

CONCENTRATION AND DIFFUSION NO. 3174

A SERMON
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*“Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.”
John 12:3*

YOU will notice, if you read the narrative attentively, that the two sisters and the brother, who made up the favored household at Bethany, though all most truly loving Jesus, had each one a different way of showing that love. Even so, true children of God do not always feel moved to serve the Lord Jesus in the same fashion, or to express their love to Him in precisely the same manner.

Martha served. She was the housekeeper and with much diligence made Him a supper. It would have been a sad omission had there been no table spread for so blessed a guest—and who could prepare it as well as Martha? Sometimes we have heard people speak disparagingly of Martha, but truly they mistake the Lord, who never chided her for serving, but for being on one occasion so cumbered by it as to think harshly of her sister. Martha, in this instance did not fall into the fault which her Lord once so gently chided—she did her part quietly and well, and thereby set forth her attachment to Jesus in the most commendable manner.

We have sisters in the church whose way of serving Christ is in the household, or by caring for the sick and the poor. Like Dorcas, they make garments for them, or like holy women of old, they minister to the Lord of their substance. Their work is with things temporal, but they are none the less approved of their loving Master.

Brethren, too, as deacons, may better honor the Lord by serving tables than they could by attempting to edify saints when the gifts suitable for that work are denied them. Each man and woman must labor according to his or her ability and calling.

As for Lazarus, he was “one of them that sat at the table.” We might hastily imagine that by sitting there he did nothing, but my brethren, the people had come together very much to see Lazarus, who had been raised from the dead—and for him to sit there and to show himself—and especially to eat and to drink, was to do the best thing to convince onlookers that he was indeed alive.

Our blessed Lord Himself when He rose from the dead, found it necessary to convince His disciples that He was really alive and in a real body, and therefore He took a piece of a broiled fish and of a honeycomb and did eat before them all. When they saw Him eat, then they were sure that He lived. So, when Lazarus ate at the table, skeptics could not say, “It is merely his corpse set upright to look like life, or a mere phantom to deceive.” Lazarus eating and drinking was a testimony for Jesus, and I would that we all knew how even to eat and drink to the glory of God.

There are some Christians who cannot do much or say much, but their godly lives, their patient suffering, their quiet holiness, are good witnesses to Jesus. I have looked at the lilies and the roses in the garden, and I have thought, “You toil not, neither do you spin, you preach not, neither do you sing, and yet you praise my Lord, simply *by being beautiful* and by unconsciously shedding abroad the perfume which He gives you.”

May not some saints be glorifying God most truly though they can do no more than this? Besides, some one of the family was needed to keep the Master company and preside as host at the table—and who could do this but Lazarus, the master of the house? Anywhere else Lazarus might have been out of

place, but to me it appears most seemly that Lazarus should sit at the table—and if he modestly declined to take the head of it and sat with others, he was still bound to be there.

But what shall Mary do? She need not be at the table, Lazarus was there. She is, perhaps, of small use in the kitchen—her abilities are slender in that direction. What shall Mary do? Her heart was very warm and she felt she must do something. She did not ask anybody, however, for her own mind was inventive.

She knew that it was a usual custom with honored guests to anoint them with ointment. She perceived that this had not yet been done, or if done, not in the royal style which her love suggested. Perhaps she was very lovely and had been somewhat fond of adorning her person, her long hair may have been much cherished, and she may have been profuse in the use of perfume upon it. The thought strikes her—she will consecrate that hair to Jesus and that pound of fragrant unguent, which she had stored up for the beautifying of herself, shall be spent upon *Him*.

It was very costly, but it had not cost a penny too much now that it could be used upon *Him*. There was a pound of it, but there was none too much for *Him*. It was very sweet, but none too sweet for *Him*. She brings the pound of ointment and pours it upon His feet as He lies reclining at the table—and then begins to wipe His feet with the hairs of her head, consecrating her personal beauty as well as her valued treasure to Him whom she both loved and adored. She had found something to do and that something not the least of the three works of love.

