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A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

"He saith unto the Jews, Behold your King!"
John 19:14

PILATE said much more than he meant, and therefore we shall not restrict our consideration of his words to what *he* intended. John tells us considering Caiaphas, "and this spoke he not of himself," and we may say the same of Pilate.

Everything said or done in connection with the Savior during the day of His crucifixion was full of meaning, far fuller of meaning than the speakers or actors were aware. Transformed by the cross, even the commonplace becomes solemn and weighty.

When Caiaphas said that it was expedient that one man should die for the people, that the whole nation perish not, he little thought that he was enunciating the great Gospel principle of substitution. When the Jewish people cried out before Pilate, "His blood be on us and on our children," they little knew the judgment which they were bringing upon themselves, which would commence to be fulfilled at the siege of Jerusalem, and follow them, hanging like a heavy cloud over their race, for centuries.

When the soldier with a spear pierced His side, he had no idea that he was bringing forth before all eyes that blood and water which are to the whole church the emblems of the double cleansing which we find in Jesus, cleansing by atoning blood and sanctifying grace.

The fullness of time had come and all things were full. Each movement on that awful day was brimming with mystery, neither could the Master or those around Him stir or speak without teaching some Gospel, or enforcing some lesson.

Whereas on certain days, frivolity seems to rule the hour, and little is to be gathered from much that is spoken, on the day of the passion even the most careless spake as men inspired. Pilate, the undecided spirit, with no mind of his own, uttered language as weighty as if he too had been among the prophets. His acquittal of our Lord, his mention of Barabbas, his writing of the inscription to be fixed over the head of Jesus, and many other matters, were all fraught with instruction.

It was to the Jews that Pilate brought forth Jesus, arrayed in garments of derision, and to them He said, "*Ecce Rex*," "Behold your King!" It was by the seed of Abraham that He was rejected as their King, but we shall not think of them in order to blame that unhappy nation, but to remind ourselves that we also may fall into the same sin.

As a nation favored with the Gospel, we stand in many respects in the same privileged condition as the Jews did. To us is the Word of God made known, to our keeping the oracles of God are committed in these last days, and we, though by nature shoots of the wild olive, are engrafted into that favored stock from which Israel has for a while been cut off. Shall we prove equally unworthy? Shall any of us be found guilty of the blood of Jesus?

We hear of Jesus this day—are we rejecting Him? The suffering Messiah will be brought forth again this morning, not by Pilate, but by one who longs to do Him honor, and when He stands before you, and is proclaimed again in the words, "Behold your King!" will you also cry, "Away with him, away with him."?

Let us hope that there will not be found here hearts so evil as to imitate the rebellious nation and cry, "We will not have this man to reign over us." Oh that each one of us may acknowledge the Lord Jesus to be his King, for beneath His sceptre there is rest and joy. He is worthy to be crowned by every heart. Let us all unite in beholding Him with reverence and receiving Him with delight.

Give me your ears and hearts while Jesus is evidently set forth as standing among you, and for the next few minutes let it be your only business to, "Behold your King."

I. Come with me, then, to the place which is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha, and there, "Behold your King." I shall first ask you to BEHOLD YOUR KING PREPARING HIS THRONE, yea, and making Himself ready to sit thereon.

When you look in answer to the summons, "Behold your King," what do you see? You see the "Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," wearing a crown of thorns, and covered with an old purple cloak, which had been thrown about Him in mockery. You can see, if you look narrowly, the traces of His streaming blood, for He has just been scourged, and you may also discover that His face is blackened with bruises, and stained with shameful spittle from the soldiers' mouths.

"Thus trimmed forth they bring Him to the rout,
Who, 'Crucify him,' cry with one strong shout,
God holds His peace at man, and man cries out."

It is a terrible spectacle, but I ask you to gaze upon it steadily, and see the establishment of the Redeemer's throne. See how He becomes your mediatorial King. He was setting up a new throne on Gabbatha, whereon He would reign as the King of pardoned sinners and the Prince of Peace.

