

The Joy in Harbest.

A THANKSGIVING SERMON;

PREACHED IN THE

Arch Street Presbyterian Church,

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BY

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S E R M O N .

"THEY JOY BEFORE THEE ACCORDING TO THE JOY IN HARVEST."

Isaiah ix. 3.

WE are not, to-day, specially concerned with the text's original reference. The prophet here uses a figure illustrative of Christian life. He is describing prospectively the gladness of Gospel times—a joy not profane and sensual, but holy and religious. A joy "*before Thee*" (i. e.) *in the presence of Jehovah*, or in holy exercises and ordinances. And this joy he compares to "the joy of harvest."

The text suggests two simple thoughts, befitting our circumstances: *First—That the season of harvest is a proper occasion of joy*; and *Secondly—That this joy of harvest is a pattern of true Christian gladness*. Let us consider them in their order. *First*—The text teaches *that the season of harvest is a proper occasion for joy*.

Under the old dispensation, such manifestations of gladness were prescribed and ceremonial. On last Thanksgiving morning we described at length that old feast of harvest, and we need not repeat it. It was an occasion of exceeding gladness. The old land of promise woke into rapture as a child to its holiday. Eyes flashed, hearts bounded, lips broke forth into singing, and from valley to mountain top, Judea foamed and sparkled with glad life at this God-appointed festival. And all these festal rites were of Divine

appointment. The priest standing before the altar in the solemn Temple-service was no more truly, nor indeed formally, worshipping God, than were these exulting Israelites at this feast of harvest.

Now this feast is our pattern. We have assembled to render grateful acknowledgments to God for this gift of harvest. Nor is the occasion unworthy such religious offering. It would be difficult to exaggerate the importance of agriculture. Without subscribing the French system of political economy, which regards the produce of land as the only true source of national wealth and revenue, and ranks artificers, manufacturers, and merchants with non-producers; and without adopting Franklin's celebrated saying, "that there are but three ways for a nation to acquire wealth: the first by War, which is robbery; the second by Commerce, which is frequently cheating; the third by Agriculture, which is the only honest way;" still there is alike in the system and the saying no little of truth. For although manufacturers, and merchants, and indeed men of all trades and professions, do add to the value of national property—and a true political economy will therefore classify all true work with productive labor—nevertheless, all such labor requires agriculture as its substantial basis. In cultivating land, labor moves the great mainspring of all physical, national, moral life. The proximate products of the spade and plow may be reaped with sickles and gathered into barns; but their products, remote and yet real, are seen in all the wheels of machinery, all the sails of commerce, all the creations of art, indeed in all the substantial and beneficent realities of civilized life.

A joy for harvest, is therefore a joy for all God's countless benefactions. In praising Jehovah "for preserving to our use the kindly fruits of the earth," we are praising Him for our whole merciful experience. For our *bodily* blessing—the continuance of life, health, strength, in all our

organs of speech, and sense, and motion. For our *intellectual* blessings—reason, judgment, memory, imagination, all unimpaired and operative. For our *social* blessings—that the lives of our beloved are spared to us, and our homes are beautiful as ever, with their cheerful hearth-fires and abundant boards. For our *civil* blessings—that our land continues free, prosperous, united, the fairest and noblest heritage of manhood on the face of the earth. For our *spiritual* blessings—a true faith, an open Bible, a free sanctuary, a pure Gospel—all these means of grace, all these hopes of glory. For one and all of these countless and immense blessings, do we rejoice before God in our “*joy of harvest.*”

It is fitting, then, that on occasions like this, we should gather in these sacred temples, with songs of Thanksgiving. As a religious service, thanksgiving has its foundation in the very nature of things; for, as we can by no equivalent recompense God for his favors, it is only a better instinct that prompts us to entertain a lively sense of his goodness, and give utterance to our gratitude in appropriate forms. And this instinct religion seizes and sanctifies. As a worshipful service, this gladness in view of personal benefits rises from the low form of a selfish joy for a gift, into a gracious thanksgiving unto the Great Giver. Here the rapt visions of the old prophets of God and the narcotic reveries of infidel philanthropists meet in one grand consummation, when a holy day becomes a “holiday,” standing out as a type of millennial and celestial worship, when the sacrifices of the Lord shall not be a broken, but a bounding heart.

We have, then, the sanction both of our better impulses, and of divine precepts for this “joy in harvest.” We have no right—it is sinful as well as unseemly—to sit in our sanctuaries to-day in garments of sackcloth; or to return

to our homes moody, sorrowful, despondent, as if the lines had not fallen to us in pleasant places, and ours was not a goodly heritage. We are gathered here as the Hebrew tribes at their Pentecost, to fill the Temple of God with the old choral harmonies, and then, like them, to go down from our Zion with bright eyes, and smiling faces, full of thankfulness for the present and trustfulness for the future; forgetful of life's trials, or mindful of them only as of clouds to the eye of faith haloed with rainbows; thoughtful mainly of our abundant mercies—of life bounding in our veins, and made soft and fair by the hand of the great Father; of homes sheltered by his grace, where dwell angels of love, flinging purer light from their plumes over all our times of gladness, and nerving us with a ministry of strength for each sharp hour of evil and peril; making our return-path jubilant as Israel's along her luxuriant landscapes, and our homes as bright at our coming; with the voice of music, and the glad laugh of children—feeling blessed in the beatitude God accords us to-day; and blessed more fully in the guarantee, that “to-morrow shall be as this, day, and much more abundant.” Demonstrating, by our smiles, our looks and tones of love, our serene and festive frames, that it is a sweet, and a blessed thing to have God for our Father—that wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and that our religious service in God's temple is but a holy “*joy in the harvest.*”

