

A PEAL OF BELLS

NO. 399

A SERMON

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*“In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses,
HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD.”*

Zechariah 14:20

THERE are many days *already past* which we might well have wished to see. Who would not have rejoiced to have beheld the day when God smote Rahab and broke the dragon in the deep waters, when Miriam took the timbrel and went forth with the daughters of Israel, saying, “Sing unto the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea”?

Who might not have wished to have witnessed the glorious victories of the judges when they put to rout the oppressors of Israel, or that day when David returned from the slaughter of Goliath, or that auspicious morn when Solomon’s temple, glittering in unrivalled magnificence, was dedicated by a vast concourse of people with generous sacrifice to the worship of the true God?

Many days there were in the chronicles of the Jewish church which are never to be forgotten—earth’s red-letter days when God made bare His arm and showed forth His might. Days there were, too, in Christ’s history which it was a High Privilege to see. The day of His birth—would that we had been among the shepherds on the plain when they heard the angels sing, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.”

Or the day of His death, when He cried, “It is finished,” and yielded up the ghost. Or better still, the day of His resurrection, when He routed all our foes by rising again for our justification. Or the day of His ascension, when He led captivity captive and ascended up on high. Or even that day of Pentecost, when the Spirit of God fell on the disciples, and when they, preaching with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance, multitudes were added to the church from those who were ordained unto eternal life.

Those days are gone. We look back upon them with faith, and as Abraham rejoiced in prospect, so would we do in retrospect. But there are days *yet to come* for whose advent we may well be eager. There is the day when Ephraim shall not envy Judah, nor Judah vex Ephraim—for all the church of Christ shall be one in spirit.

There is the day when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. There is the day, too, when Israel shall be restored to its own land—when its country shall be called no more desolate, but Beulah, and no more forsaken, but Hephzibah shall its name be—for the Lord delights in it.

There is specially the day of the second advent—that day of days for which methinks all other days that went before were made, that day which shall be the summing up, the total of all ages—for the fullness of time shall come, and Christ in the fullness of His glory shall reign among the sons of men.

I think I may with your permission add to the days which we might desire to see that which is spoken of in the text—“In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD.” What connection there may be between that day and others which I have mentioned it is not my purpose this morning to explain.

I would that this were to us personally the day when it should be fulfilled in us as individuals, and may the Lord hasten the happy day when universally throughout the church this text has been fulfilled, and upon the bells of the horses there shall be, “HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD!”

The text, as you perceive, deals with horses which were unclean under the Jewish law. Yet, in the day spoken of in the text, the horses themselves shall be purged from commonness or uncleanness, and their harness shall be dedicated to God as certainly as the vestments of the High Priest himself. It will be a happy day indeed when the men who deal with horses, too often a race anything but honest and upbeat, shall exhibit in their common transactions a consecration to God, so that on the horses' furniture shall be written, Holiness to the Lord.

The original Hebrew word translated "bells" is a very singular one, because nobody knows precisely what it means. The fact is, the Hebrews knew so little of horses from being interdicted from their use that they had not a very large vocabulary to describe the harness and other equipments of the horse. The word is translated by some critics, "bells," by others, "bits," by some, "frontlets," by others, "collars," by some, and by Calvin especially, "blinkers," and Calvin also hints that the word may mean "stables."

The words must then mean—"The furniture of the horses shall be, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD." And there is no doubt a comparison between the horses and the High Priest—if it be the frontlet—just as the High Priest wore upon his brow the Hebrew letters in gold, "Holiness to the Lord," so on the frontlet of the horses shall be Holiness to the Lord. And as the High Priest wore bells about his garments, so when the horses are decorated with their silver bells, there shall be on the bells, Holiness to the Lord.

And if it signify any other kind of vestment, even as on the very ornaments of the Priest, on his ephod and breastplate holiness was written, so in every article that shall be by the horse, shall holiness to God be most clearly manifest, yea, even the stables, unconsecrated as one would suppose they must always remain, shall be consecrated to God. The commonest buildings, set apart to meanest uses, being frequented by worshippers of the Lord, shall become temples of Him who dwells in humble and contrite hearts.

The simple meaning of the text is just this—that the day shall come when in common life holiness shall be the guiding star—when the ordinary actions of human existence shall be as much the worship of God as the sacrifice on the altar or the mission of the high priest when he went within the veil.