He was King before all worlds, as Lord of all by right of His eternal power and Godhead. He had a throne when worlds were made, as King of all kings by creation. He had also always filled the throne of providence, upholding all things by the word of His power. On His head were many crowns, and to Pilate's question, "Art thou a king then?" He did fitly answer, "Thou sayest that I am a king."

But here before Pilate and the Jews, in His condition of shame and misery, He was about to ascend, and first of all to prepare the throne of the heavenly grace, which now is set up among the sons of men, that they may flee to it and find eternal salvation.

Mark how He is preparing this throne of grace—it is *by pain and shame endured in our room and stead*. Sin was in the way of man's happiness, and a broken law, and justice requiring a penalty—and all this must be arranged before a throne of grace could be erected among men.

If you look at our suffering Lord you see at once the ensigns of His *pain*, for He wears a crown of thorns which pierce His brow. Pain was a great part of the penalty due for sin, and the great Substitute was therefore sorely pained. When Pilate brought forth our martyr Prince, He was the very mirror of agony. He was majesty in misery—misery wrought up to its full height and stature.

The cruel furrows of the scourge, and the trickling rivulets of His blood adown His face were but the tokens that He was about to die in cruel pangs upon the cross, and these together were incumbent upon Him, because there could be no throne of grace till first there had been a substitutionary sacrifice. It behooved Him to suffer that He might be a Prince and a Savior. Behold your King in His pains. He is laying the deep foundations of His kingdom of mercy.

Many a crown has been secured by blood, and so is this, but it is His own blood. Many a throne has been established by suffering, and so is this, but He Himself bears the pain. By His great sacrificial griefs, our Lord has prepared a throne whereon He shall sit till all the chosen race have been made kings and priests to reign with Him.

It is by His agony that He obtains the royal power to pardon—by His stripes and bruises He wins the right to absolve poor sinners. We shall have no cause to wonder at the greatness of His mediatorial power if we consider the depth of His sacrificial sufferings. As His misery is the source of His majesty, so the greatness of His pains has secured to Him the fullness of power to save.

Had He not gone to the end of the law, and honored justice to the highest degree, He had not now been so gloriously able to dispense mercy from His glorious high throne of mediatorial grace. Behold your King, then, as He lays deep in His own pain and death the basis of His throne of grace.

Nor is it only pain, for He wears also the tokens of *scorn*. That crown of thorns meant mainly mockery—the soldiers made Him a mimic monarch, a carnival king—and that scarlet robe, too, was cast upon His shoulders in bitter scorn—thus did this world deride its God.

The evangelists give you the description in brief sentences, as if they stopped between each line to cover their faces with their hands and weep. So there He stands before the crowd, helpless, friendless, with none to declare His generation, or give Him a good word. He is deserted by all who formerly called Him Master, and He has become the center of a scene of rioting and ridicule.

The soldiers have done their worst, and now the chief men of the nation look at Him with contempt, and are only kept back from the most ribald scorn by a hate too furiously eager for death to afford them leisure for their scoffs. His enemies had done everything in their power to clothe Him with scorn, and they were asking for permission to do more, for they cried, "Let him be crucified."

Behold you, how He has left all the honor of His Father's house, and His own glory among the angels, and here He stands with a mock robe, a mimic sceptre, and a thorny crown, the butt of ridicule, scoffed at by all! Yet this must be, because sin is a shameful thing, and a part of the penalty of sin is shame, as they will know who shall wake up in the day of judgment to everlasting contempt.

Shame fell on Adam when he sinned, and then and there he knew that he was naked. And now shame has come down in a tremendous hail upon the head of the Second Adam, the substitute for shameful man, and He is covered with contempt. "All they that see me laugh me to scorn." It is hard to say whether cruelty or mockery had most to do with the person of our Lord at Gabbatha, but by enduring these two things together He laid on an immovable foundation the cornerstone of His dominion of love and grace.