This is the text's first lesson—*That we should keep a joyous feast before the Lord at the gathering of harvest.* But this is not its only, nor, indeed, its chief lesson. If it were, the speaker's task to-day would be easy. We have little fear that on this point any of you will even “*seem to come short.*” Infidelity itself will join with us in this service. It shrinks not from our “holy days” when we pronounce them “holidays.” Even the stern old Puritans came grandly out in behalf of mirth—*when the Governor so or-*

dered it! On Sabbath days they may have borne themselves as if their sanctuary dropped ice-water, but on "Thanksgivings" they were anointed with the oil of joy "even above their fellows." Then, heads before bowed down as the bulrush, went up with the rebound of a loosened bow-string! Iron brows relaxed, sad eyes flashed, the merry laugh rang out, and the fire-light sparkled at the old Puritan's hearth-stone, and boards were loaded and relieved of luxuries—as if absorption and digestion were the chief end of man. And this is one of the few graces of our forefathers we delight to honor. Sure we are, no progressive infidel will sneer at Christians to-day as "sour-faced evangelicals"; we shall make manifest enough for the most progressive of them all, the spirit and the power of this "*joy in harvest.*"

But the text has another and more important lesson, and leads us to consider, *Secondly—that this joy of harvest is a pattern of true Christian joy.*

Speaking of the period of Israel's redemption, the prophet declares, that "*their joy before God*" (i. e.) in his service—shall be, in its common spirit and manifestations, *ACCORDING TO the joy in harvest.* This annual gladness in the season of fruit-gathering is set forth as a *type of the joyful spirit of the latter-day piety.*

The text is therefore intended to teach us, *that gladness is the very essence of advanced Christian life.* And this is the other thought we now propose to consider: *the duty of cultivating and manifesting Christian joy*—making all our days, like this, days of thankful happiness. Of course, we are not thinking to commend sinful pleasure, or the delight which an unholy nature takes in unholiness. Nor have we any fear of being so misunderstood, or misrepresented by any man of ordinary intelligence. All this casuistry as to *whether professing Christians may or may not join in the popular amusements of the world,* is a useless

waste of poor logic. Prove that they *may*, yet they *will not*! Make it plain as with a sunbeam that such amusements are not inconsistent with piety, and nevertheless is your labor lost, for no pious heart will go after them. In the process of regeneration a man's *taste* is regenerated. "That power whereby he receives pleasure or pain from the beauties or deformities of things around him," has itself been made holy, and in all its affinities turned away from the evil and toward the good.

And so the Christian does not merely refrain from worldly pleasures as a matter of conscience, but instinctively recoils from them as a matter of taste. You might convince a butterfly, plumed with azure and gold, and flitting freely through gardens of beauty, that it would be altogether seemly to return occasionally to the groveling life and rank garbage of its caterpillar kinsfolk. Nevertheless, it would say, "No, I thank you, sir; please excuse me. New tastes have sprung up in my heart with these plumes and pinions; your logic is capital, but on the whole I rather prefer to rest on these flowers and float in this sunshine." And so, though you, or Dr. Bellows, or an Archangel, should convince a Christian that the theatre, or the card-table, or a fancy ball, or a race-course, were quite proper as religious amusements, still you must, moreover, unregenerate the man's taste, enveloping his spiritual wings back again into reptilehood, ere you can persuade him to rejoice in them. A Christian is not a Frenchman to "follow his logic down Niagara." You can not indeed thus convince him; for he regards a *delight* in sinful pleasure as the greatest of all sins. It is the going forth, not of the hands and feet merely, but of the loving heart, in evil courses. The offering, not merely of the fed beast, but of the sacred incense of the Holy Temple at the shrine of Infernals. I say you cannot thus convince him. But if you could—(if there were wind enough in a thousand

Bellowses to blow away his conscience and the laws of his God)—still his renewed tastes will revolt from them. The restored prodigal has found his Father's house so full of exquisite delights, that he casts no longing eyes back to the old husks of the swine field.

Our text speaks of this Christian joy as a "*joy before God*," (*i. e.*) a joy in the Divine presence—pleasures wherein we can look for the guidance and the smile of our heavenly Father. And sure I am, no Christian can exercise such trust in scenes of ungodly amusement. He could not ask the Divine blessing over a card-table! He could not hope to see God amid the painted landscapes of a theatre! Nor trust that God would give his angels charge over him to keep his feet from stumbling in the maze of dizzy dances! He will not "look for God" in the devil's old haunts, even though the devil has gone out of them! Oh no! in speaking of Christian joy, our text speaks of such "pleasures as are at God's right hand for evermore."

