

“THE LORD IS RISEN, INDEED”

NO. 1106

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 13, 1873,
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 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Why seek you the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen! Remember how
 He spoke unto you when He was yet in Galilee.”*

Luke 24:5, 6.

THE first day of the week commemorates the Resurrection of Christ and, following Apostolic example, we have made the first day of the week to be our Sabbath. Does not this intimate to us that the rest of our souls is to be found in the Resurrection of our Savior? Is it not true that a clear understanding of the rising again of our Lord is, through the power of the Holy Spirit, the very surest means of bringing our minds into peace? To have a part in the Resurrection of Christ is to enjoy that Sabbath which remains for the people of God. We who have believed in the risen Lord do enter into rest, even as He also, Himself, is resting at the right hand of the Father. In Him we rest because His work is finished, His Resurrection being the pledge that He has perfected all that is necessary for the salvation of His people and we are complete in Him.

I trust, this morning, that some restful thoughts may, by the power of the Holy Spirit, be sown in the minds of Believers while we make a pilgrimage to the new tomb of Joseph of Arimathea and see the place where the Lord lay.

I. And, first, this morning, I will speak to you upon certain INSTRUCTIVE MEMORIES which gather around the place where Jesus slept “with the rich in His death.” Though He is not there, He assuredly once was there, for “He was crucified, dead, and buried.” He was as dead as the dead now are and though He could see no corruption, nor could be held by the bands of death beyond the predestined time, yet He was in very deed most assuredly dead. No light remained in His eyes, no life in His heart. Thought had fled from His thorn-crowned brow and speech from His golden mouth. He was not, in mere appearance, but in *reality* dead—the spear-thrust decided that question once and for all.

Therefore in the sepulcher they laid Him, a dead Man, fit occupant of the silent tomb. Yet as He is not there now, but is risen, it is for us to search for memorials of His having been there. Not for the “holy sepulcher” will we contend with superstitious sectaries, but in spirit we will gather up the precious relics of the risen Redeemer. First, He has left in the grave the spices. When He rose He did not bring away the costly aromatics in which His body had been wrapped, but He left them there. Joseph brought about one hundred pounds of myrrh and aloes, and the odor remained. In the sweetest spiritual sense, our Lord Jesus has filled the grave with fragrance. It no longer smells of corruption and foul decay, but we can sing with the poet of the sanctuary—

*“Why should we tremble to convey
 These bodies to the tomb?
 There the dear flesh of Jesus lay,
 And left a long perfume.”*

Yonder lowly bed in the earth is now perfumed with costly spices and decked with sweet flowers, for on its pillow the truest Friend we have once laid His holy head! We will not start back with horror from the chambers of the dead, for the Lord, Himself, has traversed them—and where He goes no terror abides. The Master also left His grave clothes behind Him. He did not come from the tomb wrapped about with a winding-sheet. He did not wear the burial clothes of the tomb as the garments of life, but when Peter went into the sepulcher he saw the grave clothes lying carefully folded by themselves. What if I say He left them to be the hangings of the royal bedchamber wherein His saints fall asleep?

See how He has curtained our last bed! Our dormitory is no longer bare and drear, like a prison cell, but hung around with fair white linen and comely tapestry—a chamber fit for the repose of princes of the blood! We will go to our last bedchamber in peace, because Christ has furnished it for us! Or if we change the metaphor, I may say that our Lord has left those grave clothes for us to look upon as pledges of His fellowship with us in our low estate and reminders that

as *He* has cast aside the death garments, even so shall *we*. He has risen from His couch and left His sleeping robes behind Him in token that at our waking there are other vestures ready for us, also.

What if I again change the figure and say that as we have seen old tattered flags hung up in cathedrals and other national buildings as the memorials of defeated enemies and victories won, so in the crypt where Jesus vanquished death His grave clothes are hung up as the trophies of His victory over death, and as assurances to us that all His people shall be more than conquerors through Him that has loved them? “O Death, where is your sting? O Grave, where is your victory?” Then, carefully folded up and laid by itself, our Lord left the napkin that was about His head. Yonder lies that napkin now. The Lord needed it not when He came forth to life.