Everything which was most despised—the horses, the places that seemed the least likely to be consecrated—the stables, and those things which seemed the least holy, even the horses' harness—all shall be so thoroughly used in obedience to God's will that everywhere there shall be written, "Holiness unto JEHOVAH."

Common things, then, in the day spoken of by Zechariah, are to be dedicated to God and used in His service.

I shall work out this great thought in a somewhat novel manner. First, let us *hear the horses' bells*. Secondly, let us *commend their music*. And then, thirdly, let us *go home and tune our bells*, that they may be in harmony with this sacred chime—"HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD!"

I. First of all, let us HEAR THESE HORSES BELLS, which according to the text are to be tuned to the heavenly note of "HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD."

First, let us mark the trappings of the steed as he goes forth *to war*. He chomps his bit and is eager for the fray. His snortings are terrible, his neck is clothed with lightning, and he cries in the midst of the battle, "Aha! Aha! Aha!"

War is to our minds the most difficult thing to sanctify to God. The genius of the Christian religion is altogether contrary to everything like strife of any kind—much more to the deadly clash of arms. Yet it may be possible that occasions may arise in which war itself might become hallowed. And certainly we must not deny that many of those who have to deal with war are at this day consecrated men, like Cornelius' devout soldier, and as truly servants of Christ in the army as though they were civilians.

Now I say again, I am no apologist for war—from my soul I loathe it—and I do not understand the position of a Christian as a warrior, but still I greatly rejoice that there are to be found at this present day in the ranks many of those who fear God and adorn the doctrine of God their Savior. I may almost venture to say that the war against the tyrant, Charles I, was a consecrated fight.

The people of God had been hunted like partridges upon the mountains in the reigns of Elizabeth, and James, and Charles. At last their lion-like spirits turned at bay, and their enemies were driven back before their gallant fury. When Cromwell, the Christian hero, mounted his charger and bade his saintly warriors, with the sword in one hand and the Bible in the other, fight for England's liberty.

I think in those valiant charges when they shouted their battle-cry—"The Lord of hosts is with us. The God of Jacob is our refuge"—there was, if ever there was, upon the frontlets of the horses, their collars, and their bits, "HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD." May such a war never rise again—but honor to the ashes of the consecrated brave!

If I could believe that there were in America a sincere desire on the part of the Northerners to set free every slave, I would say, "God speed their swords and bless their arms." If I could believe that the chain would be broken and that it was their intent to do it—if I did not fear that they will yet compromise, and make terms with the bloodhound's master, and let him still hold his blood-stained property in the souls and bodies of men—I would say that that might be, if war ever could be, a consecrated war, and the bits of the horses would be "HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD."

But since that is a difficult point to speak of, since, as I have said before, the very genius and spirit of Christianity go against war altogether, though I must believe there have been occasions in which the bells of war-horses have been HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD, yet I would rather speak of individuals.

If there ever lived a man who, unselfish in spirit, and without any desire of aggrandizement or selfish honor, held in his hand a consecrated sword, it is Garibaldi. I think of him, for his speeches make me believe it, not only as a hero, but as a Christian, as the scourge of Popery and the enemy of all despotism.

It might be said that his war-garments are Holiness to the Lord. The same might we say of Hedley Vicars, whose history, so well-written, you have all so often read, and of Havelock, our own true Havelock, who for the deliverance of our own wives and sisters, in silence rushed upon his prey, and delivered women and children out of the fierce jaws of the blood-loving tiger.

These men preached Christ wherever they went. I love not their trade, but I love them. I would wish them to put up their swords into their scabbards, but when they did draw them, I am sure they did it in the full conviction that they were doing their duty—and though even that may not justify the error—yet it must prevent any of us from condemning them. I believe that they did it as in the sight of God and what they did was to them Holiness unto the Lord.

Oh! may there never be war again! May peace reign! But if there must be wars, may they all be just ones! If there must be fighting, may it always be for the freedom of the slave, and the deliverance of the helpless! And in all this may JEHOVAH, even in the battle, in the garments rolled in blood, and in the fire and vapor of smoke, still be acknowledged, and across the field of fire may there be written, "HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD!"

We turn aside awhile, for other horses are coming, and their bells are ringing forth Holiness unto the Lord. Horses are used in state. In splendor, kings, princes, and judges of the land ride through the crowd. The text says, "Upon the bells of the horses shall be, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD." Drawn by noble steeds, glittering with rich caparisons, an exalted personage passes through the thronging mass. It is a sovereign and oh! when the sovereign of a nation has a heart which bows before God, and has a hope of an immortal and an imperishable crown, then regal state is sanctified, and the bells upon the horses are Holiness unto the Lord.