Nor, in speaking of the culture of such joy, are we in danger of being misunderstood as teaching that such happiness can be cultivated in an unrenewed nature. Real "joy before the Lord" is possible only as a development of the new life of holiness. All philosophic systems of happiness are false here. They deal only with outward semblances, not with inward facts. They are busy with mere phenomena, not with vital principles. They weave pleasure like painted calico out of cotton with machinery; and do not grow it like wheat from an inward, germinant life. We are speaking of joy as a mood and temper of mind to be cultivated by the true Christian. And here, indeed, it seems a strange thing that such exhortation is needful. One would suppose that instinctively all Christians would at least strive to be happy. But, alas for these moral paradoxes of our nature! There are many Christians who will have it,

that godliness on earth is essentially sorrowful. That there is some natural connection between acerbity and holiness ; some philosophic necessity that the heart of a Seraph should wear the face of a Sphinx. Sure we are they are mistaken. In the unwritten law of our nature, God proclaims pleasure to be good, and pain evil. Every organ of our body, every faculty of our intellect was created for purposes of enjoyment. And so pain is God's warning that the thing causing it is evil ; and pleasure is his guarantee that its excitant is good. But even more clearly does he proclaim this in his written law of Revelation. Here we are as frequently and earnestly commanded to be *joyful*, as to be pure, or humble, or beneficent, or honest. In our text, God's very pattern of a high style of piety is this "joy of the harvest." *To be happy* is therefore a great Christian duty.

Now, in order to a successful cultivation of happiness, *we must form right notions of its nature and conditions*. Observe then, First, *That true happiness is not a thing of circumstances, but of character*. Not as the word meant originally, something "happening" to ourselves from without ; but as the word means in the *ennobling* progress of language, something springing up within us.

A man with an inflamed eye cannot delight in fair landscapes—nor with an aching tooth in the pleasures of a banquet. Put an aching heart into a balloon, and send it afloat through the firmament, and it will carry with it its whole burden. Empalace a guilty conscience in imperial pavilions, and remorse will fill all its chambers of imagery with terrible phantoms. True joy is of the soul itself, not of its accessories ; a bliss in ourselves, not the beatitude of circumstances.

And here is the fatal error of unregenerate men. They deal with accidents, not elements. And so, though they shift the scenery of the outward life with the brilliant changes of the drama, still they escape not the unrest. For the

pursuing tormentor is only their own unblessed shadow ; and the brighter the sunshine, so the deeper the gloom ! Happiness, we repeat, is a thing to be cultivated in ourselves, and not in our circumstances.

Meanwhile observe, *Secondly*, that, as felt within ourselves—*Happiness is rather an exercise than an element* ; depending not on the *possession* of faculties, but upon their *healthful and rightly-directed functions*.

According to the great English moralist, "Happiness consists in the exercise of all our faculties in some engaging end. If a faculty does not act, it is as if it were not. If it act without appropriate objects, the action is mere yearning, and so results in unhappiness." In order to be happy, therefore, we must keep all our various powers healthful in themselves, and appropriately active.

In this work we must begin with *the body*. Our animal nature lies at the very basis of our being. A man, therefore, neglecting bone and muscle and nerve, and his various organs of sense and digestion, and depending meanwhile upon his higher faculties for happiness, is like a foolish keeper of a vineyard, who should leave his vines to wither at the root and think to grow and gather grapes from the trellises. Our intellectual and spiritual comfort depends much upon physical health and exercise. Much of religious gloom results from bodily ailments. There are devils that encamp in the outposts of man's nature, as their very vantage ground for attacking the inner spiritual citadel. Dyspepsia and disordered bile, and imperfect secretion, are foul fiends all of them, and calomel and quinine have an apostolic calling to the casting out of devils. Medicine is oftentimes a very means of grace—and a wise physician better for the soul than a whole sanhedrim of ministers. Much of the acerbity of the old theological and ecclesiastical controversies, did not indicate a zeal for the faith so much as an imperfect digestion. A

more generous diet would have rendered John Calvin a gentler and a holier, and so a happier man. And a hard-trotting horse would have shaken John Knox into a sweeter temper, and more mature piety. Even the inspired Paul advised the beloved Timothy not more earnestly to fight the good fight of God, than to take medicine for his stomach's sake.

Let all Christians, in regard of exercise and aliment, observe wisely the laws of their physical nature, and we shall soon see a braver and more manly spirit pervading our piety, casting off this morbid and sickly sentiment, and going forth in trustful and serene gladness to the service of the Lord. For, in our condition as mortal men, the body and the flesh have their rights—and the moral nature will be diseased, and so suffer till these rights are respected.

Of course the same law must be fulfilled in regard of the *Intellectual*. All our mental faculties must be kept active with wise regulation, and in right directions. Idleness is the corroding rust of the faculties. Causing the mind, like an unshining sun, to be self-consumed by its own self-centering energies. And so mental activity is the first law of life. But then simple activity is not enough—all activity is not action. A wind mill whirls as rapidly as a chariot wheel, but makes no progress. There is much that we regard as intellectual exercise which is at best useless. Men give themselves to day-dreams and reveries—pore over the gaseous issues of the press, which they call "*literature*;" gape and stare in popular lecture rooms, where hucksters of "old nonsense as new truths," astonish the natives with analyses of smoke and illustrations of spider webs; go ballooning through the clouds of liberal and transcendental philosophy—and think themselves in all this cultivating their intellects. As if an ass's body were edified when it snuffs the east wind! Alas, this is the May-game of thought, not its battling with

Principalities—a promenade in silk slippers, not a pilgrimage over mountains. A simple up and down see-saw of the mind, productive only of giddiness.