You who mourn may use it as a handkerchief with which to dry your eyes. You widows and you fatherless children—you mourning brothers and you weeping sisters—and you, you Rachels, who will not be comforted because your children are not here, take this which wrapped your Savior’s face and wipe your tears away forever! The Lord is risen, indeed, and therefore thus says the Lord, “Refrain your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears, for they shall come again from the land of the enemy.” “Your dead men shall live.” O mourner—together with the Lord’s dead body shall they arise! Why, sorrow not as they that are without hope, for if you believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so they, also, which sleep in Jesus will the Lord bring with Him!

What else has the risen Savior left behind Him? Our faith has learned to gather up memorials sweet from the couch of our Lord’s tranquil slumber. Well, Beloved, He left *angels* behind Him, and thus made the grave—

*“A cell where angels use
To come and go with heavenly news.”*

Angels were not in the tomb before, but, at His Resurrection, they descended! One rolled away the stone and others sat where the Body of Jesus had lain. They were the personal attendants and bodyguard of the Great Prince and, therefore, they attended Him at His rising, keeping the doorway and answering the enquiries of His friends. Angels are full of life and vigor, but they did not hesitate to assemble at the grave, gracing the Resurrection even as flowers adorn the spring!

I read not that our Master has ever recalled the angels from the sepulchers of His saints. And now, if Believers die as poor as Lazarus and as sick and as despised as he, angels shall convey their souls into the bosom of their Lord and their bodies, too, shall be watched by guardian spirits, as surely as Michael kept the body of Moses and contended for it with the foe. Angels are both the servitors of living saints and the custodians of their dust. What else did our Well-Beloved leave behind Him? He left an open passage from the tomb, for the stone was rolled away—doorless is that house of death! We shall, in our turn, if the Master comes not speedily, descend into the prison of the grave. What did I say?—I called it a “prison,” but how can it be a prison—it has no bolts or bars!

How can it be a prison, that has not even a door to close upon its occupants? Our Samson has pulled up the posts and carried away the gates of the grave with all their bars! The key is taken from the belt of Death and is held in the hands of the Prince of Life! The broken signal and the fainting watchmen are tokens that the dungeons of death can no more confine their captives! As Peter, when he was visited by the angel, found his chains fall off him and iron gates opened to him of their own accord, so shall the saints find ready escape at the Resurrection morning! They shall sleep awhile, each one in his resting place, but they shall rise readily, for the stone is rolled away!

A mighty angel rolled away the stone, for it was very great—and when he had done the deed he sat down upon the stone. His garment was white as snow and his face like lightning. And as he sat on the stone he seemed to say to Death and Hell, “Roll it back, again, if you can.” “Who shall rebuild for the tyrant his prison? The scepter lies broken that fell from his hands. His dominion is ended—the Lord is arisen! The helpless shall soon be released from their bands.” One thing else I venture to mention as left by my Lord in His forsaken tomb. I visited, some few months ago, several of the large grave vaults which are to be found outside the gates of Rome.

You enter a large square building, sunk in the earth, and descend by many steps. And as you descend you observe on the four walls of the great chamber, innumerable little pigeonholes in which are the ashes of tens of thousands of departed persons. Usually in front of each compartment prepared for the reception of the ashes stands a lamp. I have seen hundreds, if not thousands, of these lamps, but they are all *unlit* and, indeed, do not appear ever to have carried light. They shed no ray upon the darkness of death. But now our Lord has gone into the tomb and illuminated it with His Presence—“the lamp of His love is our guide through the gloom.”

Jesus has brought life and immortality to light by the Gospel! And now in the dovecotes where Christians nestle, there is light—yes, in every cemetery there is a light which shall burn through the watches of earth’s night till the day breaks and the shadows flee away—and the Resurrection morn shall dawn! So, then, the empty tomb of the Savior leaves us many sweet reflections which we will treasure up for our instruction.

II. Our text expressly speaks of VAIN SEARCHES—“Why seek you the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen!” There are places where seekers after Jesus should not expect to find Him, however diligent may be their search, however sincere their desire. You cannot find a man where he is not, and there are some spots where Christ never will be discovered. At this present moment I see many searching for Christ among the monuments of ceremonialism, or what Paul called, “the weak and beggarly elements,” for they, “observe days and months and times and years.” Ever since our Lord arose, Judaism and every form of symbolic ceremony have become nothing better than sepulchers.

