

THE KING FEASTING IN HIS GARDEN

NO. 919

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 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“I am come into My garden, My Sister, My Spouse: I have gathered My myrrh with My spice.
 I have eaten My honeycomb with My honey. I have drunk My wine with My milk:
 eat, O Friends; drink, yes, drink abundantly, O Beloved.”
 Song of Solomon 5:1.*

I BELIEVE this text to be appropriate to the spiritual condition of our Church. If I am not very sadly mistaken, the Lord of Hosts is with us in a very remarkable manner. Our meetings for prayer have been distinguished by an earnest and fervent spirit. Our meetings with enquirers have been remarkably powerful. In a quiet manner, without any outward outcries, souls have been smitten down with conviction of sin, and have been comforted as they have received Christ by faith. By His Grace we are not a deserted Church, we are not left with broken hedges, with the wild boar of the wood committing devastations.

The Lord has sent a gracious rain which has quickened the seed. He has watered the plants of His garden, and made our souls to rejoice in His Presence. Now if the text is appropriate, as I believe it is, the duty to which it especially calls us should have our earnest attention. The workers for Christ must remember that even if they have to care for the garden, their chief business must be to commune with the Lord and Master of that garden, since He, Himself, this morning calls them to do so. “Eat O friends; drink, yes, drink abundantly, O Beloved.”

In happy and auspicious times, when the Spirit of God is working, it is very natural to say, “We must now work more abundantly than ever,” and God forbid that we should hinder such zeal—but *more* spiritual privilege is not to be put in the second place. Let us commune as well as work. For there shall we find strength for service, and our service shall be done the better, and become the more acceptable, and ensure the larger blessing. If while we serve like Martha we at the same time commune like Mary, we shall not, then, become cumbered with much serving. We shall serve and not be cumbered, and shall feel no fretfulness against others whose only faculty may be that of sitting at the Master’s feet.

The text divides itself readily into three parts. First, we have the Presence of the heavenly Bridegroom—“I am come into My garden, My sister, My spouse.” We have, secondly, the satisfaction which He finds in His Church—“I have gathered My myrrh with My spice, I have eaten My honeycomb with My honey, I have drunk My wine with my milk.” And, thirdly, we have the invitation which He gives to His loving people—“Eat, O friends; drink, yes, drink abundantly, O Beloved.”

I. The voice of the Master Himself calls us to consider HIS PRESENCE—“I am come.” He tells us He is come. What? Could He come without our perceiving it? Is it not possible? May we be like those whose eyes were held so that they knew Him not? Is it possible for us to be like Magdalene, seeking Christ, while He is standing very near us? Yes, and we may even be like the disciples, who, when they saw Him walking on the water, were afraid.

They thought it was a spirit, and cried out—and Jesus said, “It is I, be not afraid,” before they knew who it was! Here is our ignorance, but here is His tenderness. He may come and yet we may not recognize Him—but here when He comes, He takes care to advertise us of the blessed fact, and calls us to observe and to consider, and to delight in it. He would, for our own comfort, prevent its being said of us, “He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.”

Let us observe, first, this coming was in answer to prayer. Our translators, in dividing the Bible into chapters, seem to have utterly disregarded the connection or the sense, so that they brought down their guillotine between two verses which must not be divided. The Church had said, “Awake, O north wind. And come, you south; blow upon my garden.” She had also said, “Let my Beloved come into His garden, and eat His pleasant fruits.” In answer to that prayer the Beloved replies, “I am come into My garden.” Prayer is always heard, and the prayer of faithful souls finds an echo in Jesus’ heart.

How quickly the spouse was heard! Scarcely had the words died away, “Let my Beloved come,” before she heard Him say, “I am come!” “Before they call, I will answer. And while they are yet speaking, I will hear.” He is very near unto His people, and therefore He very speedily answers their request. And how fully does He answer them, too! You will, perhaps, say, “But she had asked for the *Holy Spirit*—she had said, ‘Awake, O north *wind*. And come, you south.’ And yet there is no mention of the heavenly wind as blowing through the garden.” The answer is that the Beloved’s coming means all that.