Meanwhile, there is much hard, honest, intellectual labor that tends not to happiness. Samson might as well dream in the enchantments of Delilah as grind corn for the Philistines. Intellect, to fulfill the law of its life, must not only labor but labor rightly. Minds are not all alike. Each hath its strong instincts—one is logical, another is imaginative; and in order to enjoyment in work, we must follow these instincts. And alas for our mistake here! Regarding that only as real labor which is hard labor, we strive to sail not with, but against the strong currents of faculties. Milton writes state-papers, and Johnson grinds out hexameters—elephants strive to fly and eagles to draw in the harness. All profitable mental labor is under the direction of the grand master-faculty—developing the intellect according to its strong germinal instinct—finding out what *the mind delights to do*, and doing that earnestly, so that our activity—not self-restrained, and so working sullenly under task-masters, but springing, spontaneous, free, from its once strong impulses—becomes in itself not a burden but a very blessedness, like the free music of birds in the air, like the free motion of stars through the firmament.

Again: This free play of thought must be in right directions, or toward appropriate objects. A search after the philosopher's stone, or the universal medicine, or the dead God of Pantheism, or the infidel phantoms of social reform—such toil after unattainable objects tends to unhappiness, because to disappointment. To be happy, the mind must exercise itself amid God's great verities—not floundering, like a blinded beast, through pathless fens and tangled forests, but advancing with sure footstep along adamantine pathways of truth, upward bound to those imperial heights where

all science centres in the knowledge of God, and all human interests are merged in the grand interest of immortality. And thus obedient to the laws of our intellectual nature, the mind active with right impulses, and in right directions, all our faculties become sources of joy, like the chords of a noble instrument, neither rusted by disuse nor weak with over tension, each responsive to a heavenly touch, giving gloriously out the grand harmony of happiness.

But especially, and above all, must this law be fulfilled in regard to our *moral nature*. Our *affections* must have fitting exercise and in right directions. In what we have already said, it is implied that in order to happiness these affections must be turned heavenward. But what we mean now is, that their exercise in this direction must follow the great law of happiness.

And here, perhaps, is the great Christian mistake. Setting out with the theory that religion has its foundation in a broken heart, we strive to render our very affections sources of sorrow. Forgetting that happiness is the true law of life, and that all our emotions, no less than our physical organs, were created not for purposes of pain but pleasure, we seek to disquiet ourselves religiously, as if God could possibly be honored by trampling under foot the very laws of our nature.

We treat this harp of the human spirit very much as an Italian artist manipulates his fiddle. There it is, the most perfect of instruments, with its four strings in tune, and at hand the bow with which to make exquisite music. But, as if all soft and fair harmonies were a sin, off goes the fierce horse hair over the tortured cat-gut, rushing wildly up and down the scale, in the search after vagrant and hidden discords; now roaring and grumbling down in lowest bass—now high up over the bridge with the piercing

shriek of a lost spirit—now vexing two poor strings at a stroke, as if in the marriage hymn of discords—shrieking and shaking, and crashing, imitative of the cries of all angry cattle, and creeping things, and fowls of the air,—a true *execution* of poor harmony in those “fashionable agonies” that some men call music. And so, under this false view of religion, some men treat the heaven-strung chords of the human spirit. Worse even than the old fanatics of the cloister and cavern, they will torture, not the body, but the very *soul* with the knotted scourge and the bloody hair-cloth.

And they do this with a seeming of true piety which sometimes deceives the very elect. “*Whom the Lord loveth he chastens,*” say these men. “Afflictions, tribulations, distresses, these are visitations of God, and so to be kindly cherished.” As if God’s chastisements were not severe enough without additional self-torture! And so if a trouble comes to them, as if it were not large enough at its birth, they must needs dandle it and nurture it into a mightier stature. But alas for their reasoning. Many of our troubles in life are not divine chastenings, but self-torture. You may have lost money in business, but it was not God that led you into wasteful extravagance or imprudent speculations. God’s gravitation did, indeed, break the neck of the foolish aeronaut; but God neither inflated his balloon, nor sent him afloat in it. Your wife may be a termagant, and your children unfilial and disobedient; but it was not God who dashed from your weak hand the golden sceptre of your household, and substituted the phosphorescent glare of decayed wood for the holy fire of your family altar. Your body may be worn out, *you* overtaken it. Your mind may be enfeebled, *you* weakened it. The thing that troubles you is not always a disguised angel, and therefore to be wel-

comed ; it is, perhaps, oftenest a very reptile, bred of your own doings, and therefore to be trampled under foot as a deadly serpent.

And even in regard of those trials which seem to come directly as a heavenly visitation ; this is the true law of their treatment. They come to the Christian as a means of grace. But our graces grow strong, not when we fondle and cherish them, *but when we rise up and master them*. Thorns and thistles are a Divine punishment ! But must a conscientious husbandman therefore give them careful tillage ? Diseases are Divine afflictions. But because they strive to remove them, are all doctors devils ? Gnats and wasps and scorpions are God's creatures. But must I anoint my head with honey and beguile them to torture me ? Oh, no, no ! The same Divine power which armed them with stings, armed me too with a strong right hand to crush them ! It is God's law, in regard of all afflictions that he sends, that man shall meet them in Divine strength and overcome them—working out in man's soul, as elsewhere, his grandest good through the great law of *Antagonisms*. The direction of this duty is threefold.