When a Sir Matthew Hale rode in the judge's chariot to distribute justice, surely the state which attended the Lord Chief Justice of the land was holiness to God. And when a Sir Thomas Abney, even on the night of the Lord Mayor's banquet, retired awhile, that he might have prayer with his family and his servants, surely then the too gaudy show of civic pomp was for that once Holiness unto the Lord. And I think, when Wilberforce went to the House of Commons, however he might ride, the bit of his horse was Holiness to the Lord.

Since we cannot dispense with the ceremonial honor which surrounds governors, we must consecrate it. As long as kingdoms remain, it must be the prayer of Christians that the state may be a holy state, and that its officers and governors may be devout and upright men.

Little do we know, my brethren, what mischief would soon be done in the high places of the land, if we had back again upon the throne a George the Fourth—if once again our eminent men were found indulging in the lowest pastimes of the very scum of this city. If again unblushing bribery defiled the judgment seat. If a bloody Jeffreys could browbeat the saints of God once more—then we should consider it a matter of importance to pray to God for kings and those in authority.

Had we not, my brethren, better think it a matter of importance now, and pray daily to God that He would cause the state to be more and more consecrated to Him, so that the very bells upon the horses, as they walk in solemn pomp, may be Holiness unto the Lord?

But I hear the tinkling of other bells. The day is to come when, not only war and the states shall be consecrated to Christ, but even pleasure and recreation shall become Holiness to the Lord. When you are traveling in Alpine regions, you will be amused by the ringing of the little bells upon the horses. You are there for rest, to recruit the body, but let that rest be taken in the spirit of holiness.

I fear that many leave their religion behind them when they go to the seaside or to continental countries. It ought not to be so—in our pleasures as well as in everything else—on the very bells of the horses there should be, Holiness unto the Lord. A Christian needs recreation as well as another man—the bow must be unstrung, for the soul always bent to work shall soon lose the energy to labor. There must be times for breathing the fresh country air, and looking upon the meadows and the fields.

I wish such days came oftener to the poor toiling population of this huge labyrinth of bricks. Would that you could oftener see the laughing face of the verdant earth and the smokeless heavens! But mark this—let us as Christians see to it that we carry the spirit of this text with us wherever we go—that the bells of the horses be Holiness to the Lord, and our very recreations should be done as sacredly and as much in the sight of God as our sacraments and our solemn feast days.

Does recreation mean sin? Then, indeed, have nothing to do with it. Does pleasure mean iniquity? Deny, deny yourselves. But there are pleasures which mean no such thing. As you traverse Alpine regions, let your thoughts stand on the mountaintops and talk with God, or if you walk the fair lanes of England, let the cool retreat become an oratory for your soul. Why everything that your eye looks upon, from the king-cup in the meadow to the cedar upon the mountain may make you praise God. And when it is so, then the bells upon the horses are Holiness to the Lord.

If in seeking rest you are really desiring to get strength that you may spend it in His service, if you take rest not for your pleasure's sake, but that stringing your muscles once more and getting your soul into tune, you may with greater vigor serve Him in days to come—then, again, the bells of the horses are Holiness to the Lord.

And if you avail yourself of any opportunities which your recreation throws in your way, to speak a kind word and a word for Christ to those whom you pass or with whom you have chance communion in your travelings—then, again, the bells of the horses are Holiness to the Lord.

It is greatly to be regretted that the mass of our people who go to the seaside, and especially who go to Paris, leave their godliness behind them. One of the Ministers of the church at L'Oratoire told me the manner in which English Christians spend their Sabbaths in Paris is a very serious impediment to the growth of religion in France.

Men think that when they are abroad they may leave their habits which they practiced at home behind them. Full often have I known that at the seaside, Christians knowingly and willfully keep the proprietors of the houses where they lodge from places of worship, to prepare them sumptuous repasts on the Sabbath day, and so they are virtually prevented from hearing the Word of God for six or nine months in the year.

There may be some of you who are going out by and by, I beg you in your recreation not to leave your religion behind you. You will put off your black coat and put on your tourist's suit—but take your

Christian character with you, I beseech you. Why should it be thought of you that your religion is a local thing, and that out of the way of society, which is a sort of check upon you, you may be free to sin as others do.

