom thank God for them! Then count up your spiritual mercies, if you can. Remember, on the other hand, what you deserved, and what it cost the Savior to bring these blessings to you—how patient the Lord has been with your refusal of His love and how continuously He has loaded you with benefits! Weigh His mercies, as well as count them, and they will help you to put on the garment of praise.

It is the telling out of the Divine goodness which largely constitutes praise—to observe, to remember, to estimate, to prize and then to speak of the Lord's gracious gifts—all these are essential. Praise is the open declaration of the gratitude which is felt within. How greatly do many fail in this! If you visit them, how readily they enlarge upon their troubles—in five minutes they have informed you about the damp weather, their aching bones and their low wages. Others speak of the bad times and the decline of trade till you know their ditty by

heart! Is this the manner of the people of God? Should we not entertain our visitors with something better than the bones of our meat and the hard crusts of our bread? Let us set before them good tidings and cheerfully tell of the Divine goodness to us, lest they should go away under the impression that we serve a hard master. It would create an almost miraculous change in some people's lives if they made a point of speaking most of the precious things and least of the worries and ills! Why always the poverty? Why always the pains? Why always the dying child? Why always the husband's small wages? Why always the unkindness of a friend? Why not sometimes—yes, why not always—the mercies of the Lord? That is praise and it is to be our everyday garment, the livery of every servant of Christ!

Let us enquire, too, who ought to wear this garment? The answer may be suggested by another—whom does it fit? Truly there is a garment of praise which exactly suits me and I mean to wear it. It is so capacious that some of my Brothers and Sisters would wonder if they could see it spread out. I am so much in debt to my God that, do what I will, I can never give a fair acknowledgment of it. I freely confess that I owe Him more than any man living and am morally bound to praise Him more earnestly than anyone else! Did I hear some of you claiming to be equal debtors? Do you demand to be allowed to praise Him more than I? Well, I will not quarrel with you. Let the matter stand and if you will excel me, I will praise my Lord for it. I once, in preaching, remarked that if I once entered Heaven, I would take the lowest place, feeling that I owe more to God's Grace than anybody else, but I found, when I left the pulpit, that I had several competitors who would not yield the lowest place to me! They were, each one, ready to exclaim—

"Then loudest of the crowd I'll sing, While Heaven's resounding mansions ring With shouts of Sovereign Grace!" Blessed be God, this is the only contention among the birds of Paradise—who owes the most, who shall love the best, who shall lie lowest and who shall extol their Lord the most zealously! Charming rivalry of humility! Let us have more of it below. I again say there is a garment of praise that fits me. Brother, Sister, is there not one which fits you, ex-

actly suiting your state and condition? If you are an heir of Heaven, there is—there must be a garment of praise which will rest most becomingly upon your shoulders—and you should put it on at once.

Then, when shall we wear it? We should certainly appear in it on high days and holidays. On Sabbath days and communion seasons the hours are fragrant with grateful memories. I heard of someone who did not attend public worship because his clothes were not fit to come in, and I replied, What can he mean? Does the Lord care for our outward dress? Let him put on the garment of praise, and he may come and welcome! The outer vestments matter little, indeed! All garments of that sort are only proofs of our fall, and of the need to hide our nakedness for very shame. Fine dress is unbecoming in the House of God, especially for those who call themselves "miserable sinners." The best adornment is humility of spirit,

the robe of thanksgiving, the garment of praise! The Lord's-Day should always be the happiest day of the week, and the communion should be a little Heaven to our souls. "Call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable."

We should wear the garment of praise on the most commonplace of days. It should be the peasant's frock and the merchant's coat, the lady's dress and the servant's gown—it is the best for wear, for comfort, for beauty and it never gets out of fashion. I once knew an old saint, a Methodist, a very quaint, original, rustic old man, who was celebrated for happiness. When he went out to day labor early in the morning, he was always singing as he went along the road. The country people used to call it "tooting to himself." Quietly he hummed a bit of a hymn wherever he was. When he used his spade or his hoe, he worked to the music of his heart and never murmured when in poverty, or became angry when held up to ridicule. I wish we were all as spiritually minded and as full of praise as he! Bless the Lord! Bless the Lord! When should we not bless Him? We will praise Him when our beds refresh us—blessed is He who kept the night watches. When we put on our clothes in the morning, we will bless His name for giving us food and raiment. When we sit down to break our fast, we will bless the love which has provided a table for us. When we go forth to our work, we will bless the Lord who gives us strength to labor. If we must lie at home sorely sick, with fierce pain or slow decay, let us praise Him who heals and sanctifies all our diseases! Let us endeavor to display the sweet spirit of thankfulness from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same. Every moment may suggest a new verse of our life Psalm and cause us to magnify Him whose mercy endures forever!

Now, lastly, why should we wear the garment of praise? We should wear it as we wear other raiment, to keep us warm and comfortable, for there is no such vesture in the world as that of praise! It warms the inmost heart and sends a glow through the whole man. You may go to Nova Zembla and not freeze in such a robe! In the worst cases and in the most sorrowful plights, be you where you may, you are proof against outward circumstances when your whole being is enwrapped in praise! Wear it because it will comfort you. Wear it also because it will distinguish you from others. It will be livery to you and men will know whose servants you are. It will be a regimental dress and show to which army you belong. It will be a court dress and manifest to what dignity you have attained. So arrayed, you will bear the tokens of your Lord who often, in the days of His sorrow, lifted His eyes and heart to Heaven and thanked the great Father for His goodness!

May some poor burdened soul lose its heaviness while thinking over our text, and henceforth wear this kingly robe—the garment of praise! Amen.