The types were of God’s own ordaining, but when the Substance had come, the types became empty sepulchers and nothing more. Since that time men have invented other symbols which have not the sanction of Divine authority and are only dead men’s graves. At this present period the world has gone mad after its idols, deluded and deceived by those who have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. Surely there never was a period, even when Rome was most dominant, in which men heaped unto themselves ceremonies at such a rate as at the present day! They have made Christianity to be a greater yoke of bondage than was Judaism, itself—but in vain shall any sincere and awakened soul hope to find Jesus among these vain performances!

You may stumble from one holy day to another, and from one holy place to another, and from one hocus-pocus to another, but you shall not find a Savior in any of them, for thus has He Himself declared, “Neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem shall men worship the Father, but the hour comes, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in *spirit* and in *truth*, for the Father seeks such to worship Him.” Jesus has torn the veil and abolished ceremonial worship and yet men seek to revive it, building up the sepulchers which the Lord has broken down. This day He repeats in our ears the warning, “Take you good heed unto yourselves, for you saw no manner of similitude on the day that the Lord spoke unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire; lest you corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female.”

Yet certain men among us go about to set up the altars which our godly forefathers broke down, and the work of Reformers and of Protestants must now be done over again! God send us a Knox or a Luther with a mighty hammer to break in pieces the idols which the priests of Baal are setting up! They seek the living among the dead! Jesus is not in their masses and processions! He is risen far above such carnal worship! If He were a dead Christ, such a worship might, perchance, be a suitable pageant over His tomb. But to one who always lives, it must be insulting to present such materialistic services!

Alas, there are many others who are seeking Christ as their Savior among the tombs of moral reformation! Our Lord likened the Pharisees to whitewashed sepulchers—inwardly they were full of dead men’s bones, but outwardly they were fairly garnished. Oh, the way in which men, when they get uneasy about their souls, try to whitewash themselves! Some one gross sin is given up, not in heart, but only in appearance, and a certain virtue is cultivated, not in the soul, but only in the outward act—and thus they hope to be saved though they still remain enemies to God, lovers of sin and greedy seekers after the wages of unrighteousness! They hope that the clean outside of the cup and the platter will satisfy the Most High and that He will not be so severe as to look within and try their hearts.

O, Sirs, why do you seek the living among the dead? Many have sought peace for their consciences by their moral reforms—but if the Holy Spirit has truly convicted them of sin—they have soon found that they were looking for a living Christ amidst the tombs. He is not there, for He is risen! If Christ were dead, we might well say to you, “Go and do your best to be your own saviors,” but while Christ is alive, He needs no help of yours—He will save you from top to bottom, or not at all. He will be Alpha and Omega to you and if you put your hands upon His work and think in any way that you can help Him, you have dishonored His holy name—and He will have nothing to do with you! Seek not a living salvation among the sepulchers of outward formality.

Too many, also, are struggling to find the living Christ amidst the tombs which cluster so thickly at the foot of Sinai. They look for life by the Law, whose ministry is death. Men think that they are to be saved by keeping God’s Commandments. They are to do their best and they conceive that their sincere endeavors will be accepted—and they will

thus save themselves. This self-righteous idea is diametrically opposed to the whole spirit of the Gospel! The Gospel is not for you who can save yourselves, but for those who are lost! If you can save yourselves, go and do it, but do not mock the Savior with your hypocritical prayers! Go and stumble among the tombs of ancient Israel and perish as they did in the wilderness, for Moses and the Law can never lead you into rest.

The Gospel is for sinners who cannot keep the Law for themselves—who have broken it and incurred its penalty! The Gospel is for those who know that they have done so and confess it. For such, a living Savior has come that He may blot out their transgressions. Seek not salvation by the works of the Law, for by them shall no flesh living be justified. By the Law is the *knowledge* of sin and nothing more! Righteousness, peace, life, salvation come by faith in the living Lord Jesus Christ and by no other means! “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved,” but if you go about to establish your own righteousness, you shall surely perish because you have rejected the righteousness of Christ.

There are others who seek the living Jesus among the tombs by looking for something good in human nature—in their own natural hearts and dispositions. I can see you now, for I have known you a long time and this has always been your folly—you will go into the morgue of your own nature and say, “Is Jesus here?” Beloved, you are sad and depressed and I do not wonder. Look at yonder dry bones and bleaching skeletons. See that heap of rotteness, that mass of corruption, that body of death—can you bear it? “Ah,” you say, “I am a wretched man, indeed, but I long to find some good thing in my flesh!”