Listen to the bells again. Horses are used for journeying. We must all journey sometimes, and when we do, the bells upon the horses and the shrill scream of the steam engine should still be—"HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD."

The missionary is crossing the sea. Perhaps at this very hour while we are sitting quietly here, his boat is leaping the billows and springing from mountain-wave to mountain-wave. I believe that every motion of the paddles is Holiness to the Lord, because the ship is carrying forth God's appointed messenger to proclaim the Gospel among the heathen.

There are Christian men on board who are not going forth to preach, but to emigrate and settle down. Now if they intend in emigrating to establish a church of Christ where they are to live, and to preach the Gospel where they may be called to go, every motion of the vessel is Holiness unto the Lord.

Perhaps she carries merchants who go abroad to trade and return again—but if they are about to trade as Christians, and then consecrate their substance unto God, that vessel, though when she leaves a black trail across the sky in her cloud of smoke, is as accepted as the smoke of sacrifice—is Holiness unto the Lord.

Where there is a true heart, the horse that bears it is a consecrated one. Let our goings out be in the Lord's sight. We are lights—if the light is moved, it should be to illuminate other places. We are salt—if the salt be scattered, it should be that the conserving influence should be felt the more widely. Do not leave home unless you feel that you can take your Master with you, and when you are away from home, ever seek to be doing something for your Master—that when you are gone, you may leave a fragrance behind you.

How much good might some do who are called to travel continually! There are some few in this church, for instance, who travel as commercial gentlemen. I know one or two of them who scarcely ever go into a town without preaching the Word there. And I know others of them who, in the commercial room where they meet with some who despise the religion of Christ, speak boldly for the truth as it is in Jesus, and they are as useful in their daily journeyings as any Christian men could be who filled up a place in the Sabbath school or officiated as deacons in the church at home.

Let your journeys, then, always be with the ringing of these bells, "HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD."

But horses of old were also used for merchandise, and when the packhorses went in long strings, the fore-horses always had bells that the others might be guided in the darkness. I think there is an allusion to that in the text, for such may have been the custom of the Eastern caravans—as indeed it was. And the text means, then, that merchandise and our common trade should be Holiness unto the Lord.

O sirs! when you take down your shutters in the morning, let it be with a prayer that your business of the day may be as much a sacrifice to God as the business which I may have to transact as the pastor of the church. And when you stand behind the counter, ask of God that in your dealings—though they be common to the eyes of men—there may be an inward spirituality which God shall discover, that thus there may be Holiness to the Lord.

Sometimes when some of you have been stirred up by a sermon, you have come to me and said, "Mr. Spurgeon, could I go to China? Could I become a missionary? Could I become a minister?" In very many cases, the brethren who offer are exceedingly unfit for any service of the kind—for they have very little gift of expression, very little natural genius, and no adaptation for such a work.

And I have constantly and frequently to say, "My dear brother, be consecrated to Christ in your daily calling. Do not seek to take a spiritual office, but spiritualize your common office." Why, the cobbler can consecrate his lap stone while many a minister has desecrated his pulpit. The ploughman can put his hand to the plough in as holy a manner as ever did a minister to the sacramental bread.

In dealing with your ribbons and your groceries, in handling your bricks and your jackplanes, you can be as truly priests to God as were those who slew the bullocks and burned them with the holy fire in the days of yore. This old fact needs to be brought out again. We do not so much need great preachers as good upright traders. It is not so much deacons and elders we long for as it is to have men who are deacons for Christ in common life, and are really elders of the church in their ordinary conversation.

Sirs, Christ did not come into the world to take all fishermen from their nets, though He did take some. He did not call all publicans from the receipt of custom, though He did call one. He did not come to make every Martha into a Mary, though He did bless a Martha and a Mary too.

He would have you be housewives still. Be sisters of mercy in your own habitations. He would have you be traders, buyers, and sellers, workers, and toilers still—for the end of Christianity is not to make preachers—but to make holy men. The preacher is but the tool. He may be sometimes but the scaffold of the house. But *you* are God's husbandry, *you* are God's building, *you*, in your common acts and your common deeds, are they who are to serve God.