The service of the three members of that elect family made up a complete feast. Martha prepared the supper, Lazarus conversed with their honored guest, and Mary anointed the Master's feet. Judge not one another, my brothers and sisters. Do each one what you feel you can do, and what the Lord expects of you—and look not on another's work with ungenerous eyes. Neither Martha, nor Lazarus, nor Mary complained of each other, but together they made the service complete. All members have not the same office, but each one must lovingly supplement the office of the rest, and emulation and jealousy must never enter among us.

We will now forget the others and look alone at Mary. We are struck with the service which she performed for Christ. It was somewhat singular, it was very demonstrative, and it proved her love to be of no common kind. Other women besides Martha had made Him a supper. Other hosts besides Lazarus had sat at the table with Him. But no other had anointed His feet exactly in her fashion, though perhaps some may have come near to it.

Mary was inventive, demonstrative, patient, ardent, enthusiastic. What she did was the deed of a soul all on fire—the deed of a woman filled with deep devotion and reverent love. There is an old proverb that “still waters run deep.” Mary had these still waters within her heart—she sat at Jesus' feet and heard His words. She was a woman of few words, but of many thoughts. She considered, she pondered, and she adored.

Mary among women is the counterpart of John among men and perhaps, at this time, she had even outrun the beloved disciple in quick discernment of the Lord's true nature. It seems to me that she had perceived His Godhead, and understood more of what He was and what He was about to do than any other of the disciples did. At least, I can on that theory better understand her deed of love.

She devised a homage for Him which she would not have dreamed of presenting to any other than such a one as she perceived the Lord to be. Pondering many things within her soul, and remembering what He had done for her personally—and for her dear brother Lazarus, whom she loved so well—she determined that a special mark of reverential homage should be paid Him, and she carried out the resolve. Deep thought led to burning love and burning love led to immediate action.

Beloved friends, the church of Christ needs a band of men and women full of enthusiasm who will go beyond others in devotion to the Lord Jesus. We need missionaries who will dare to die to carry the Gospel to regions beyond. We need ministers who will defy public opinion and with flaming zeal burn a way into men's hearts. We need men and women who will consecrate all that they have by daring deeds of heroic self-sacrifice. Oh, that all Christians were like this, but we must at least have some.

We need a bodyguard of loving champions to rally around the Savior, the bravest of the brave, Immortals, and Invincibles, who shall lead the van of the armies of the Lord. Where are we to get them? How are they to be produced? The Holy Spirit's way to train men and women, who shall greatly serve Christ, is to lead them to deep thought and quiet contemplation. There they obtain the knowledge and vital principle which are the fuel of true zeal.

You cannot leap into high devotion, neither can you be preached into it, nor dream yourself into it, or be electrified into it by revivalism. It must, through the divine energy of the Holy Spirit, arise out of hard, stern dealing with your soul, and near and dear communion with your Savior. You must sit at His feet, or you will never anoint them. He must pour His divine teaching into you or you will never pour out a precious ointment upon Him.

This is a rather long introduction, but we will now leave it all and crave your attention for a little time to a short parable which appears to me to grow out of this incident.

Mary took a pound of ointment and poured it all on Christ's feet—that is *concentration*. When she had poured it all out on Christ's feet, the whole house was filled with the odour of the ointment—that is *diffusion*. And the surest way to effective diffusion is perfect concentration.

I. Let us speak a little first upon this CONCENTRATION.

You desire, my friend, to do something before you die, which may prove a blessing to your family connections. The desire is good, but do not begin with diffusion—commence with concentration and let Mary be your model. *She brought out all her ointment*, the whole pound without reserve. Even so, consecrate to the Savior all that you have—every faculty, power, possession, and ability. Half the pound of spikenard would not have sufficed. That half pound in reserve would have spoiled the deed.

Perhaps we should never have heard of it at all if it had been less complete. Half a heart given to Christ? Tell it not in Gath, whisper it not in the streets of Askelon. Half a life given to Christ? Half your faculties, half your powers given to Christ? It is an unworthy gift. He gave you all and He claims all of you. O dear soul, if you would fill the house with sweet odor, bring in your whole self and pour out your heart at His feet!