I. In regard of evils that are *past*. Yesterday's evil fulfilled yesterday its mission. It may have been a great and sore sorrow—the loss of all your possessions ; nay, the loss of that which gave possessions all their value. Parents, brothers, sisters, children, friends—alas, they may have gone from your bosom to the pitiless grave ! The sorrow may seem colossal, overmastering ! But what then ; must you refuse to be comforted ? Because the Divine hand has led you into the valley of the shadow of death, must you therefore pitch tent in the ravine and abide in the darkness ? Should you not rather take hold on the Divine staff, following the lead of the great Shepherd up from the gloom to

the green pastures and still waters that lie beyond it? A great grief falls on a man as a tempest on a cedar. But may not the tree rebound from the stroke, flinging again its remaining branches to the breeze and the sunshine? If I have lost a fortune, shall I sit down in sackcloth amid its ashes, or rise up like a man and go forth to make another? Because one beloved one is dead, shall I refuse to cast the green turf on the dear dust, and keep an embalmed mummy-grief in my household till the cherished ones that are left to me grow pale and spectral as dwellers in a sepulchre?

But say these men—"These afflictions were the punishment of my sins,—to forget the affliction were to forget the offense, and surely you would not have me forget my past sins." Well, we would have you treat your past sins just as God treats them! He says; "*I will forgive their iniquities, and I will remember their sin no more.*" Verily, if you have truly repented of past sins, then has he sunk them in the ocean of his infinite love, never more to flit as spectres along the seas whereon you make voyage to eternity. Paul "forgot the things that were behind," not laying again the foundation of repentance, but "going on unto perfection." But we, we alas! often mistake remorse for repentance. Repentance is the patriarch's dove fleeing at once with white wings to the heavenly shelter. But remorse is the black raven ignoring the ark, and forever hovering and screaming and feeding on the carcasses of the dead. The one is a blessed angel diffusing heavenly peace—the other a fierce fiend casting appalling shadows.

II. But this rule applies as well to evils that *are present*. Even when a trouble is at its height, it is our duty to feel it as lightly as possible. While the affliction is recognized as a visitation of God, yet the soul should rest under the bright side of the Shekinah. We should think more of our mercies and less of our trials. If God is afflicting,

yet the while is he more fully blessing you. If he has taken away your fortune, he has left you health. If one dear friend has died, a whole hundred are living. And true piety will turn, like the desert pilgrim, from the scorching sun to the sheltering palms and the sweet water. Like the sailor, who fell from the mast-head, our mood should be, not sorrowful that we have broken an arm, but joyous and thankful that we have *not* broken our neck!

Alas, for our folly in thinking over our *great* troubles! But then we have a greater folly in thinking everlastingly of our *small* troubles. Regarding it as a mark of godliness, and so a matter of conscience *to feel bad*—some men are always on the watch to find something to feel bad about. In the midst of lives full of mercies, they lie in wait for small afflictions, as a spider for flies in a flower's sweet bell. Meet them where you will, they are always complaining. Sometimes it is the wife that is sick, sometimes the eldest son, sometimes the baby! Now they have a pain in the head, and now in the side, and now in the chest or the shoulder, or the great toe. Sometimes it is rheumatism, and then indigestion, and anon neuralgia. Sure we are they are always complaining, and they settle down into a fixed habit of disquiet till their high calling of God seems but a constant nursing of small troubles.

Now, instead of this, it is our duty to rise from these complainings up to higher moods of joyful thanksgiving. Our trials at their worst are as nothing to our mercies. Shame on us for our thanklessness! Providence builds us a palace of Aladdin, full of all rich and fair things, and tempted by the fiend of discontent we rub the mystic lamp, and cry out for the roc's egg from Mount Caucasus to hang as a devouring curse in our halls of glory.

III. Meanwhile this rule applies as well to all *future evils*.

There is a right and a wrong way of looking forward. To anticipate rightly is *to hope*, and Hope is God's angel of content singing in the bosom. The hopeful man sees even in a present evil the germ of a coming good. Evil to him is only imperfect development—the sourness of green fruit becoming savory as it ripens. Pain is only the birth-pang of joy, the sore labor of a travailing soul bringing forth gladness. Hope is a servant of God, bringing back from the future glorious clusters of Eschol. Therefore, a right looking forward tends greatly to happiness.

But there is a *wrong* looking forward, a spying of Canaan only to find its great cities and giants. There are men that scan the future only to torment themselves with imaginary troubles. They watch the sky only for signs of storm; they feel the pulse only for symptoms of fever. Their harvests are always to be blighted, and their ships to founder, and their cattle to die. That bank is sure to break with their deposits, and that steamboat to blow up with their wives and children. Frosts in their corn field, crises in the money market, a pestilence in the city, a dissolution of the Union, a general European war, a comet wrecking the solar system! These things are the demons of disquiet that stalk through their future. Imagination is to them a Witch of Endor, calling up denouncing phantoms, not a true angel of God going before to part the rivers and open the great gates of a glorious Canaan.