That wicked fiction of the Church of Rome—that her *cathedrals* are holy—has made us think that our *houses* are not. Why, my friends, our houses are as holy—or ought to be—as ever church or chapel. Some seem to think that there is some peculiar sanctity about aisles and oak seats, stone pillars, and gothic arches. Holiness cannot belong to stones—holiness has to do with nothing except the acts and thoughts of intelligent subjects. And if holiness can by metaphor belong to places or substances, it must be through the Christian holy minds that are in contact with them.

I will not have it that yonder parish church or that this place is one that is one whit more holy than that room where you live if you there offer prayer and praise. Oh! brethren, you must not think that the table, and the font, and the baptistery are holy. No, no—if there be holiness in them, so may there be in your own table, in your own labors, and in your own tools which you handle. At least, there will be as much in one as in the other if, with a holy mind, you serve God in both.

Not confined holiness—that is superstition, universal holiness—that is Christianity. Not the bowls upon the altar holy—that is Judaism, but the bells upon the horses holy—that is true living godliness and vital Christianity. See to it, then, Christian friends, in your common daily doings, that the bells upon the horses are Holiness unto the Lord.

But horses were also used, as they still are, for *toil*, and toil, though I have already anticipated the subject—toil is to be Holiness to the Lord. The horse is turning over the furrow with the plough, and if it be held by a godly farmer, the bells upon that horse are Holiness unto the Lord. And now it is time when the hay should be cut down and carted. If with gratitude in his bosom, the husbandman takes home the fruit of the earth, the carting is Holiness to the Lord.

And when harvest-time comes round, and all the country is glad, every shout of harvest home ought to be a holy shout, every smile that is on the brow of the tiller of the soil should be a holy smile. And when he has consecrated his wave-sheaf unto his God—when he has given a part of his increase to the poor and needy—and when he has bowed his knee and thanked the Universal Giver of all good—then the farmer's toil is Holiness to the Lord.

I would, my dear brethren, that you would make your common toils Holiness unto the Lord. Come to look upon your meals as though they were sacraments, your clothes as though they were priestly vestments, your common words as though you were preaching daily sermons, and your every-day thoughts as though you were thinking for the Sabbath of holy things.

It is not to be always talking religion, but to be talking religiously that makes the Christian. It is not to be performing outward symbols—it is to be possessing the inward spirit. I believe that there is more piety in going to visit the poor and needy, and scattering your substance among them, more piety in teaching the poor ignorant ragged child, more piety in seeking to help some poor struggling tradesman, than there is in many a long prayer and many a sanctimonious whine, ay, and in many a long and eloquent discourse.

That common piety which like common sense is oftenest the uncommonest of all, is what we need to have, and if I could make one man among you become thus consecrated, I should think I had, under God, done as much as though I poured you out in scores upon the plain of India, or sent you to edify the Chinese, or to instruct the Ethiopian.

We want you as missionaries *here*. We want you as missionaries in daily life, and we must have you too, or else the church will not increase, nor will the name of Christ be magnified.

I have thus sought to make you listen to the ringing of these bells.

II. Now for the second point. Let us COMMEND THE MUSIC of the bells upon the horses.

The religion of common life I must commend, first of all, for its *loudness*. There are many men who do not hear the church bell, who will hear the bells upon the horses, by which I mean that preach as frequently as we may, some people will never believe us—but they cannot help believing what they see in our lives.

We may extol Christ, and they will say, “It is his office and duty,” but if your actions are what they should be—if your lives are saturated with the spirit of Jesus—they cannot help hearing them. They may put their fingers in their ears and not hear *our* sermons, but they *must* hear *your* sermons—for they can hear them through their eyes as well as through their ears—if you in your daily walk act as becomes the Gospel of Christ.

Then, again, I commend the music of these horses’ bells, not only for loudness, but for *clearness*. Many people cannot understand our sermons. There are words we use that they do not try to comprehend, and some which the carnal mind cannot receive. But they can understand *your* sermons, if they cannot mine.

If you have traded honorably. if you, instead of taking undue advantage, have only taken that which is your due, if they have seen you refuse to tell a lie though you might have gained much by it, if they have known you to stand firm in your integrity, while others laughed at you as a fool and a madman—they can understand it.

My sermons may be mystifying, but *yours* would not be. The church bell may sometimes have a cracked note, but the bells upon the horses will be so clear that they will be compelled in their consciences to believe what you teach.