O Beloved, you search in vain! You might as well rake Hell over to find Heaven in it as look into your own carnal nature to find consolation! Behold this day, God has abandoned the old nature and given it up to death. Under the old Law, circumcision was the putting away of the filth of the flesh, as though after this filth were gone the flesh might perhaps be bettered, but now, under the New Covenant, we have a far deeper symbol, for, “know you not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by Baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we, also, should walk in newness of life.” “The old man is buried as a dead thing out of which no good can come.” “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him that the body of sin might be destroyed, that from now on we should not serve sin.”

God does not attempt to renew the old carnal mind, but to make us new creatures in Christ Jesus. If any man continually practices introspection with a view to consolation, he might as well pile up blocks of Wenham ice with a view to burn down a city! If you are turning over your frames and feelings, your thoughts and imaginations, to discover comfort, you might far sooner hope to find precious diamonds in the sweepings of the roads. “He is not here,” says the whole of our old nature. He is not here, He is risen! And for consolation you must look alone to Him, as He is enthroned above the skies.

Yet again, too many have tried to find Christ amidst the gloomy catacombs of the world’s philosophy. For instance, on Sunday they like to have a sermon full of thought—thought being, in the modern meaning of it, something beyond, if not opposite to, the simple teaching of the Bible. If a man tells his people what he finds in the Scriptures he is said to “talk platitudes.” But if a man amuses his people with his own dreams, however opposed they may be to God’s thoughts, he is a “thinking man,” a “highly intellectual preacher.” There are some who love, above all things, the maundering of daydreamers and the crudities of skeptics. If they can hear what an infidel Professor has said against Inspiration—if they can be indulged with the last new blasphemy—some hearers feel that they are making advances in that higher culture which is so much vaunted nowadays!

But, believe me, the bat-haunted caves of false philosophy and pretended science have been searched again and again, and salvation dwells not in them! In Paul’s day there were Gnostics who tracked all the winding passages of vain-glorious learning, but they only discovered “another gospel which was not another.” The world by wisdom knew not God. After roaming amid the dreary catacombs of philosophy, we come back to breathe the fresh air of the living Word and concerning the mazes of science, we gasp out the sentence—“He is not there.” Reason has not found Him in her deepest mining, nor speculation in her highest soaring, though, indeed, He is not far from any one of us! Athens has her unknown God, but in the simple Gospel God is known in the Person of Jesus.

Socrates and Plato hold up their candles, but Jesus is the soul. Our moderns quibble and dispute and yet a living Christ is among us converting sinners, cheering saints and glorifying God! If the Lord were a dead question for debate, philosophy might help us. But as He is a living power, a grain of faith in Him is better than mountains of philosophy. O

you who know not the inner life and the quickening Spirit, what have you to do with the risen Lord? As well might corruption's world become the judge of cherubim as you become the arbiters of the Truth of God concerning Jesus our Lord!

How anxiously do I wish that you who have been searching for salvation in any of these directions would give up the hopeless task and understand that Christ is near you—and if you, with the heart, believe on Him, and with the mouth confess Him, you shall be saved. “Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and beside Me there is none else.” This is His cry to you. “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” Jesus is still living and able to save to the uttermost! All you have to do is simply turn the glance of your faith towards Him—by that faith He becomes yours—and you are saved! But oh, seek not the living among the dead, for He is risen!

III. We will again change our strain and consider, in the third place, UNSUITABLE ABODES. The angels said to the women, “He is not here, but is risen!” As much as to say—since He is alive He does not abide here. The living Christ might have sat down in the tomb—He might have made the sepulcher His resting place—but it would not have been appropriate. And so He teaches us today that Christians should dwell in places appropriate to them. You are risen in Christ—you ought not to dwell in the grave!

I shall now speak to those who, to all intents and purposes, live in the sepulcher though they are risen from the dead. Some of these are excellent people, but their temperament, and perhaps their mistaken convictions of duty, lead them to be perpetually gloomy and desponding. They hope they have believed in Christ, but they are not sure. They trust that they are saved, but they would not be presumptuous enough to say so. They do not dare to be happy in the conviction that they are accepted in the Beloved! They love the mournful string of the harp. They mourn an absent God. They hope that the Divine promises will be fulfilled—they trust that, perhaps, one of these days they may come forth into light and see a little of the brightness of the Lord's love—but now they are ready to quit, they dwell in the valley of the shadow of death and their soul is sorely burdened.