Note that as she brought all, so *she poured it all upon Jesus*. She had no fear of the black looks of Judas, for the act was not meant for Judas—it was all for Jesus. I do not think she gave a thought to Martha, or Lazarus, or to any of them. The whole pound was for Jesus. The highest way of living is to live for Jesus, and altogether for Jesus, not caring what this man says or how the other judges, but feeling that as *He* has bought us with His blood, and we are His from the crown of our head to the sole of our feet, we therefore own no master but our Redeemer.

Brothers and sisters, do you live for Jesus in that fashion? Do we not perform many actions under the impulse of secondary motives? I like, for my part, sometimes to do an act of which I feel, "I do not consider whether this will benefit my fellow men. I am doing it only for Jesus. What comes of it—whether a soul shall be saved or not, is not my main care—but I am speaking this good word *in His honor*, and if God accepts it, and it glorifies Jesus, my end is served." Oh, it is a blessed thing to feel that you are living, not as a servant of man, nor of the church, nor of a sect or party, but of Him whose precious blood has bought you!

Concentrate all your faculties upon the Lord Himself, and then consult not with flesh and blood. Mary did not wait for any advice about the matter. There is Jesus and there are His blessed feet, inviting her to anoint them. She will not stop to inquire what Martha thinks, much less what Judas murmurs, but her heart tells her to do it. All her powers of love say to her, "Do it," and she brings out the costly perfume and pours it all on Him.

When the criticism is given about the wasteful deed, she cares not to make an apology—and she needs not to do so. If for the moment the grumbling grated harshly upon her ear, her Master's look of love and that kind word, "Let her alone; against the day of my burying hath she kept this," are quite enough for her.

She did not aim at pleasing Judas, and so, if Judas is not pleased, she is not disappointed. She did it for Jesus, and Jesus being pleased, she has gained all that she sought. Ah, brethren, this is what we must try to do—we must not always remain in leading-strings, asking other people what they think about our actions—if we know that a certain course is right, let us follow it, and let others think and say what they choose.

This concentration of everything upon Jesus is the only way of worthily serving Him. When we give Him all, we do not give Him a thousandth part of what He deserves. But to give Him half—to give Him a tithe, to give Him what we can easily spare—is a poor way of expressing our love to Him. Who else deserves a part of your service? If you have been redeemed from death and hell, who else can claim a portion of your heart? Look at Him in His life of labor, look at Him on the cross, and look at Him remembering you still before the throne of God. Does He not engross your affections? Say, does He not throw another cord of love around you and bind you as a sacrifice to the horns of the altar?

I will not linger longer on that point. Enough is as good as a feast. Concentrate, concentrate, concentrate, concentrate all on Jesus.

II. Now, consider what will come of it—namely, DIFFUSION. “The house was filled with the odour of the ointment.”

Mark that the house was not filled with the odour of the ointment through Mary’s seeking. She did not run into every chamber and drop a little on the floor, so that every room might smell of it. She did not care whether the house was perfumed or not—she only wanted to anoint her Lord, and therefore she poured all the ointment on His feet. The result was that the rooms were perfumed, but that was not her main object.

She did not tell everybody that she had precious ointment in store, but they knew it by her pouring it out. Whenever you hear a man boast that he is holy, remember that good scent needs no proclaiming. The only cart I ever meet with that rings a bell is the dust cart. If jewels and diamonds, or the bullion of the Bank of England are carried through the streets, no bell is rung. “Great cry and little wool” is a proverb which has had a new exposition in this country of late—a wonderful cry about holiness and wonderful little holiness to cry about, but a great deal to be wept over and lamented before the living God.

To stand in every room and cry, “Spikenard! Spikenard! Wonderful spikenard!” would have been idle. Pour it on Jesus’ feet and you will not have to say anything about it, for every room will be sweet with the smell thereof. We need, nowadays, dear friends, to have a little less talk about what men are and much more actual living unto Jesus. The Lord work it in us by His Spirit!