Again, I commend the music of these bells for its *constancy*. The church bell rings but once a week. I am preaching to you some three or four sermons in a week, but you, if you consecrate your common things, will be preaching all day long. You will keep the bells upon the horses ringing every time the horses nod their heads. Every time they move there will be a fresh peal—and that is the advantage of putting the bells not on the steeple, but on the horse—so that they must always ring.

This place is shut up a great portion of the week, and only opened occasionally for worship. But *you* ought to keep your preaching places open always. There, behind the counter, should be *your* pulpit. or in the Corn Exchange, or the Market, or in the family. You should always be preaching. Your life should be always one continual sacrament, always one constant service of God. I commend this music, then, for its constancy as well as for its loudness and for its clearness.

Again, we must praise it for its *universality*. *My* church bell can only ring in one place and the bells in the parish church only ring in the steeples where they hang. But the bells upon the horses ring wherever the horses go. And so with your piety—it will ring wherever you go.

You can preach in the lodging-house, you can preach in the backroom yonder, where poverty has found a haunt, you can preach wherever God in His providence has cast you. At the Boardroom table, in the midst of the corporation, in the Senate, in the House of Commons—you can preach wherever God calls you.

I say again, the bells upon the horses ring wherever the horses go, and so must your piety ring wherever you are. This universal preaching in every court, and lane, and alley is far better for effect than our preaching ever can be.

Once more, I commend the bells upon the horses for their *harmony*. You know our church bells ring different notes. You go into one, you hear Puseyism. You go into another and you hear sound evangelical doctrine. You enter another and you hear all but infidelity. Church bells run through the whole octave of tone.

Among true Christians, our bells often ring a little differently. My Wesleyan brothers' bell does not ring quite the same as mine—nor mine exactly the same as the Independents'. But mark, the bells on the horses all ring alike.

One Christian man's life is like another Christian's life. There is nothing contradictory in the practical sermon, if there be in the doctrinal. If the vocal testimony of the church should be somewhat divided, yet the loving testimony of the church is always one, if it be always holiness, holiness, holiness unto the Lord. See to it, then, that you ring these bells upon the horses for their lovely harmony and the absence of all discord.

And then once more. I commend the bells upon the horses, for they ring out a *divine* note. Our church bells do not always do that. Sometimes our sermons are a little to the honor and glory of the speaker, a little to the honor and glory of a particular church, but the bells on the horses ring out not the glory of man, but Holiness to the Lord—to the Lord—to the Lord.

And so if you consecrate your whole life, the testimony of that life may be to *your* credit, but still it will be far more to the honor and glory of *God*. There will be no fear that *man* shall take the honor of your pious consecration, of your holy watchfulness, of your humble integrity, of your industry, your perseverance, and your constancy in the path of right. The bells upon your horses shall ring a diviner note than I fear will yet be rung from the bells of our pulpit.

I have thus sought to commend the music.

III. And now I close, by asking you to go home and TUNE YOUR BELLS TO THIS NOTE.

You have many bells in your house. Go home and tune first of all the *chamber* bell. It is an ill thing when a Christian husband is a worse husband than a worldly one. It is an evil thing when the husband and wife do not live together as partakers of the grace of Christ. Perhaps you will say this is a very homely remark, but I think it is a very necessary one—for if a man cannot conduct himself well in his own family—what is he in the church?

I fear there have been many who have been mighty men in the church who, if their private affairs had been a little examined, might have come out a little scarred and marred in the ordeal. Should I have a Christian man here who is not acting according to the Christian mandate, should I have a Christian woman here who pulls her house down with her own hands, through idleness and carelessness, let me speak to them.

How can the husband think of edifying others at the prayer meeting, until first he is what he should be before his own house? The husband is to love his wife, even as Christ loved the church. The wife must see that she reverences her husband. The children must be obedient, and the household affairs must be ordered with discretion, or else your bells are not Holiness unto the Lord.

Then when you have looked at that, look at the *kitchen bell*. See that it sounds forth Holiness to the Lord. Let the servant—not with eye-service as a man pleaser, serve her master, and let the master take care that he gives unto his servant that which is just and equal. Oh! it is a blessed thing when there is piety in the kitchen, and when the whole household is a church.

Indeed, my brethren, I can speak the joy of one who has servants who fear God. Very often have my eyes been filled with tears, through the peace, and joy, and rest of spirit that I have had in my own household, since God has given me those who fear His name.