Dear Friend, do you think this is a proper condition for a Christian to be in? I am not going to deny your Christianity for a moment, for I have not half so much doubt about that as you have. I have a better opinion of you than you have of yourself! The most trembling Believer in Jesus is saved and your little faith will save you. But do you really think that Christ meant you to stay where you are, sitting in the cold and silent tomb amid the dust and ashes? Why keep underground? Why not come into the Master's garden where the flowers are breathing perfume? Why not enjoy the fresh light of full assurance and the sweet breath of the Spirit's comforting influences?

It was a madman who dwelt among the tombs—do not imitate him. Do not say I have been such a sinner that this is all I deserve to enjoy. If you talk of deserving, you have left the Gospel altogether. I know you believe in Jesus and you would not give up your hope for all the world. You feel, after all, that He is a precious Christ to you. Come, then, rejoice in Him though you cannot rejoice in yourself. Come, Beloved, come out of this dreary vault, leave it at once! Though you have lain among the pots, yet now you shall be as the wings of a dove covered with silver and her feathers with yellow gold. Your Master comes to you now and says, “O My Dove, that are in the clefts of the rocks, in the secret places of the stairs, let Me see your countenance, let Me hear your voice; for sweet is your voice, and your countenance is comely.”

Members of the body of a risen Savior, will you still lie in the grave? Arise and come away! Doubt no longer! O Believer, what cause have you to doubt your God? Has He ever lied to you? Question no longer the power of the precious blood. Why should you doubt it? Is it not able to cleanse you from sin? No longer enquire as to whether you are saved or can be—if you believe, you are as safe as Christ is! You can no more perish than Christ can if you are resting in Him—His word has pledged it, His honor is involved in it—He will surely bring you unto the promised rest! Therefore be glad. Why, I have known a Brother live down in the catacombs and vaults so long that he has condemned his Brethren for living in the sunlight, and has said, “I cannot understand a man speaking so confidently, I cannot understand it.”

My dear Brother, because you cannot understand it, it is not, therefore, wrong. There is a great deal about eagles that owls do not understand. You that are always fretting and worrying in that way are sinning against God—you are grieving His Spirit! You are acting inconsistently with your Christian profession and yet you judge others who believe God to be true and take Him at His Word and therefore get joy and comfort out of His promise! Never do that—it would be wicked, indeed, for you to set yourselves up as judges. Instead, pray the Lord to lift up the light of His

Countenance upon you, to give you joy and peace in believing, for this He says, “Rejoice in the Lord you righteous, and shout for joy all you that are upright in heart.” Come out of the tomb, dear Brothers and Sisters, for Jesus is not there and if He is not there why should *you* be? He is risen! O rise into comfort, too, in His Spirit’s power!

Another sort of people seem to dwell among the tombs—I mean Christians—and I trust real Christians. They are very, very worldly. It is no sin for a man to be diligent in business, but it is a grievous fault when diligence in business destroys fervency in spirit—and when there is no serving of God in daily life. A Christian man should be diligent so as to provide things honest in the sight of all men, but there are some who are not content with this. They have enough, but they covet more, and when they have more, they still stretch their arms like seas to grasp in all the shore. Their main thought is not God, but *gold*—not Christ, but *wealth*.

O Brothers and Sisters, Brothers and Sisters, permit me earnestly to rebuke you lest you receive a severe rebuke in Providence in your own souls. Christ is not here! He dwells not in piles of silver. You may be very rich and yet not find Christ in it at all—and you might be poor, and yet if Christ were with you, you would be happy as the angels. He is not here, He is risen! A marble tomb could not hold Him, nor could a golden tomb have contained Him. Let it not contain you! Unwrap the grave clothes of your heart—cast all your cares on God who cares for you. Let your conversation be in Heaven. Set not your affection on things on the earth, but set it upon things above where Christ sits at the right hand of God.

Once more on this point, a subject more grievous still—there are some professors who *live* in the house of sin. Yet they say that they are Christ’s people! No, I will not say they live in it, but they do what, perhaps, is worse—they go to sin to find their pleasures. I suppose we may judge of a man more by where he finds his pleasure than by almost anything else. A man may say, “I do not habitually frequent the gaieties of the world. I am not *always* found where sin is mixed with mirth and where worldlings dance upon the verge of Hell—but I go there now and then for a special treat.” I cannot help quoting the remark of Rowland Hill, who, when he met with a professor who went to the theater—a member of his Church—said to him, “I understand you attend the theater.” “No,” he said, “I only go for a treat now and then.”