His visit brings both north and south wind. All benign influences are sure to follow where He leads the way! Spices always flow out from the heart when Christ’s sweet love flows in—and where He is, Christians have all things in Him. There was a full answer to her prayer, and there was more than an answer, for she had but said, “Let Him come and eat,” but, lo, He gathers myrrh and spice, and He drinks of wine and milk. He does exceeding abundantly above what she had asked or even thought—after the right royal manner of the Son of God—who does not answer us according to the poverty of our expressions and the leanness of our desires, but according to His riches in Glory, giving to us Grace upon Grace out of His own inexhaustible fullness.

Brethren, this Church has had a full reward for all her prayers. We have waited upon God often, all the day long there has been prayer in this house, and during this last month there has scarcely been an hour in which supplication has been suspended. And the answer has already come. We are so apt to overlook the answer to prayer. Let it not be so. Let us praise the Lord that prayer has not been a vain service. It has brought down His Presence, the chief of all blessings, and that for which we most interceded at His Throne. Let us exalt Him!

We can hear Him say now, “I am come into your meetings, I am blessing you. I am saving souls, I am elevating some of you into nearness of fellowship with Myself. I am chastening some of your spirits with sadness to think you have lived in so groveling an estate. I am with you, I have heard your prayers, I have come to abide with you as a people.”

Now, if this is the case, let us next observe what an unspeakable blessing this is! If the voice had said, “I have sent My angel,” that would have been a precious benefit. But it is not so spoken. The word is, “I am come.” What? Does He, before whom angels adoringly bow their heads—does He, before whom perfect spirits cast their crowns—does He condescend to come into the Church? Yes, it is even so. There is a personal Presence of Christ in the midst of His people. Where two or three are met together in His name, there is He in the midst of them. His corporeal Presence is in Heaven, but His spiritual Presence, which is all we want—all it is expedient for Him as yet to grant—is assuredly in our midst. He is with us truly and really when we meet together in our solemn assemblies, and with us, too, when we separate and go our ways in private to fight the battles of the Lord.

Brethren, for us to enjoy His Presence as a Church is a privilege whose value is only to be measured by the melancholy results of His absence. Where Jesus Christ is *not* in the garden, the plants wither, and like untimely figs the fruits fall from the trees. Blossoms come not, or if they appear, they do but disappoint when Jesus is not there to knit and fructify them. But when He comes, even the driest boughs in the garden become like Aaron’s rod that budded! Yes, our older Brethren in the Church remember times of trouble, times when the ministry was not with power, when the gatherings on the Lord’s-Day were joyless, when the voice of wailing saddened the courts of Zion. But now we rejoice, yes, and will rejoice! The contrast between the past and the joyous present should increase our gratitude till we praise the Lord on the high sounding cymbals with jubilant exaltation!

Remember, too, that if He had dealt with us according to our sins, and rewarded us after our iniquities, we should never have heard the footsteps of the Beloved traversing the garden. How many have grieved the Holy Spirit by careless living and backsliding? How have most of us followed Him afar off instead of keeping step with Him in service and fellowship? Alas, my Lord, if You had regarded only the sins of the pastor of the Church, You had long ago left this flock. But You have not dealt with us severely, but according unto Your love and to Your mercy You have blotted out our sins like a cloud. And like a thick cloud our transgressions, and still do You condescend to come into Your garden.

If you take each word of this remarkable sentence, you will find a meaning. “I am come.” There is the personal Presence of Christ. “I am come.” There is the certainty that it is so. It is no delusion, no dream, no supposition. “I am truly come.” Blessed be the name of the Lord, at this present time it is assuredly so! Many of His saints can bear testimony that they have seen His face and have felt the kisses of His lips, and have proven, even this day, that His love is better than

wine. Note the next word, “I am come into My garden.” How near is the approach of Christ to His Church! He comes not to the garden *door*, nor to look over the wall, nor in at the gate and out again. But into His garden.