See to it that the kitchen bell does not ring a contrary note to your parlor bell, for if the kitchen can say—"My master is pious abroad, but he is wicked at home. He can talk very well in the pulpit, and pray very nicely at the prayer meeting, but he neglects us—he is harsh, overbearing, and passionate"—it will spoil all my sermons.

If you say to the servant, “Come and hear our minister,” she will say, “I do not want to hear him, if he is not a better man than you are, he will not do much good to me.” Mark then, if the bells of the horses are to be holy, certainly the bells of the kitchen should be holy too.

Then, some of you have got a *shop* bell—a little bell which rings as soon as ever any one comes in. Now take care that this is Holiness to the Lord. If people get cheated at other shops, do not let them get cheated at yours, or they will be sure to say, “Ah! *you* hear Spurgeon. That is your religion, is it?” They shall be sure to throw the blame on your *religion* and not on *you*.

If there be a place where they get short-weight, let it never be at yours. If there be a place where there is a want of integrity, or civility, or attention—let it not be yours, but seek so to act that while you do not make your religion help your trade—yet you keep your trade always in subservience to your religion, and seek to glorify God in all that you do.

Some of you have got a *factory* bell, that rings at certain hours, and I see your men come streaming down the street to work. Now make that bell Holiness to the Lord. When will the time come when all these quarrelings shall be done with between master and man? When shall the day come when both of them shall seek to have perfect peace and harmony? For it is to their mutual interest, let them know.

Oh! when shall it be that the workman shall feel that he has all that which is just and equal? And on the other hand, when shall the master feel that he has not to deal with men who when given an inch will take a mile, but who are content to deal as fairly with him as he would with them.

If I have any of your great cotton lords here, if I have any men who have many servants, let them take care that their religion rings their factory bell—or else I would not give a farthing for all their religion, let them give what they may towards the maintenance of it.

Then, some of you have got a *visiting* bell, for I have seen it marked over, “*Visitors.*” And what are visits among the higher classes? It was my misfortune, once, to sit in the corner of a drawing room and listen to the conversation during a visit. If it had been condensed into the sense or usefulness it contained, it might have been spoken in something like the thousandth part of a second. But there it went on, talk, talk, about nothing at all, and when it was done, they went away, I have no doubt greatly refreshed.

Now, I think the visits of Christian people should never be of that kind. If you go to see anybody, know what you are going for and have a message to go with, and go with some intention. If God had meant you and me to waste our time in flying visits, He would have made us butterflies and not men. He would have made us so that we might sip the nectar from the flowers like bees, instead of which He has made men whose time is precious and whose hours cannot be weighed in the scale with diamonds.

Let your visits be rather to the sick to give them comfort, to the poor to give them help, to your friends to show yourself friendly, and to the godly to get godly refreshment, than to the frivolous to waste an hour, or to the fashionable to maintain a fancied dignity. Let everything, whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, be done to the glory of God.

Physician, there is a bell at your door—let that be Holiness to the Lord. Let those kind acts of yours to the distressed poor—let those divine acts of stooping down to the poor wayfarer in his suffering, consecrate your practice. Let your bell be Holiness to the Lord.

Let each of you, whatever his calling may be, seek to find some special way in which that calling may conduce to the glory of Christ. You are a little star in the Pleiades—do not wish to be the pole-star. If you were taken out of the Pleiades, the constellation would not be what it now is. Keep where you are, but shed your special rays upon the earth. And if you are but a little star—do not the little stars together shed much light, and earth were dark if they all were quenched?

I have tried to preach a plain homely sermon, but perhaps I have not hit the mark. Perhaps I have not made you feel what I want you to feel. Why, I would have every dustman’s bell Holiness unto the Lord. Whatever your business is—though you are a scavenger, though you sweep a crossing, though you black shoes—whatever you have to do, let everything be done to the glory of God.

And if any say it cannot be done, do you show them the way, for the best practical proof is the proof of fact. I may preach today, and preach twenty days about making the bells upon the horses Holiness to the Lord, but if you do not tune your own private conversation, the text will but excite laughter among some, and no practical profit will it be to any.

Is there anything wrong at home? Go and set it to right. Is there anything wrong in the shop or in the kitchen? If you have not done what you ought to have done as a Christian man, if you have not acted as you ought to have done in your trade—go and do better. Not that you are to be saved by works—I have been speaking to those who *are* saved already. Being saved, show by your profession what you believe and would by your acts glorify your Master.

Let me pray you to think often of this text—“In that day shall there be on the bells of the horses, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD.”

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.