“Ah,” said Mr. Hill, “that makes it all the worse. Suppose that somebody said, ‘Mr. Hill is a strong being, he eats carrion,’ and I am asked, ‘Is it true, Mr. Hill, that you live on carrion?’ ‘No, I do not habitually eat carrion, but I have a dish of it now and then just for a treat.’ Why, you would think I was nastier than I should have been if I had eaten it ordinarily.” There is much force in the remark. If anything that verges on the unclean and lascivious is a treat to you, why then, your very heart is unclean and you are seeking your pleasure and comfort among the dead!

There are some things that men take pleasure in nowadays that are only fit to make idiots laugh, or else to cause angels to weep. Do be particular, Christian men and women, in your company. You are brothers to Christ—will you consort with the sons of Belial? You are heirs of perfection in Christ. You are, even now, arrayed in spotless linen, and you are fair and lovely in the sight of God—you are a royal priesthood, you are the elect of mankind—will you trail your garments in the mire and make yourselves the sport of the Philistines? Will you consort with the beggarly children of the world? No, act according to your pedigree and your newborn nature and never seek the living among the dead. Jesus was never there—go not there yourselves. He loved not the noise and turmoil of the world’s pleasures. He had meat to eat of another kind. God grant you to feel the Resurrection life strong within your spirits.

IV. But I pass on from that. In the fourth place, I want to warn you against UNREASONABLE SERVICES. Those good people to whom the angels said, “He is not here, but is risen!” were bearing a load, and what were they carrying? What is Joanna carrying, and her servants? And Mary, what is she carrying? Why, white linen—and what else? Pounds of spices, the most precious they could buy. What are they going to do? Ah, if an angel could laugh, I should think he must have smiled as he found they were coming to embalm Christ!

“Why He is not here and, what is more, He is not dead! He does not need any embalming, He is alive!” You might have seen all over England, on Good Friday, and also on this Easter Sunday, crowds of people—I have no doubt very sincere people—coming to embalm Christ. They tolled a bell because He was dead and they hung crepe over what they call their altars because He was dead, and they fasted and sung sad hymns over their dead Savior! I bless the Lord my Redeemer is not dead—and I have no bells to toll for Him, either! He is risen, He is not here! Here they come, crowds of them with their white linen and their precious spices to wrap a dead Christ up in!

Are they mad? But they say, “We were only acting it over again.” Oh, was that it? Practical charades, was it? Acting the glorious Atonement of Calvary as a play! Then I accuse the performers of blasphemy before the Throne of the eternal God who hears my words! I charge them with profanity in daring to rehearse in mimicry that which was once done and done forever and is never to be repeated! No, I cannot suppose they meant to mimic the great Sacrifice, and, therefore, I conclude that they thought their Savior to be dead. And so they said, “Toll the bells for Him! Kneel down and weep before His image on a cross.”

If I believed Jesus Christ died on Good Friday, I would feast all day long because His death is over! As He has ordained the high festival of the Lord’s Supper to be His commemoration, I would follow His bidding and keep no fast. Who would sit down and whine over a Friend once dead if you know Him to be restored to life and exalted in power? Why toll a bell for a living Friend? However, I condemn not the good people any more than the angels condemned those holy women, only they may take their spices home and their white linen, too, for Jesus is alive and does not need them!

In other ways a great many fussy people do the same thing. See how they come forward in defense of the Gospel. It has been discovered by geology and by arithmetic that Moses was wrong. Straightway many go out to defend Jesus Christ. They argue for the Gospel and apologize for it, as if it were now a little out of date and we must try to bring it round to suit modern discoveries and the philosophies of the present period. That seems to me exactly like coming up with your linen and precious spices to wrap Him in. Take them away! I question whether Butler and Paley have not, both of them, created more infidels than they ever cured—and whether most of the defenses of the Gospel are not sheer impertinences. The Gospel does not need defending! If Jesus Christ is not alive and cannot fight His own battles, then Christianity is in an evil case.