Why was it that Mary’s spikenard perfumed all the house, and how is it that, if there is true grace in a man’s life, it is sure to be felt and recognized without his saying much about it? We reply, *because it is real*. Real religion is always influential. Sham religion has but sham power. You cannot get influence by saying, “I mean to influence So-and-so”—as well hope to stop the sun and moon without Joshua’s miraculous power.

The power of religion within yourself will be very much the measure of the power which you exercise over others. Artificial flowers may be made so exactly like the real plants that you can scarcely detect them, but they lack the perfume of our garden favorites—and so also the mere professor has not the fragrance of real grace, and consequently, no attractive and sweetening influence upon others.

But where religion is real, true, heartfelt, deep—where there is strong, all-absorbing love to Christ—the sweet perfume of grace will give the man influence over his fellow men. I cannot tell you how it is that a man who lives near to God has this influence, but I know he has it. The camphor tree is full of camphor in all parts of it—branch, bark, root, and flower are all full of camphor—and the man who really lives for Jesus is full of gracious influence in all places and times. May you and I be so!

How was it that the rooms became filled with the odor? There is a law of nature which chemists call *the law of transfusion*. If two gases of an entirely different nature are brought into contact, they

commence at once to mix with one another and continue to unite till they are thoroughly intermingled. Thus flavors and odors diffuse themselves in the air.

It is so with good and evil in the world. Insensibly, every man is the worse for coming in contact with a vicious example, and consciously or unconsciously, every man is swayed to some degree for good by the presence of a virtuous life. The law of transfusion enters into moral and spiritual matters, as well as into the realm of chemistry—and if you walk with God, and endeavor to preserve a blameless life and glorify Christ—influence will be yours without your seeking it. How far it will extend, God alone knows. It may reach far beyond what you suppose to be its sphere and may even teach some who are yet unborn, who shall hear from others how you lived and how you glorified Christ.

Besides, dear friends, true piety is a very powerful essence and *possesses great energy*. There are perfumes in nature, like the otto of roses, of which the smallest drop will make a chamber smell for many a day. True holiness is such a mighty, pervading essence that, if you possess it, it cannot be hidden—it will make itself known as a sweet savor even as far as heaven. The life of God is in it and it must operate. In everything that is good, God lies hidden. The Spirit of God dwells in every gracious word, and godly thought, and holy deed, and He is sweetness itself. The name of Jesus is as ointment poured forth—what must His Spirit be? Yet that Spirit is to be found in every true believer.

I want to close by asking you, dear friends, how far, as yet, you have concentrated your love upon Christ and thus have influenced those who dwell in your house? I will only ask about your own house. Has *your* house been filled with the odor of the ointment? You do pray, but have your prayers been so mighty with God that they have brought down a blessing upon your family?

You seek to avoid sin, you try to make your conversation pure, gracious, kind, cheerful, loving, and Christlike—do you think that some in your house have been blessed thereby? I do not ask, “Have all been converted?” for though all the house was the better for Mary’s ointment, yet Judas remained a traitor. I should not wonder if some in your house may have even disliked you the more for your piety—but still, the Lord frequently blesses godliness and makes it the means of conversion.

O woman, you may gain your husband by your piety. If he will not hear sermons, he will hear that quiet, loving life of yours! O sister, you may win your brother by your love. He will not read pious books, but those letters of yours, those sweet words of tender rebuke and invitation—he does read them and he feels them, too, though you fear he does not.

Father, those boys of yours are not yet what you could wish, but they must feel your godly example. Perhaps when you lie beneath the sod, they will recollect what you used to be. Fill the house with the odor of true religion. Fill the parlor and the drawing room, the bedchamber and the kitchen, with hallowed conversation. I say again, not with mere talk and Pharisaic pretense, but with real holy living and true godly communion. And depend upon it, you are doing for your children and your servants the best thing in your power to do. Give them teaching, give them warning and entreaty, but still, the actual perfuming with godliness must arise from your own holy living—it must be begotten of the ointment poured on Jesus’ feet.