He goes down every walk, midst the green alleys. Among the beds of spices He walks, watching each flower, pruning the superfluous foliage of every fruit-bearing plant, and plucking up by the roots such as His heavenly Father has not planted. His delights are with the sons of men. His communion with His chosen is most familiar—so that the spouse may sing, “My Beloved is gone down into His garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies.” Jesus Christ, the Lord, forgets not His Church, but fulfils the promise—“I the Lord do keep it, I will water it every moment. Lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.”

Brethren, this is a solemn as well as a pleasant fact. You who are members of this Church, remember that Jesus is come into the Church, that He is now going His rounds among you, and marking your feelings towards Him. He knows today who is in fellowship with Him, and who is not. He discerns between the precious and the vile. He never comes without the winnowing fan when He visits His threshing floor. Beware if you are as chaff. He has come into His garden. O you that have not enjoyed much of His gracious company, pray to Him to cast a look towards you, and be like the sunflower which turns its face to the sun to refresh itself with His beams. O pant and long for His Presence. If your soul is as dark as the dead of night, call out to Him, for He hears the faintest sigh of any of His chosen.

“I am come into My garden,” He says. Note here the possession which Christ claims in the Church. If it were not His garden, He would not come into it. A Church that is not Christ’s Church shall have none of His Presence, and a soul that is not Christ’s has no fellowship with Him. If He reveals Himself at all, it is unto His own people, His blood-bought people, the people that are His by purchase and by power—and by the surrender of themselves to Him. When I think of this Church as committed to my care, I am overawed, and well may my fellow officers be cast down under the weight of our responsibility. But after all, we may say, “Master, this garden is not ours. It is Your garden. We have not begotten all this people, neither can we carry them in our bosoms. But You, great Shepherd of the sheep, You will guard the fold.”

Since the garden is His own, He will not suffer even the least plant to perish. My Brethren who work for Christ—do not be downcast if certain portions of the work should not seem to succeed. He will attend to it. “The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand.” It is more His work than ours, and souls are more under His responsibility than ours. So let us hope and be confident, for the Master will surely smile upon His “vineyard of red wine.”

The next word denotes cultivation. “I am come into My garden.” The Church is a cultivated spot. It did not spring up by chance, it was arranged by Himself. It has been tended by Himself, and the fruits belong to Himself. Thankful are we if we can truly know that as a Church—

*“We are a garden walled around,
Chosen and made peculiar ground.”*

Christ, the Great Cultivator, exercises care and skill in training His people, and He delights to see His own handiwork in them.

And then there are the two choice words at the close by which He speaks of His Church, herself, rather than of her work. As if He would draw the attention of His people to themselves and to Himself, rather than to their work. He says, “My Sister, My Spouse.” There is one name for the garden, but there are two names for herself. The work is His work, the garden is His garden, but see, He wants communion not so much with the work as with the worker, He speaks to the Church herself. He calls her, “My Sister, My Spouse.” “Spouse” has something in it of dearness that is not in the first word, for what can be dearer to the husband than the bride?

But then there was a time when the spouse was not dear to the Bridegroom, there was a period, perhaps when He did not know her, when there was no relationship between the two—though they are made of one flesh by marriage, yet they were of different families. And for this cause He adds the dear name of “Sister,” to show an ancient relationship to her, a closeness and a nearness by blood, by birth, as well as by betrothal and wedlock. The two words put together make up a confection of such inexpressible sweetness, that instead of seeking to expound them to you, I will leave them to your meditations, and may He who calls the Church, “Sister,” and, “Spouse,” open up their richness to your souls.

Here, then, is the gist of the whole matter. The Master’s Presence is in this Church in a very remarkable manner. Beloved, I pray that none of you may be like Adam, who fled among the trees to hide himself from God when He walked in the garden. May your business not act like an overshadowing thicket to conceal you from fellowship. He calls you, O

Backslider, He calls you as once He called Adam—“Where are you?” Come, Beloved, come and commune with your Lord. Come away from those carking cares and anxieties which, like gloomy groves of cypress, conceal you from your Lord, or rather your Lord from you.