Now, without enlarging, we repeat it as a general rule, that it is a great Christian duty *to make the most of our mercies and the least of our troubles*. Walking with God, like Enoch, with a trustful and loving faith, we should cast all our cares upon God, and not like foolish children, strive ever to take them back again from his Almighty hand, that we may go tottering and stumbling and bowed down under them; not torturing our mortal nature into discord, but at-

tuning all its affection into soft, and joyous, and triumphant harmonies.

This is manifestly our duty as Christians, because such joyous harmonies are the necessary result of advanced piety. Every Christian grace is but a distinct development of a new pleasure. A devout disposition is happiness; a benevolent emotion is happiness; a strong faith is happiness; a glowing love is happiness; an aspiring hope is happiness! Christian joy is not, indeed, so much a distinct grace, as the heavenly blossom and fruit of all the graces—the music of all our regenerated faculties moving together in the grand harmony of a well-regulated life! Therefore our religious nature must be developed in symmetry—not one great grace by itself, but all graces in their proportions; each perfect in its play—all nice in their adjustment! Some men are always cultivating special graces. One labors for faith; another for hope; another for charity; another for gratitude. And this is like playing forever with a single stop of the organ, either thundering with the bass or shrieking with the alto. And the result is always a monstrous monotony. Courage, without gentleness, shocks the sense like the roar of a roused lion. On the contrary, gentleness without courage, sickens the sense like an everlasting bee-drone. To the true music of Christian life there is need of the whole range of the grand instrument—the hand of the Divine Player moving along the whole scale and all the octaves, if it would bring forth from the soul, well rounded in its whole sphere of faculties, that complete and magnificent harmony of religion, which is *happiness*!

This, then, is the conclusion of the whole matter. Happiness is but another name for the healthfulness of our whole complex constitution. And when these laws of happiness are effectually worked out, then only do we come fully up to our practical duty as Christians. For religion takes care

alike of the body, and the mind, and the heart—adjusting all our varied powers and faculties into the range and play of one harmonious system. And this is happiness. Not a thing of condition, but of character. Not to be sought without us by sore labor, but springing up within us, the very breath and heart-beat of the new life of godliness—piety in its own pure, genial, beneficent, trustful nature, lived freely out man-ward and God-ward. As the harmony of the spheres from the simple and mighty gravitation of matter, so this harmony of our whole spiritual nature, from the higher gravitation of the soul, revolving in the free heavens of faith and love, and tending still and forever onward to fuller revelations of God.

Such is true religion—such has it ever been, a spirit of gladness. The old patriarchal altars were centres of the purest social pleasures. The march of the Tabernacle through the Wilderness was, in contrast with surrounding heathenism, as the passage of a strong and shining angel. So long as Israel remained faithful to God, her national and religious life was one long, pastoral holiday. The ritual service of the temple was triumphal: “Four and twenty thousand Levites ministered by turns—a thousand at a time. Four thousand more performed the lower offices. Four thousand singers and minstrels, with the harp and trumpet, and all the richest instruments of a land whose native genius was music, filled up the pauses of prayer with harmonies that transported the spirit beyond the cares and passions of a troubled world.”

Even their Sabbaths were of the character of great festivals, and it was regarded as a manifestation of the severe judgments of God, when those Sabbath-days became sorrowful. They were not, indeed, as men would have us now believe, days of simple, sensual pleasure. True, even the old Hebrews regarded the Sabbath as “made for man.” But

the Jewish notion of a "man" was a being with a *soul* as well as a body; and a Sabbath made for such a being must have a mission unto his spiritual as well as his physical nature. The infidel holiday-Sabbath was never made for man at all, but only for *swine*!

Perhaps Moses did not understand the thing. It may be only a mark of his ignorance—a proof in himself of the infidel-development theory, that he was as yet only in the transition state between sea-mucus and manhood—a sort of spiritual chrysalis that had not, as yet, got its wings free nor its eyes open. But certain we are, Moses regarded the seventh day as strictly religious. Joyous indeed, but with a "joy before the Lord," and a joy "in his sanctuary."

We have not been able to find in his Institutes any specific mention made of Sunday excursions into the country, for air and exercise. He did indeed allow every Israelite on the Sabbath to loose his *ox*, and his *ass*, from the stall, and lead them away to *water*. But it strikes us as hardly logical to infer that therefore he must have directed each man to carry his *wife* and *children* into the country, for the sake of *cheap liquor*! It does not seem to have struck him how wonderfully fresh the atmosphere is likely to become in a crowded horse-car; nor how surpassingly invigorating to nerves and muscles is the noble exercise of a ride, three miles an hour, on a city railroad. Had he been more thoroughly developed into the grand stature of our modern Moseses, he would, perhaps, have appointed another course of Levites to open restaurants in the rural districts—and mounted the whole Tabernacle on wheels for the sake of a grand, general, Sabbath ventilation!

But though in no sense a day of profane mirth, yet the Jewish Sabbath was a religious *festival*. They called it "a delight." It was their type of millennial and celestial rest,

and every eye flashed and every heart bounded, as with fullness of pleasures at the right hand of God !