Ah, dear friends, I wish that not only the house in which we may happen to dwell, but the workshop where we labor, the shop where we trade, the place of business where we associate with others, might all be perfumed with divine grace. Christians are not to glide out of the way of their fellow creatures and shut themselves up in order to be pious any more than a soldier may hope to win the battle by running away.

No, mix with your fellow men. If there are offices of trust to discharge, do not leave them to the lowest of the low to discharge them, but be willing to do public service for your country. But so do this that you shall spread abroad in every office the savor of honesty and integrity, and make the rogue and the cheat ashamed of themselves.

I would to God that every Christian church were a living protest against all the wrong-doing of the times, a gracious disinfectant to stay the abounding corruption. There is an evil smell of sin perpetually reeking towards heaven—and it needs that you Christians should live Christlike lives in public as well as

in private until you fill this country with a healthier savor—and until England shall become a Christian country in fact, as well as in name.

Would to God that the example of Christians might yet become so potent that all nations might feel its power, that wars might cease, that cruelties of every kind might come to an end, and that the sweet savor of Jesus' name, manifested through His people, might perfume the whole world as though God had showered upon it ambrosial essences and fragrances from the flowers of heaven to sweeten it against the time when Christ Himself shall come and make it a marriage chamber for His chosen bride!

God grant that the perfume of your holiness may reach the stars. That your lives may be so sweet that, beyond these fogs and clouds, the sweet aroma of your grace may rise acceptable to God through Jesus Christ, for we are ever a sweet savor unto Him if we live unto the Lord.

I fear me, however, that I may be addressing some whose lives are not a sweet perfume at all. Ah, take heed to yourselves! If you are living without God and without Christ—if you are living in any secret sin—take heed to yourselves. You may think that you will be able to conceal the ill savor of your sin, but you will not. How wonderfully does evil tell its own secret! The intolerable odor of many a secret sin has forced its way to notice.

Beware you who would cover your sin! Beware, I pray you! For the task is hopeless. Dig, dig, dig, dig deep and in the dead of night cover up the sin, but like the blood of Abel, it cries from the ground. “Be sure your sin will find you out.” If you are living now in sin and yet pretend to be virtuous, remember that, if your hypocrisy is never found out in this life, it will confront you at the last great day.

How terrible will be the resurrection of buried sins to men who know not Christ! They will wake up in the next world and find their sins howling around them like grim wolves—insatiable, fierce, and terrible. Any one sin is able to destroy the soul, but what must it be to be surrounded by thousands, howling with terrible voices, and eager to drag you down and tear you in pieces?

It will be so with you, sirs, it must be so with many of you, unless you lay hold now upon the great salvation. Jesus Christ can drive away those wolves, can stay the ill savor of your sins. If you will trust Him, if you will yield your hearts to Him, He will deliver you. But if you will not, on your own heads be your blood.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

JOHN 12:1-43

Verse 1. *Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead.*

The days Christ was to spend upon the earth were getting to be very few, so He paid another visit to that Bethany home where He was always so welcome, and more so than ever since He had raised Lazarus from the dead.

2-3. *There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him. Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.*

All the members of the re-united family were present—Martha busy as usual with the domestic duties which fell to her share, Lazarus in close attendance upon the Master who had wrought so great a miracle upon him, and Mary, in her own sweet and gracious way, pouring out the wealth of her affection in honor of the Master.

4-6. *Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein.*

The question of Judas was a most unworthy one, but the motive that prompted the question was worse still. Little did he care for the poor, but if he could have had the selling of that very costly ointment of spikenard, he would have made that an opportunity of enriching himself.

7-8. *Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this. For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always.*

Christ was Himself always caring for the poor, so He would not discourage any effort on their behalf, but just then, one of His most devoted disciples desired to render to Him special honor—and He would not let her be rebuked—but on the contrary, He pointed out the deep symbolical meaning of her loving action.