How could He have been the King of a redeemed people if He had not thus redeemed them? He might have been Lord over a people doomed to die—the stern ruler of a people who continued in sin, and would so continue till they perished forever from His presence. But no such a kingdom did He seek. He sought a kingdom over hearts that should eternally be under obligation to Him. Hearts that, being redeemed from the lowest hell by His atoning death, would forever love Him with the utmost fervency. His sorrow secured His power to save. His shame endowed Him with the right to bless.

"Behold your King." Look at Him with steady eye and see what a King He now is *by right of benefit conferred*. Behold, He has put away sin forever by the sacrifice of Himself, and therefore all the ransomed ones agree that He should be king who smote the great dragon which devoured the nations. Behold, by His stooping to shame, He has dethroned Satan, who was the prince of this world.

And who should occupy the throne but He who has won it, and cast out the strong one who ruled aforetime. Christ has done more for men than the prince of darkness could or would, for He has died for them, and so He has earned a just supremacy over all grateful hearts.

As for death, Jesus, by yielding to death, has conquered it. Let Him be crowned with the victor's wreath who has destroyed the world's destroyer. In His shame you also see the Lord Jesus Christ fulfilling the law, and making it honorable. He who could honor that law, which else would have cursed us, deserves to have all honor and homage paid to Him by the sons of men, whom He has rescued from the curse.

You see, then, our Lord, when He put on the old red cloak, and submitted His brow to be environed with thorns, was really establishing for Himself an empire, the foundations of which shall never be shaken. He was performing that saving work which has made Him King among sinners whom He saves, and Lord of the kingdom of grace, which through His death is bestowed upon men.

Note this, too, that men are kings among their fellows when they can show *deep sympathy and give substantial succor*. He who can sympathize wins power of the best sort, not coarse force, but refined spiritual influence. For this cause our Lord was afflicted, as you see Him afflicted, that He might have sympathy with you in your direst grief, and in your most grievous dishonor.

As the children were partakers of flesh and blood, He Himself also took part of the same. And as they must suffer, so the Captain of their salvation was made perfect by suffering. This gives Him His glorious power over us. He is a faithful High Priest, for He can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and this ability to enter into our infirmities and sorrows makes Him supreme over our hearts.

Look at your King in pain and mockery, and see how royal He is to your heart! How sovereignly He commands your heart to rejoice. With what regal power He commands your fears to lie still, and how obediently your despondency yields to His Word.

Now, as it is with you, so is it on a larger scale in the world. The suffering nations will yet see their true deliverer in their suffering Lord. That sceptre of a reed will secure Him power far greater than a rod of iron. His love to man is proved by His suffering to the death on their behalf, and this, when the Holy Ghost has made men wise, shall be to the myriads of our race the reason for proclaiming Him Lord of all.

The kings and princes who rule mankind by reason of their descent, or by the force of arms, have but the names of kings. The true kings are the great benefactors. The heroes are our kings after all. We look upon those as royal who can risk their lives for their fellow men, to win them liberty, or to teach them truth.

The race forgets its masters, but it remembers its friends. Earth, but for Jesus, had been a vast prison, and men a race of condemned criminals, but He who stands before us in Gabbatha, in all His shame and grief, has delivered us from our lost estate, and therefore He must be King. Who shall say Him nay?

If love must ultimately triumph, if unselfish self-sacrifice must obtain homage, then Jesus is and shall be King. If eventually, when the morning breaks and man's heart is purged from the prejudice and injustice occasioned by sin, the might shall be with the right, and truth must prevail. Then Jesus must reign.

The eternal fitness of things demands that the best should be highest, that he who does men most service should be most honored among them. In a word, that He who was made nothing of for man's sake should become everything to him.

See, then, how the crown of thorns is mother to the crown which Jesus wears in His church! The scarlet robe is the purchase price of the vesture of universal sovereignty, and the mock sceptre of reed is the precursor of the rod of nations wherewith the whole earth will yet be ruled. "Behold your King," and see the sources of His mediatorial power.