Don't you hear His call? “O My Dove that is in the clefts of the rock, 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.” Let none of us be like the disciples in another garden when their Lord was there and He was in agony, but they were sleeping. Up, you Sleepers! Christ has come! If the midnight cry, “Behold, the Bridegroom comes,” awoke the virgins, shall not, “I am come,” awaken you? It is His own voice! It is not, “He comes,” but “I am come”!

Stand up, you Slumberers! And now, with heart and soul, seek fellowship with Him! It would be a sad thing if while Christ is with us any should be slumbering, and then should wake up and say, “Surely God was in this place and I knew it not.” Rather may you invite Him to come into your souls and abide with you until the day breaks and the shadows flee away, and you behold Him face to face.

II. Thus much upon the first point. And now may His Holy Spirit help us to view OUR LORD IN HIS CHURCH. The beautiful expressions of the text are capable of many holy meanings, and it is not possible that any expositions of mine could fully unveil their treasures. But let me observe, first, that Christ is delighted with the offerings of His people. He says, “I have gathered My myrrh with My spice.” We may consider myrrh and spice as sweet perfumes offered by way of incense to God—as being indicative of the offerings which His people bring to Him.

What if I say that prayer is like sweet smelling myrrh, and that the Beloved has been gathering the myrrh of holy prayer, the bitter myrrh of repenting sighs and cries in the midst of this Church, lo, these many months? You, perhaps, thought that poor wordless prayer of yours was never heard, but Jesus gathered it, and called it spice. And when some Brother was praying aloud, and in silence your tears fell thick and fast for perishing sinners, for you could not bear that they should die, nor endure that Christ's name should be blasphemed, the Beloved gathered up the precious drops and counted them as costly oil of sweetest smell.

Was it not said in Psalm 72:15, “Prayer also shall be made for Him continually”? And you did pray for Him that His name might be as ointment poured forth, and that He might gird His sword upon His thigh and ride forth prosperously. Jesus observed and delighted in your heart's offering. Others knew not that you prayed—perhaps you thought, yourself, that you scarcely prayed—but He gathered His myrrh with His spice from you. No faithful prayer is lost. The groanings of His people are not forgotten. He gathers them as men gather precious products from a garden which they have tilled with much labor and expense.

And then, may not spice represent our praises? For these, as well as prayer, come up as incense before His Throne. Last Thursday night when my brother spoke to you, if you felt as I did, I am sure your heart sent up praise as smoke of incense from the warm coals of a censer, as he cast on them handfuls of frankincense in the form of various motives for gratitude and reasons for praise. Oh, it was good to sing God's praises as we then did by the hour together. It was delightful, too, to come to His Table and make that ordinance in very deed a service of praise to God. Praise is pleasant and comely, and most of all so because Jesus accepts it, and says, “Whoever offers praise glorifies Me.”

When the Lord, in another place, speaks of offering sweet cane bought with money, does He not refer to other offerings which His people bring in addition to their prayers and their praises, when they give to Him the first fruits of all their increase, and present thank offerings to His name? He has said, “None of you shall appear before Me empty,” and I hope none of you have been content to do so! The contributions given for the spread of His cause, for the feeding of His poor, and clothing of His naked ones are given by true hearts directly to Himself. Though they may be but as two mites that make a farthing, yet offered in His name are they not also included in this word, “I have gathered My myrrh with My spice”?

The Savior's satisfaction is found, in the next place, in His people's love—“I have eaten My honeycomb with My honey.” Shall I be wrong if I believe that this sweetness refers to Christian love? For this is the richest of all the graces, and sweetens all the rest. Jesus Christ finds delightful solace in His people's love, both in the inward love which is like the honey, and in the outward manifestation of it, which is like the honeycomb. He rejoices in the love that drips in all its preciousness from the heart, and in the honeycomb of organization, in which it is for order's sake stored up and put into His hand.