Then besides their Sabbaths, their year abounded with religious holidays ; and the world hath no such records of gladness as that which filled Judea at those God-appointed festivals. That joyous spirit did indeed pass away when the austere Pharisaism of dust and ashes made a clear sweep over the festal moods of the old Hebrew faith. But upon nothing did prophecy more terribly denounce the fierce judgments of God, than upon that diabolical self-righteousness that bowed down a man's head as a bulrush, and spread sackcloth under him ; and when the time of Israel's deliverance was accomplished, and the incarnate One came, and the heavens rang with the angelic harmony of "good-will to men," then religion shone forth again in her primeval loveliness, purified of every speck and stain of human infirmity, gloriously and lovingly transfigured, "her face like the light, and her raiment white and glistening," and enraptured men stood worshipping in her celestial splendor, and cried, *"It is good to be here ; let us build tabernacles."*

Such is religion as a divine revelation ! God's angel of peace, and joy, and good-will, smiling and singing in the chambers of the spirit. Such God made her and intended her to be ; and methinks it is time that religion were justified from the foul, infidel suspicion that she is the mother of all grief and the enemy of all gladness. It is high time that we tore the Gorgon vizard off her heavenly loveliness, and wiped her eyes of tears, and washed her face of ashes, and arrayed her in Zion's beautiful garments, and put a harp in her hand and a crown upon her head, and sent her forth singing with bounding feet, in the practical demonstration that "her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are paths of peace."

Embodying as religion does the mightiest influences of

gladness—recreating the disordered soul of a man from a chaos of raging passions into a fair and well-rounded sphere of gentle and generous affections—bringing man, as related to Christ, into actual possession of “things present,” so that in regard of their manifold uses he is, over all title-deeds and tenure, positive “land-lord”—“sea-lord”—“sky-lord”—all things working together for good under the gracious smiles of his Eternal Father—and opening before him in the “things to come” an inheritance and enthronement over all the enrapturing realities of the eternal world. Doing this, being this, Religion has only to come forth from the old sepulchres wherein Pharisaism would imprison her as an unblessed spirit, and in all her glorious beauty walk this lower world, wiping away man’s tears, unloosing his heavy burdens, binding up his broken heart, singing sweet songs at his death-bed, pouring eternal light through his grave. And then shall the old visions of prophecy be realized in her victories over the nations—the new Jerusalem descending out of heaven, and the tabernacle of God being with men, and the gladness of Zion upon earth become “*a joy before God, like the joy in Harvest!*”

Christian life then should always be joyous. But ours should be true harvest joy, *because we live in the time of harvest*. We have no new theory of the Millennium. Perhaps we have had quite enough of them already. We have, most of us, survived several “final consummations”; and heard more than once the trumpet call to “the great battle of Armageddon.” And if the seven angels were compelled to follow our “symbolic interpreters,” there would be not a little confusion in blowing the trumpets, and pouring out the vials. “Of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.”

But of the special prophecy of our text there is no presumption in saying, it is even now being fulfilled before us.

A year ago we sought to illustrate the thought, that physically, politically, spiritually, the world is golden with the fruits of its great Autumn. That in the historic progress of the race, all past generations have been busy in a rudimental husbandry, felling forests, draining marshes, subduing a rugged soil, and scattering and watching the precious seed. But that now the time has come for gathering the corn, and treading the wine-press—that the old thought-germs, thought-leaves, thought-flowers, have ripened into practical thought-fruit, and that it is our lot to live in the great time of the harvest.

But what we would now furthermore consider, is: that all this is really but the *harvest of Christianity*. That the things in which, as men, as patriots, as philanthropists we rejoice—are the *results of Christianity*. The wisdom of man—philosophic, constructive, progressive—has no more produced our grand beatitudes, than the bright blossoms and singing birds of the green wood have produced the summer. Such wisdom is not a cause, but in itself only a consequence. Philosophers, legislators, conquerors—men whose hands have seemingly shaped human destiny—have not been powers, but simply *phenomena*. They have wrought out the higher forms of our civilization, as the bee its geometric cells, and the coral its noble islands, under those laws of instinct which are the inspirations of God. The grand creative controlling force of humanity is the Spiritual—the Religious. The power of a new and inspired life, first germinant in the individual soul—then working outwardly in the development of personal character—then influencing man's social relations—then moulding laws and institutions, and all the organic forms of society.

Many of the grandest movements of the race have resulted manifestly from this pure religious instinct. The Reformation, under Luther, produced as its result our grand

civilization. But did Luther, amid his toil, think for a moment, of these new developments of intellectual and social life? Ah, no! He thought only of the truth as it is in Jesus! And in that simple religious impulse, as oaks in an acorn, lay all the philosophy and philanthropy of that industrial civilization which that Reformation has brought forth.

Our Puritan forefathers laid in this western world the foundation of our wondrous nationality. But in all their work, they had no thought of social compacts and forms of government. So little did they project our progressive Democracy, that their avowed and recorded purpose, as to merely worldly things, was "the advancement of his Majesty's dominions." They worked only under the impulse of a purely religious thought, and this grand nationality, with all its marvellous, beneficent developments, came to these shores in the May Flower, enveloped in the simple godliness of the Pilgrims, as the luxuriant harvests of autumn are borne afield in the seed-basket of the toilful husbandman.