II. O you who see in your bleeding and rejected Lord, "the King in his beauty," come you hither yet again, and BEHOLD HIM CLAIMING YOUR HOMAGE.

See in what way He comes to win your hearts. What is His right to be King over you? There are many rights, for on His head are many crowns, but the most commanding right which Jesus has over any of us is signified by that crown of thorns—it is *the right of supreme love*.

He loved us as none other could have loved. If we put all the loves of parents and of wives and children all together, we can never rival even for a moment the love of Christ to us. And whenever that love touches us, so that we feel its power, we crown Him King at once. Who can resist His charms?

One look of His eyes overpowers us. See with your heart those eyes when they are full of tears for perishing sinners, and you are a willing subject. One look at His blessed person subjected to scourging and spitting for our sakes will give us more idea of His crown rights than anything besides.

Look into His pierced heart as it pours out its life flood for us, and all disputes about His sovereignty are ended in our hearts. We own Him Lord because we see how He loved. How could we do otherwise? Love in action, or rather love in suffering, carries an omnipotence about it. Behold what His love endured, and so, "Behold your King."

Jesus, in the garb of mockery, marred with traces of His pain, also reminds us of *His complete purchase* of us by His deeds and death. "Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price." Behold your King, and see the price.

It is the price of suffering immense, of shame most cruel. It is an incalculable price, for the Lord of all is set at nought. It is an awful price, for He who only has immortality yields Himself to die. It is the price of blood. It is the scourging and bleeding and woe of Jesus—nay, it is Himself. If you would see the price of your redemption, "Behold your King."

'Tis He that has redeemed us unto God by His blood, He that "made himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant; and being found in fashion as a man, humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." You own that claim—the love of Christ constrains you—you feel that henceforth you live for Him alone, and count it joy that in all respects He should reign over you with unlimited sway.

Jesus, because He suffered, has acquired a power over us which is far superior to any which could be urged in courts of law, or enforced by mere power, for our hearts have voluntarily surrendered to Him and given Him *the right of our free submission*, charmed to own allegiance to such imperial love.

Is it possible for a believer to look at the Lord Jesus Christ without feeling that he longs to be more and more His servant and disciple? Do you not thirst to serve Him? Can you behold Him in the depth of shame without pining to lift Him up to the heights of glory? Can you see Him stooping thus for you without pleading with God that a glorious high throne may be His, and that He may sit upon it, and rule all the hearts of men?

There is no need to argue out the right of King Jesus, for you feel it. His love has carried you by storm, and it holds fast its capture. You cannot have a Savior without His being your King, and seeing such a Savior in such a condition, you cannot even think of Him without delighting to ascribe to Him all power and dominion. Could we escape His sway it would be bondage to us, and when we at any time fail to own it, it is our worst affliction.

"Behold your King," then, for He Himself is His own claim to your obedience. See what He suffered for you, my brethren, and henceforth never draw back from any labor, shame, or suffering for His dear sake.

"Behold your King," and reckon to be treated like Him. Do you expect to be crowned with gold where He was crowned with thorns? Shall lilies grow for you and briars for Him? Never again be ashamed to carry His glorious name, unless indeed you can be so vile as to prove a traitor to such a Lord. See to what shame He was put, and learn from Him to despise all shame for His truth's sake.

Shall the disciple be above his Master, or the servant above his lord? If they have thus maltreated the Master of the house, what shall they do to the household? Let us reckon upon our share of this treatment, and by accepting it prove to all men that the despised and rejected of men is really the King over us, and that the subjects blush not to be like their monarch.

Even though the cost be all the shame the world can possibly pour upon us, or all the suffering that flesh and blood can in any condition endure, let us be faithful in our loyalty, and cry, "Who shall separate us? Shall persecution, or distress, or tribulation divide us from our King? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors.