Or, what if it should mean that Christ overlooks the imperfections of His people? The honeycomb is not good eating, but He takes that as well as the honey! “I have eaten My honeycomb with My honey.” As He looks upon His people, and sees what He has done for them, His loving heart rejoices in what His Grace has accomplished! As a benevolent man who has taken a child from the street and educated it would be pleased to see it growing up, prospering, happy, well-informed, talented—so when Jesus Christ, remembering what His people were, sees in them displays of Divine Grace, desires after holiness, self-denials, communion with God, and the like—this is to Him like honey. He takes an intense satisfaction in the sweet fruits which He Himself has caused us to produce. In spite of all our imperfections, He accepts our love, and says, “I have eaten My honeycomb with My honey.”

Turning again to our precious text, we observe that our Lord’s satisfaction is compared to drinking as well as eating, and that drinking is of a twofold character. “I have drunk My wine.” Does He intend, by this, His joy which is fulfilled in us when our joy is full? Does He mean that as men go to feasts to make glad their hearts with wine, so He comes to His people to see their joy, and is filled with exultation? Isn’t that what He means? Surely He does. And the milk, may not that mean the Christian’s common, ordinary life? As milk contains all the constituents of nourishment, may He not mean by this the general life of the Christian?

Our Lord takes delight in the graces of our lives. One has said that wine may represent those actions resulting from well-considered dedication and deep spiritual thought. For wine must be extracted from the grape with labor and preserved with care—there must be skill, and work, and forethought spent upon it. But milk is a natural production—it flows freely, plentifully, spontaneously. It is a more common and ordinary, yet precious thing. So the Lord delights that His people should give to Him those elaborate works which they have to tend with loving care and watch over with much anxiety before they are produced.

These are the wine. But He would have them give Him the simple outgushing of their souls, the ejaculations which flow forth without labor, the little deeds of love which need no forethought, the everyday outgoings of their inner life—these are milk, and are equally acceptable to Him. Well, if it is so, certain it is that Christ finds great pleasure in His people, and in their various forms of piety He drinks His wine with His milk.

Permit me now to call your attention to those many great little words, which are yet but one—I refer to the word “My.” Observe that eight or nine times it is repeated. Here is the reason for the solace which the Bridegroom finds in His Church. Does He walk in the Church as men do in a garden for pleasure? Then He says, “I am come into My garden.” Does He talk with His Beloved? It is because He calls her, “My Sister, My Spouse.” Does He love her prayers and praises? It is because they never would be prayed or praised if He had not created these fruits of the lips.

He says not, “I have gathered your myrrh with your spice.” Oh, no! Viewed as *ours*, these are poor things, but viewed as *His* they are most acceptable. “I have gathered *My* myrrh with *My* spice.” So if He finds any honey in His people, any true love in them, He first *put it there*. “I have eaten My honeycomb with My honey.” Yes, and if there is any joy and life in them to make His heart glad, He calls it, “My wine,” and, “My milk.” When I read these words, and thought of our Lord’s being fed by us, I could almost have cried out, “Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You? Or thirsty, and give You drink? Do You find any satisfaction in us? Surely, our goodness extends not to You. Why should we give You anything to eat?”

Yet He declares it. And we may blushing believe Him, and praise His name—for surely if He found it so—it is because He made it so. If He has gotten anything out of us, He must first have put it in us. If He sees of the travail of His soul, it is because the travail came first.

Note well, you lovers of Jesus, that our Lord in this heavenly verse is fed first. “I have eaten,” He says. And *then* He turns to us, and says, “Eat, O Friends.” If any of you seek friendship with the Well-Beloved, you must commence by preparing Him a feast. Remember our Lord’s own parable—“Which of you, having a servant plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, ‘Come at once and sit down to eat’? But will he not rather say to him, ‘Prepare something for my supper, and gird yourself and serve me till I have eaten and drunk, and afterward you will eat and drink’?”