9. *Much people of the Jews therefore knew that he was there: and they came not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead.*

Their curiosity was but natural, for few of them could have seen anyone who had been raised from the dead. It is well when a saved soul, who has been spiritually raised from the dead, becomes a center of attraction together with the Lord who has worked such a miracle of mercy upon him.

10-11. *But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death; because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus.*

They would have committed a double murder if it had been possible, and would have put to death both Jesus and Lazarus, who was a living witness to the wonder-working power of the Christ whom they would not receive as the promised Messiah. When men hate Christ, they also hate those whom He has blessed—and will go to any lengths in seeking to silence their testimony.

12-13. *On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord.*

It is significant that John is the only one of the four evangelists who mentions the palm fronds that were carried by the people in this triumphal procession in honor of Christ, and it was to John that the vision was given of the “great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues,” who “stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.”

14-16. *And Jesus, when he had found a young ass, sat thereon ; as it is written, Fear not, daughter of Sion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt. These things understood not his disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things unto him.*

It is strange that Christ's own disciples did not at once remember this plain prophecy when it was so literally fulfilled, yet, before we condemn them, let us recollect how “slow of heart” we also have been “to believe all that the prophets have spoken.”

17. *The people therefore that was with him when he called Lazarus out of his grave, and raised him from the dead, bare record.*

They could not help testifying in His favor after they had seen Him work such a notable miracle as the raising of Lazarus from the dead.

18-19. *For this cause the people also met him, for that they heard that he had done this miracle. The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? behold, the world is gone after him.*

When they saw our Lord riding in state through the streets, and the people waving palm branches and shouting in His honor, they said, “The world is gone after him.” That was only very partially true, and for a very short time—but the day will come when the whole world shall go after Him. Christ's divine attractions shall be felt throughout the earth, and all the Pharisees then in the world will not be able to prevent the people from going after Him. And—

*“Come what may
To stand in the way
That day the world shall see.”*

20-21. *And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast: the same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus.*

They were proselytes who had learned to worship JEHOVAH. Something more than mere curiosity must have moved them to want to see Jesus. Having heard of His raising the dead, they had a desire, and a very proper desire, to know more of Him, so they asked to be introduced to Him by one who, though not a Greek, had a Greek name, and who might have therefore served as a kind of bridge for these Greeks to reach the Savior.

22-23. *Philip cometh and telleth Andrew: and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus. And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified.*

Christ’s passion and death were getting very near when these Gentiles came to Him and He saw, in that company of Greeks, the vanguard of that great army that shall yet come to Him out of every nation under heaven. In the prospect of that great ingathering, He looked beyond the impending shame and suffering, and spoke even of the hour of His death as the time when He should be glorified.

24. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.* [See sermon #3024, Christ’s Death and Ours]

This was Christ’s way to glory, and it must be our way to glory, too. The grain of wheat must fall into the ground and die, or else it cannot bring forth fruit. Just so must it be with you and with me—and in proportion as we learn to die to self we shall live to the glory of God.

25. *He that loveth his life shall lose it;*

If you keep yourself to yourself, you will lose yourself.

25. *And he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.*

Brethren and sisters in Christ, if we are really to glorify Christ on the earth, we must be willing to lose our reputation, our good name, our comfort, and indeed everything that we have for Christ’s sake. This is the only way truly to live. If, for your own sake, you begin to keep back anything from Christ, that is the way to die. You would then be like the grain of wheat that is laid by and preserved and which, therefore, can never grow or multiply.

Surrender yourself. Be willing to be nothing. Be willing to die if only the truth may live. Care nothing about honor and glory for yourself—care only about the honor and glory of your Master. Learn the meaning of the Master’s paradox—as you bury yourself, you will multiply yourself. As you are put out of sight, like a grain of wheat that is sown in the ground, you have your only opportunity of growth and increase. Heavily-laden ears of corn shall spring up from the grain which has been buried in the earth.

26-28. *If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour. Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name.* [See sermon #1391, A Golden Prayer]

In the twenty-seventh verse, our Savior asked Himself the question, “What shall I say?” here He gives His own answer, “Father, glorify thy name.” When you know not what to pray for, you can always safely pray, “Father, glorify thy name.” As you stand where the crossroads meet and you ask, “Which way shall I choose?” pray, “Father, glorify thy name.”