"King of griefs, you are King of my soul! O King of shame, you are absolute monarch of my heart. You are King by right divine, and King by my own voluntary choice. Other lords have had dominion over us, but now, since You have revealed Yourself after this fashion, Your name only shall govern our spirit."

Do you not see, then, that Jesus before Pilate reveals His claim in the appearance which He wears. "Behold your King."

III. "Behold your King," for a third time, that you may see Him SUBDUING HIS DOMINIONS.

Dressed in robes of scorn, and with a visage marred with pain, He comes forth conquering and to conquer. This is not very apparent at a superficial glance, for He is not arrayed like a man of war. You see no sword upon His thigh, nor bow in His hand. No fiery threatenings fall from His lips, nor does He speak with eloquent persuasion.

He is unarmed, yet victorious—is silent, but yet conquering. In this garb He goes forth to war. His shame is His armor, and His sufferings are His battle-axe. How say you? How can it be so? I speak no fiction, but sober fact, and it shall be proved.

Missionaries have gone forth to win *the heathen* for Christ, and they have commenced with the uncivilized sons of sin by telling them that there is a God, and that He is great and just. The people have listened unmoved, or have only answered, "Do you think we know not this?"

Then they have spoken of sin and its punishment, and have foretold the coming of the Lord to judgment, but still the people stirred not, but coolly said, "'Tis true," and then went on their way to live in sin as before.

At last these earnest men have let fall the blessed secret, and spoken of the love of God in giving His only begotten Son, and they have begun to tell the story of the matchless griefs of Immanuel. Then have the dry bones stirred, then have the deaf begun to hear.

They tell us that they had not long told the story before they noticed that eyes were fastened on them, and that countenances were beaming with interest which had been listless before, and they have said to themselves, "Why did we not begin with this?" Ay, why, indeed, for this it is that touches men's hearts—Christ crucified is the conqueror.

Not in His robes of glory does He subdue the heart, but in His vestments of shame. Not as sitting upon the throne does He at first gain the faith and the affections of sinners, but as bleeding, suffering, and dying in their stead. "God forbid that I should glory," said the apostle, "save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

And though every theme that is connected with the Savior ought to play its part in our ministry, yet this is the master theme. The atoning work of Jesus is the great gun of our battery. The cross is the mighty battering-ram wherewith to break in pieces the brazen gates of human prejudices, and the iron bars of obstinacy.

Christ coming to be our Judge alarms, but Christ the man of sorrows subdues. The crown of thorns has a royal power in it to compel a willing allegiance, the sceptre of reed breaks hearts better than a rod of iron, and the robe of mockery commands more love than Caesar's imperial purple. There is nothing like it under heaven.

Victories ten thousand times ten thousand have been achieved by Him whom Pilate led forth to the multitude—victories distinctly to be ascribed to the thorny crown and vesture of mockery. Are they not written in the book of the wars of the Lord? There will be more such as He is more frequently set forth in His own fashion, and men are bidden in the Man of sorrows to behold their King.

Has it not been so *at home* as well as among the far-off heathen? What wins men's hearts to Christ today? What but Christ in shame and Christ in suffering? I appeal to you who have been newly converted—what has bound you as captives to Jesus' chariot? What has made you henceforth vow to be His followers, rejoicing in His name? What but this, that He bowed His head to the death for your sake, and has redeemed you unto God by His blood? You know it is so.

And oh, dear *children of God*, if ever you feel the power of Christ upon you to the full, till it utterly overcomes you, is it not the memory of redeeming grief which does it? When you become like harps, and Jesus is the minstrel, and lays His finger amongst your heartstrings, and brings out nothing but praise for His dear name, what is it that charms you into the music of grateful love but the fact of His condescension on your behalf?

Is not this your song, that He was slain and has redeemed you unto God by His blood? I confess I could sit down at His cross' foot and do nothing else but weep until I wept myself away, for His suffering make my soul to melt within me.