Even if your poverty compels you, to say, “As the Lord lives, I have not a cake, but a handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse,” listen to Him as He answers, “Fear not, make Me thereof a little cake first.” Be assured that after you have done so, your barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail. The way for Believers to be fed by

Christ is to seek to feed Him—look to His being satisfied, and He will assuredly look to you. “You shall eat neither bread, nor parched corn, nor green ears, until the same day that you have brought an offering unto your God.” (Lev. 23:14).

“Bring you all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in My house, and prove Me now herewith, says the Lord of Hosts, if I will not open you the windows of Heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.” See, my Brothers and Sisters—you must find meat for your Lord, and then, but not till then—there shall be meat for you!

In a feast it is remarkable how complete the entertainment is. There is the sweetest food and the most nourishing and exhilarating drink. Then over and above that there is the rarest perfume, not counted to be needed in ordinary entertainments, but crowning all and making up a right royal feast. How marvelous that our Beloved should find within His Church all that His soul wants! Having given Himself to cover her, He delights in her, He rests in His love, and rejoices over her with singing. For the Joy that was set before Him, He endured the Cross, despising the shame—and this day He continues to be filled with the same delight.

III. I would gladly linger, but time forbids. We must now remember, in the third place, that the text contains an INVITATION. The Beloved says, “Eat, O Friends; drink, yes, drink abundantly, O Beloved.” In the invitation we see the character of the invited guests—they are spoken of as *friends*. We were once aliens, we are now more like the Lord from whom the love proceeds. O you that stand shivering in the cold shallows of the river of life, why tarry there? Descend into the greater depths, the warmer waves, and let the mighty stream bathe you breast high.

Yes, go farther, plunge where you can find no bottom, for it is blessed and safe swimming in the stream of Christ’s everlasting love and He invites you to it now. When you are at a big banquet table, pick not here and there a crumb, sip not now and then a drop—He says, “Eat,” and He adds, “drink abundantly.” The invitation to receive abundantly applies to both refreshments. Your eating and your drinking may be without stint. You cannot impoverish the Most High God, possessor of Heaven and earth. When you are satiated with His love, His table shall still be loaded. Your cups may run over, but His flagons will still be brimmed. If you are straitened at all, you are not straitened in Him—you are straitened in yourselves.

But now let me speak to my Brethren, and especially to my fellow workers in the kingdom of Christ. It is for us, just now, while our Lord is walking in His garden—while He is finding satisfaction in His work and in His people—to beware of taking any satisfaction in the work ourselves. And equally to beware that we do not neglect the appropriate duty of the occasion, namely, that of feasting our souls with our Lord’s gracious provisions. You are caring for others, it is well. You are rejoicing over others, it is well. Still watch well yourselves, and rejoice in the Lord in your own hearts.

What did He say to the Twelve when they came back glorying that even the devils were subject unto them? Did He not reply, “Nevertheless rejoice not in this, but rather rejoice that your names are written in Heaven”? It is your *personal* interest in Christ, your being *yourself* saved, Christ being present with *you*—that is your main joy. Enjoy the feast for yourselves, or you will not be strong to hand out the Living Bread to others. See that you are first partakers of the fruit, or you will not labor aright as God’s farmers. The more of personal enjoyment you allow yourself in connection with your Lord, the more strong will you be for His service, and the more out of an experimental sense of His preciousness will you be able to say with true eloquence, “O taste and see that the Lord is good!”

You will tell others what you have tasted and handled. You will say, “This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him and delivered him from all his fears.” I put this before you with much earnestness, and I pray that none of you may think it safe to work as to forget to commune—or wise to seek the good of others so as to miss *personal fellowship* with the Redeemer. I might now conclude, but it strikes me that there may be some among us who are, in their own apprehensions, outside the garden of Christ’s Church. They are, therefore, mourning over this sermon, and saying, “Alas, that is not for me! Christ is come into His garden, but I am a piece of waste ground. He is fed and satisfied in His Church, but He finds nothing in me. Surely I shall perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little!”