But He is and we have only to preach His Gospel in all its naked simplicity, and the power that goes with it will be the evidence of its dignity. No other evidence will ever convince mankind. Apologies and defenses are well intended, no doubt—so was the embalming well intended by these good women—but they are of small value. Give Christ room, give His preachers space and opportunities to preach the Gospel and let the Truth of God be brought out in simple language! And you will soon hear the Master say, “Take away the spices, take away the linen! I am alive, I do not need these.” We see the same kind of thing in other good people who are sticklers for old-fashioned, stereotyped ways—they must have everything conducted exactly as it used to be conducted 100 or 200 years ago. Puritan order must be maintained and there must be no divergence.

The way of putting the Gospel must be exactly the same way in which it was put by good old Dr. So-and-So, and in the pulpit there must be the most awful dreariness that can possibly be compassed. And the preacher must be devoutly dull and all the worship must be serenely proper—lots of spices and fine linen to wrap a dead Christ up in! I delight to break down conventional proprieties. It is a grand thing to put one’s foot right through merely human regulations—life cannot be strapped down by regulations fit only for the dead! Death lies wrapped up like a mummy in the museum—it will always do the proper thing, or rather won’t do anything at all. But Life, reality, will show itself unexpected ways. Life will say what Death could not say. It will break out where it was not expected and break all your laws and regulations into a thousand pieces!

But still I see the good people holding up their hands in horror, and crying out, “Bring here the Arabian gum, the myrrh and the aloes. Bring here the linen—we must take care of our dear, dead Master.” Leave Him alone! Leave Him alone, Man, He is alive and does not need your wrapping up. I do not hesitate to say that a great deal of Church order among Dissenters and Episcopalians, Presbyterians and all sorts of denominations—and a great deal of propriety and decorum, and regulation, and, “As-it-was-in-the-beginning-is-now-and-ever-shall-be-isms”—are only so much spices and knell for a dead Christ. But Christ is alive and what is needed is to give Him room!

I do not say this for my own sake—am I not always proper?—but I say it for the sake of earnest Brother Evangelists who, in preaching to the poor, use extravagance of language and perhaps of action. Let them use it. Scoffers say they are histrionic. Was ever anybody ever half so histrionic as Ezekiel? Did not all the Prophets do strange things to get the attention of the people? Why, the same charge was brought against Whitfield and Wesley—“These people are breaking through all rules,” and so on. What a blessed thing it is when men can do it! Mr. Hill went to Scotland to preach the Gospel and they said he rode on the back of all order and decorum.

Then said *he*, “I will call my pair of horses by those names, and make it true.” It was true! No doubt he did ride on the back of order and decorum, but then he drew souls to Christ with those two strange steeds and his breaking through rules enabled him to get at men and women who never would have been got at in any other way. Be ready to set Christ at liberty and give His servants liberty to serve Him as the Spirit of God shall guide them.

V. I wanted to speak, last of all, upon THE AMAZING NEWS which these good women received—“He is not here, but is risen!” This was amazing news to His enemies. They said, “We have killed Him—we have put Him in the tomb—it is all over with Him.” Aha! Scribe, Pharisee, Priest! What have you done? Your work is all undone, for He is risen! It was terrifying news for Satan. He, no doubt, dreamed that he had destroyed the Savior—but He is risen! What a thrill had gone through all the regions of Hell! What news it had been for the grave!

Now it was utterly destroyed and Death had lost his sting! What news it was for trembling saints. “He is risen, indeed.” They plucked up courage and they said, “The good cause is still the right one and it will conquer, for our Christ is still alive as its Head! It was good news for sinners! Yes, it is good news for every sinner here. Christ is alive! If you seek Him He will be found of you. He is not a dead Christ to whom I point you today. He is risen! And He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him. There is no better news for sad men, for distressed, desponding and despairing men than this—the Savior lives—able, still, to save and willing to receive you to His tender heart!

This was glad news, Beloved, for all the angels and all the spirits in Heaven! Glad news, indeed, for them. And this day it shall be glad news to us, and we will live in the power of it by the help of His Spirit. And we will tell it to our Brethren that they may rejoice with us, and we will not despair any longer. We will give way no more to doubts and fears, but we will say to one another, “He is risen, indeed: therefore let our hearts be glad.” The Lord bless you, and in coming to His table, as I trust many of His people will come, let us meet our risen Master. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Luke 24.

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