Then, if the call of duty is heard, I feel intensely eager to plead with others, ready to make any sacrifice to bring others under my Lord's dominion, and full of a holy passion that even death could not quench—all this, I say, if I have but just come from gazing on the Redeemer's passion, and drinking of His cup, and being baptized with His baptism.

The scepter of reed rules as nothing else ever did, for it rouses enthusiasm. The thorn-crown commands homage as no other diadem ever did, for it braces men into heroes and martyrs. No royalty is so all-commanding as that which has for its insignia the crown of thorns, the reed, the red cloak, and the five wounds.

Other sovereignties are forced, and feigned, and hollow compared with the sovereignty of "the despised of men." Fear, or custom, or self-interest make men courtiers elsewhere, but fervent love crowds the courts of King Jesus.

We do not merely say that the marred countenance is the most majestic ever seen, but we have felt it to be so on many an occasion, yea, and feel it to be so now. Do you want to make our hard hearts soft? Tell us of Jesus' grief. Would you make us, strong men, into children? Set the Man of sorrows in our midst. There is no resisting *Him*.

Look you also at *backsliders* if you would see the power of the despised Nazarene. If they have gone away from Christ, if they have become lukewarm, if their hearts have become obdurate to Him who once could charm them, what can bring them back?

I know but one magnet which in the hands of the Holy Spirit will attract these sadly fallen ones—it is Jesus in His shame and pains. We tell them that they crucified the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame, and they look on Him whom they have pierced, and mourn for Him.

O you that after having sipped of the communion cup have gone to drink at the table of Bacchus, you who after having talked of love to Christ have followed after the lusts of the flesh, you who after singing His praises have blasphemed the sacred name with which you are named—may His omnipotence of love be proven in you also.

What can ever bring you back but this sad reflection, that you also have twisted for Him a crown of thorns and caused Him to be blasphemed among His enemies? Still the merit of His death is available for you. The power and efficacy of His precious blood have not ceased even for you, and if you come back to Him—and oh, may a sight of Him draw you—He will receive you graciously as at the first.

I say to you, "Behold your King," and may the sovereignty of His humiliation and suffering be proved this morning in some of you as you shall come bending at His feet, conquered by His great love, and restored to repentance and faith by His marvelous compassion. A sight of His wounds and bruises heals us, so that we grieve at our rebellions, and long to be brought home to God, never to wander more.

Ah, dear brethren, we shall always find, as long as the world stands, that among saints, sinners, backsliders, and all classes of men, Jesus Christ's power is most surely felt when His humiliation is most faithfully declared, and most believingly known. It is by this that He will subdue all things to Himself.

If we will but preach Jesus Christ to the Hindu, it will not be necessary to answer all his metaphysical subtleties—the sorrows of Jesus are as a sharp sword to cut the Gordian knot. If we will go down among the degraded inhabitants of Africa, we shall not need first to civilize them—the cross is the great lever which lifts up fallen men—it conquers evil and establishes truth and righteousness.

The most depraved and hardened learn of His great love, and hearts of stone begin to beat—they see Jesus suffering to the death out of nothing else but love to them, and they are touched by it, and eagerly inquire what they must do to be saved by such a Savior. The Holy Spirit works in the minds of many by setting forth the great love and grief of Jesus. May we who are His ministers have great faith in His cross, and henceforth say, as we preach the suffering Jesus, "Behold your King."

IV. In the fourth place, I beg you to "Behold your King" SETTING FORTH THE PATTERN OF HIS KINGDOM.

When you look at Him, you are struck at once with the thought that if He be a king He is like no other monarch, for other kings are covered with rich apparel and surrounded with pomp, but He has none of these.

Their glories usually consist in wars by which they have made others suffer, but His glory is His own suffering. No blood but His own has flowed to make Him illustrious. He is a King, but He cannot be put in the list of sovereigns such as the nations of the earth are compelled to serve.

When Antoninus Pius set up the statue of Jesus in the Pantheon as one of a circle of gods and heroes, it must have seemed strangely out of place to those who gazed upon its visage if the sculptor was at all true to life. It must have stood apart as one that could not be numbered with the rest.