I know how apt poor hearts are to write bitter things against themselves—even when God has never written a single word against them. So let me see if by turning over this text we may not find thoughts of consolation for the trembling ones. We were once enemies. We are made servants, but we have advanced from the grade of service (though servants,

still) into that of friends. From now on He calls us not servants, but friends, for the servant knows not what his Lord does. And all things that He has seen of His Father He has made known unto us.

The friendship between Christ and His people is not in name only, but in deed and in truth. Having laid down His life for His friends, having brought them to know His friendship in times of trial and of difficulty, He at all times proves His friendship by telling His secrets to them and exhibiting an intense sympathy with them in all their secret suffering. David and Jonathan were not more closely friends than Christ and the Believer, when the Believer lives near to His Lord. Never seek the friendship of the world, nor allow your love to the creature to overshadow your friendship with Christ.

He next calls His people Beloved as well as friends. He multiplies titles, but all His Words do not express the full love of His heart. “Beloved.” Oh, to have this word addressed to us by Christ! It is music! There is no music in the rarest sounds compared with these three syllables which drop from the Redeemer’s lips like sweet smelling myrrh. “Beloved!” If He had addressed that one word to any one of us, it would create a Heaven within our souls which neither sickness nor death could mar! Let me sound the note again, “BELOVED!” Does Jesus love *me*? Does He own His love? Does He seal the fact by declaring it with His own lips?

Then I will not stipulate for promises, nor make demands of Him. If He loves He must act towards me with loving kindness. He will not smite His Beloved unless love dictates the blow. He will not forsake His chosen, for He never changes. Oh, the inexpressible, the heaped-up blessedness which belong to the man who feels in his soul that Christ has called him Beloved!

Here, then, you have the character in the text of those who are invited to commune with Christ. He calls His friends and His Beloved. The provisions presented to them are of two kinds. They are bid to eat and to drink. You, who are spiritual, know what the food is and what the drink is—for you eat His flesh and drink His blood. The incarnation of the Son of God, and the death of Jesus the Savior—these are the two sacred viands whereon faith is sustained. To feed upon the very Christ of God is what is needed. Nothing but this can satisfy the hunger of the spirit. He who feeds on Him shall know no lack. “Eat,” says He, “and drink.” You ask, “Where are the provisions?” I answer, they are contained in the first words of the text, “I am come.” If He is come, then eat. If He is come, then drink. There is food, there is drink for you in Him!

Note that delightful word, “abundantly.” Some dainties satiate, and even nauseate when we have too much of them. But no soul ever had too much of the dear love of Christ. No heart did ever complain that His sweetness was too much. That can never be. Some things, if you have too much of them, may injure you. They are good to a certain point, but beyond that, evil. But even the smallest child of Grace shall never overindulge himself with Jesus’ love. No, the more you have, the more you shall enjoy, the more blessed shall you be, and who knows? There may be a soft breath in the text which may fan the smoking flax, a tender hand that may bind up the bruised reed. I will briefly indicate two or three comfortable thoughts.

Seeking Soul, should it not console you to think that Jesus is near? The kingdom of God is come near unto you, for He has come into His garden. He was in our last meeting for anxious souls, for many found Him there. You are not, then, living in a region where Christ is absent—maybe when He passes by He will look on you. Can you not put out your finger and touch the hem of His garment, for Jesus of Nazareth passes by? Even if you have not touched Him, yet it should give you some good cheer to know that He is within reach, and within call. Though you are like the poor withered lily in the garden, or worse still, like a noxious weed—yet if He is in the garden He may observe you and have pity on you.