This incident seems like a rehearsal of Christ’s passion. Here we see that natural fear of death which came across the Savior’s mind because He was so really and truly man. If His pains had not been real pains, but had been pleasant and congenial to Him, there would have been no self-sacrifice in His suffering. But the fact that they cast upon His spirit the dark shadow of death only proves to us what

sharp pains they were—but instead of asking for a way of escape from them, He surrendered Himself to them, gave Himself up as a willing victim with this prayer upon His lips, “Father, glorify thy name.”

And now see what happened.

28-29. *Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again. The people therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered: others said, An angel spake to him.*

This was one of the three occasions on which testimony was openly borne to Christ by His Father—first at His baptism, then at His transfiguration, and now here at the rehearsal of His great sacrifice. [In sermon #909, *Voices From the Excellent Glory*, Mr. Spurgeon speaks of those three testimonies to Christ.] Verily, He is the Son of God, and He is ever well-pleasing to God. And God has glorified His name and will continue to glorify it through Jesus Christ His Son.

We learn from this narrative that the voice of God is not understood by everybody. Some of those that stood by said that it thundered and others said that an angel spake to Him. It is necessary that you should be a child of God if you are to know your Father’s voice. Though God is speaking, at this moment, in the clearest tones, none will recognize His voice, or understand His words, but those who are taught by His Holy Spirit.

30-31. *Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes. Now is the judgment of this world:* [See sermon #2338, *The Crisis of This World*] *now shall the ruler of this world be cast out.*

See how the eye of faith reads things differently from the eye of sense. You and I would have said, “Now is Christ coming to His lowest point. Now is His name to be cast out from among men and His cause to be crushed as the result of His death.” But Christ reads the signs of the times very differently. “Now,” said He, “in the hour of My shame, and suffering, and death, is the judgment of this world. Now shall the prince of this world be cast out.” It was only by Christ being apparently conquered that Satan could be really vanquished, and there is often no way of victory for a saint except through defeat. When self is slain, then do we truly live.

32-33. *And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die.* [See sermons #139, *Christ Lifted Up*; #775, *The Great Attraction* and #1717, *The Marvelous Magnet*]

The Pharisees said, “The world is gone after him,” but Jesus says, “No, not while I am riding in state through the streets of Jerusalem. But when I am lifted up and hung upon the cross, then shall it indeed be true, ‘I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.’” The crucified Christ of Calvary is the mighty magnet that is to attract multitudes of trembling, doubting, ruined sinners, who by grace shall be drawn unto Him and find eternal life in Him.

34-35. *The people answered him, We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever: and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up? who is this Son of man? Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth.*

What a sad condition to be in—to not know where you are going! Are there not some of you, whom I am now addressing, who do not know where you are going? Yet if you would but take the trouble to look, you might easily know that, as long as you continue in the paths of sin, you are going down to the chambers of death. Oh, that God’s Holy Spirit would give you sufficient light to enable you to see where you are going! You surely do not want to take “a leap in the dark.” Oh, that you may have the grace to turn from the downward way and to seek the heavenward road!

36-41. *While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light. These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them. But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: that the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and*

hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him.

[See sermons #2413, Despised Light Withdrawn and #1844, Israel and Britain—A Note of Warning]

You know that wonderful sixth chapter of Isaiah's prophecy, and you know how wonderfully he has spoken there of the glory of Christ. But what a terrible thing it is that even Christ should be driven to blind men's eyes, to take the light away from them because they proved themselves unworthy of it! May that never be the case with any of us, but while we may see, let us see—and may God give us more light!

42-43. *Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.*

What a shameful thing that was! Yet you will still find that there are many persons who, even though they believe the truth, dare not own it, but must hide in obscurity until the times grow easier. However, Christ's death fetched out many who had been His disciples in secret. Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus could not stay in the background any longer, and doubtless, the thoughts of many other hearts were then revealed.

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.