Neither can you set Him among the masters of the human race who have crushed mankind beneath their iron heel. He was no Caesar—you cannot make Him appear like one. Call Him not autocrat, emperor, or czar—He has an authority greater than all these—yet not after their kind. His purple is different from theirs, and His crown also, but His face differs more, and His heart most of all.

"My kingdom," says He, "is not of this world." For troops, He has a host of sorrows, for pomp, a surrounding of scorn—for lofty bearing, humility—for adulation, mockery—for homage, spitting—for glory, shame—for a throne, a cross. Yet was there never a truer King, indeed all kings are but a name, save this King, who is a real ruler in Himself and of Himself, and not by extraneous force.

Right royal indeed is the Nazarene, but He cannot be likened unto the princes of earth, nor can His kingdom be reckoned with theirs. I pray that the day may soon come when none may dream of looking upon the church as a worldly organization capable of alliance with temporal sovereignties so as to be patronized, directed, or reformed by them.

Christ's kingdom shines as a lone star with a brightness all its own. It stands apart like a hill of light, sacred and sublime—the high hills may leap with envy because of it, but it is not of them nor like unto them. Is not this manifest even in the appearance of our Lord as Pilate brings Him forth and cries, "Behold your King!"?

Now as He sets before us in His own person the pattern of His kingdom, we may expect that we shall see some likeness to Him in His subjects. And if you will gaze upon the church, which is His kingdom, from the first day of her history until now, you will see that it too is wearing its purple robe.

The martyrs' blood is the purple vesture of the church of Christ. The trials and persecutions of believers are her crown of thorns. Think of the rage of persecution under Pagan Rome—and the equally inhuman proceedings of Papal Rome—and you will see how the ensign of Christ's kingdom is a crown of thorns—a crown and yet thorns—thorns but still a crown.

The bush is burning, but it is not consumed. If you, beloved, are truly followers of Jesus, you must expect to take your measure of shame and dishonor, and you may reckon upon your allotment of griefs and sorrows.

The "Man of sorrows" attracts a sorrowful following. The lamb of God's Passover is still eaten with bitter herbs. The child of God cannot escape the rod, for the elder brother did not, and to Him we are to be conformed. We must "fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ for His body's sake, which is the church" (Col 1:24).

Recollect, however, that Christ's sufferings as a pattern were not for His own sins, nor brought upon Him as a chastisement for His own faults, so that the sufferings which belong to His kingdom are those which are endured for His name and for His glory's sake, and for the good of others. If men lie in prison for their own crimes, that has nothing to do with His kingdom. If we suffer for our sins, that is no part of His kingdom.

But when a man loses of his substance for Christ's cause, lays out himself to toil even unto death, bears contempt and suffers hardness as a Christian—this is after the type of Christ's kingdom. When the missionary goes forth with his life in his hand among the heathen, or when a believer in any way divests himself of comfort for the good of others, it is then that he truly copies the pattern set him in Pilate's Hall by our great King.

I say to you Christians who court ease, to you who are hoarding up your gold, to you who will do nothing that would bring you under the criticism of your fellow men, to you who live unto yourselves—would it not be irony of the severest kind if I were to point to Jesus before Pilate and say, "Behold your King." Living in undue luxury, amassing wealth, rolling in ease, living to enjoy yourselves! Is that your King?

Poor subjects, you, and very unlike your Lord, but if there be among us those who for His sake can make sacrifices, we may look upon our King without fear. You who are undaunted by contempt, and who would give all that you have, yea, and give yourselves to know Jesus—and are doing so—to such I say, "Behold your King," for you are of His kingdom and you shall reign with Him.

In your conquest of yourselves you have already become kings. In reigning over your own desires and carnal inclinations, for the sake of His dear love, you are already kings and priests unto God, and you shall reign forever and ever.