Notice, too, that although the text speaks of a garden, it never was a garden till He made it so. Men do not find gardens in the wilderness. In the wilds of Australia or the backwoods of America, men never stumble on a garden where human foot has ever been. It is all forest, or prairie, or mountain. So, mark, Soul, if the Church is a garden, Christ made it so. Why cannot He make *you* so? Why not, indeed? Has He not said, “Instead of the thorns shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the briers shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off”? This garden-making gives God a name. Jesus gets honor by plowing up the wastes, extracting the briers, and planting firs and myrtles there. See, then, there is hope for you yet, you barren Heart—He may yet come and make your wilderness like Eden—and your desert like the garden of the Lord.

Note, too, that the Bridegroom gathered myrrh, and fed on milk and wine, and honey. Yes, and I know you thought, “He will find no honey in *me*. He will find no milk and wine in *me*.” Ah, but then the text did not say He found

them in the *Church*. It is said, “I have eaten My honeycomb with My honey. I have drunk My wine with My milk.” And if He put those things *into* His Church, and then took comfort in them, why not put them into *you*, and take comfort in *you*, too? Be of good cheer! Arise, He calls you this very morning.

Another word, perhaps, may help you. Did you notice, poor hungry Soul, how Jesus said, “drink abundantly”? “Ah,” you say, “He did not say that to *me*.” I know it. He said that to His friends and to His Beloved—and you dare not put yourselves among those. But do not you see how generous He is to His friends, and how He keeps back nothing? He evidently does not mean to lock anything up in the storeroom, for He tells them to eat and drink abundantly. Now, surely, where there is such a festival, though you dare not come and sit at the table with the guests, you might say with the Syrophenician woman, “Yet the dogs under the table eat of the children’s crumbs.”

It is good knocking at a door where they are keeping open house, and where the feast reveals a lavish hospitality. Knock now, and try it. If it were a poor man’s dinner with a dry crust and a poor herring, or if it were a miser’s meal spread most begrudgingly, I would not advise you to knock. But where there is wine and milk in rivers, and the good Man of the house bids His guests eat and drink abundantly, I say knock, for God says it shall be opened!

Another thought. Jesus finds meat and drink in His Church, and you are afraid He would find neither in you—I want to tell you a Truth of God which, perhaps, you have forgotten. There was a woman that was a sinner. She had had five husbands, and he with whom she then lived was not her husband. She was an adulteress and a Samaritan. But Christ said, after He had conversed with her, that He had found meat to eat that His disciples knew not of. Where did He get it, then? If He had drank that day, He did not get it from Jacob’s well, for He had nothing to draw with, and the well was deep.

He found big refreshment *in that poor woman*, to whom He said, “Give me to drink.” The Samaritan harlot refreshed the soul of Jesus—when she believed in Him and owned Him as the Christ! Have you ever read that Word of His, “My meat and My drink is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work”? And what is the will of Him that sent Him? Well, I will tell you what it is *not*—“It is not the will of your Father, that is in Heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.” The will of God and the will of Christ are these—to save sinners. For this purpose was Jesus born and sent into the world—He came into the world to seek and to save that which was lost. See, then, poor lost One, in saving you, Christ will find both meat and drink! I trust, therefore, you will look to Him and cry to Him, and cast yourself upon Him—and you shall never, as long as you live, have any cause for regretting it.

Finally, the text represents the Lord saying, “I am come into My garden.” It may imply that He is not always in His garden. Sometimes His Church grieves Him and His manifest Presence departs. But hearken, O Sinner, there is a precious thought for you—He is not always in His garden. But He is always on the Throne of Grace. He does not always say, “I am come into My garden,” but He always says, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” He never leaves the Mercy Seat. He never ceases to intercede for sinners.

Come, and welcome, then. If you have not seen the Beloved’s face, come and bow at His feet. Though you have never heard Him say, “Your sins are forgiven you,” yet come now with a broken and a contrite heart and seek absolution at His hands. Come, and welcome! Come, and welcome! May the sweet Bridegroom with cords of love draw you, and may this morning be a time of love. And as He passes by, if He sees you wallowing in your blood, may He say unto you, “Live!” May the Lord grant it, and on His head shall be many crowns. Amen! Amen! Amen!

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