He who is ruled by his passions in any degree is still a slave, but he who lives for God and his fellow men has a royal soul. The insignia of a prince unto God are still shame and suffering—which adornments are readily worn when the Lord calls him to do so. In Christ's kingdom those are peers of the highest rank who are most like their Lord, and are the lowest and humblest in mind—and most truly the servants of all.

The secondary princes of His kingdom approximate less closely to Him, and the lower you descend in the scale, the less you are like Him in those respects. The Christian surrounded with every comfort, who never endured hardness for Christ, who never knew what it was to be sneered at for Jesus' sake, who never made a sacrifice which went so far as to pinch him in the least—if indeed he be a Christian—is least in the kingdom of heaven.

Proud, rich men who give but trifles to Christ's cause are pariahs in His kingdom, but they are the chief who are willing to be least of all, they are princes who make themselves the offscouring of all things for His name's sake, such as were the apostles and first martyrs, and others whom His love has greatly constrained.

V. Our concluding remark shall be, "Behold your King"—PROVING THE CERTAINTY OF HIS EMPIRE—for if, beloved, Christ was King when He was in Pilate's hands, after being scourged and spit upon, and while He was wearing the robe and crown of mockery, when will He not be King?

If He was King at His worst, when is it that His throne can ever be shaken? They have brought Him very low. They have brought Him lower than the sons of men, for they have made Him a worm and no man, despised of the people, and *yet He is King*!

Marks of royalty were present on the day of His death. He dispensed crowns when He was on the cross—He gave the dying thief a promise of an entrance into Paradise. In His death, He shook the earth, He opened graves, He split the rocks, He darkened the sun, and He made men smite on their breasts in dismay.

One voice after another, even from the ranks of His foes, proclaimed Him to be King, even when dying like a malefactor. Was He a King then? When will He not be King? And who is there that can by any means shake His throne?

In the days of His flesh, "The kings of the earth stood up and the rulers took counsel together, saying, Let us break his bonds asunder, and cast his cords from us, but he that sat in the heavens did laugh, the LORD did have them in derision." And Christ on the cross was acknowledged in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin, to be still the King of the Jews. When will He not be King?

If He was King before He died and was laid in the grave, what is He now that He has risen from the dead, now that He has vanquished the destroyer of our race, and lives no more to die? What is He now?

You angels, tell what glories surround Him now! If He was King when He stood at Pilate's bar, what will He be when Pilate shall stand at His bar, when He shall come on the great white throne and summon all mankind before Him to judgment? What will be His acknowledged sovereignty and His dreaded majesty in the day of the Lord?

Come, let us adore Him. Let us pay our humble homage in the courts of the Lord's house this day. And then let us go forth to our daily service in His name, and make this our strong resolve, His Spirit helping us, that we will live to crown Him in our hearts and in our lives—in every place where our lot may be cast—till the day break and the shadows flee away, and we behold the King in His beauty and the land that is very far off.

None can overturn a kingdom which is founded on the death of its King. None can abolish a dominion whose deep foundations are laid in the tears and blood of the Prince Himself. Napoleon said that he founded his empire by force, and therefore it had passed away. "But," he said, "Jesus founded His kingdom upon love, and it will last forever." So it must be, for whatever may or may not be, it is written, "*He must reign.*"

As for us, if we wish to extend the Redeemer's kingdom we must be prepared to deny ourselves for Christ. We must be prepared for weariness, slander, and self-denial. In this sign we conquer. The cross will have to be borne by us as well as by Him if we are to reign with Jesus. We must both teach the cross and bear the cross. We must participate in the shame if we would participate in the glory. No thorn, no throne.

When again shall be heard the voice, "Behold your King," and Jew and Gentile shall see Him enthroned, and surrounded with all His Father's angels—with the whole earth subdued to His power, happy shall he be who shall then in the exalted Savior behold his King.

The Lord grant us this day to be loyal subjects of the Crucified that we may be favored to share His glory.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—JOHN 19:1-30

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—373, 295, 282

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.