Throughout all the broad movements of our race, it is easy to perceive the controlling influence of this religious leaven; and philosophers and legislators and conquerors, working out civilization through wars and convulsions, have been manifestly, though blindly, obedient to a great religious law, producing social systems, as the fire-mists of the nebulae, stars, under the Divine scope and order of a resistless gravitation.

There is, in truth, no great vital germinal force in the race but its *religious faith*—in itself simple, and one, but manifold in its developments. This alone is power, all else is phenomena. Hence have sprung all pure moralities, all sweet-voiced charities, all that progress of the race away from selfishness in the direction of the beneficent and useful, all those green leaves and

fair blossoms and precious fruits of a pure philanthropy which prove the engrafting of a new scion on the old stock of our selfish nature. And so all these things which distinguish us above earlier generations—Steam, Electricity, the Printing Press, the Magnetic Telegraph, Learning, Science, the Arts, Philosophy, Franchises, Nationality, Civilization—things wherein we rejoice and do well to glory, as the ripened fruits of the race's long husbandry—are, in fact, only the practical results of man's religious faith and life. The golden corn on the hills, the purple clusters in the valleys wherein Christianity in earthly developments brings forth and ripens her glorious harvests.

Our broad, comprehensive, industrial, civilization, elevating and blessing, not the titled few, but the whole huge mass of humanity, and so differing from all historic and effete civilizations, as the sun in Heaven, giving light in all the dwellings of the world, differs from the splendid yet straitened lusters that flashed in the pavilions of conquerors and the palaces of kings; this civilization is but the earthly fruit of beneficent, expansive, practical Christianity.

We have heard, indeed—for who has not, in these days when blind men hold up their farthing candles to the sun—we have heard this boastful cry, "*Christianity is a failure!*" Infidels, gazing upon the splendid and beneficent achievements of our Heavenly faith—having their daily life in an economy where every genuine cheering fact is a Christian phenomenon—dwelling in a world, once a wild howling wilderness, through whose deserts this river, which makes glad the city of God, hath flowed in an ever deepening and fertilizing flood, till already the solitary place is glad for it, and the desert buds and blossoms as the rose—sitting indeed, as invited guests, at the great harvest-feast of Christianity, eating her fruits, and drinking of her vintage, and reclining in her

pavilions,—even thus, and there, infidels, in the frenzy of overfulness, dare to blaspheme, as a “great failure,” that very influence which has loaded the board and issued the invitation. Verily if Christianity *has failed*, it is as a mighty tree fails, when standing up in full strength it shelters beast and bird with its broad shadow, and showers to earth the abundance of its ripened fruit. Christianity is around us this day, in all our social and national beatitudes, garnered in these great store-houses of civilization, just as the principle of vegetable life is around us in these crowded agricultural garners.

Truly, we live in the fair autumn of the world. In these prophetic times, when the heavenly truths, scattered by patriarchs and apostles among the nations, after long watching, and slow progress, amid seething rains, and chilling storms, have budded and blossomed, and brought forth fruit, that to-day waves around us in the glorious realities of man’s *last* civilization—and our Christian joy before God ought to be—for it is—“*a joy in the Harvest.*”

Now we may not detain you longer.

The text’s practical application is twofold. First, *that we keep this day fittingly as a great Religious Festival.* What abundant reasons we have for this annual Thanksgiving! Who can number our blessings? Blessings physical, intellectual, social, national, religious! Living here in America, in this Nineteenth century—free men, free Christians! Verily this day is the promise fulfilled in our ears—“He hath made man a little lower than the angels, and crowned him with glory and honor, and put all things under his feet.”

Standing on this redeemed earth, looking upward and onward to immortality, a Christian does seem the child of a great King, journeying in a world-chariot, along the star-paths of the firmament, blessed with mercies beseeing an

imperial sonship, and homeward-bound to the Palace of the Eternal Father!

Let us be thankful then to-day. Let us keep the day fittingly. Let us cast out the demon discontent, from heart and household. Be not afraid of overmuch gladness. Hush not the music of your children's song, and merry laugh, and bounding feet. Repress no impulse of a joyous heart, swelling up in thanksgiving. It is your household festival. It is your great State festival. It is your grand National festival. Never before, did so many sister States keep lovingly together this Feast of harvest. We know, to-day, no North, no South, no West, no East. It is not the going up of the Tribe of Dan and of Benjamin to the old Puritan tabernacle on Plymouth Rock—it is the gathering of the one great household—all the kith and kin of the Anglo-Celtic-Saxon blood—the hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel, all going up together with offerings of praise to the one common temple—the central Salem of peace—the God of Love in the midst of her, that she shall not be moved!

Thanks be unto God for this American Pentecost! Never were the bonds of our beloved brotherhood so revealed in their strength! Millions upon millions of trustful, loving hearts, from Northern snows to Southern savannahs—from these fair Atlantic daysprings to yon Pacific golden eves—all lifted up in hallelujahs above all old tribal jealousies, all strifes of parties, all “rivalries of regions,” till we stand together, brothers all, with common prayers and praises for our great common birthright, in His august presence whose eye slumbers not nor sleeps, keeping watchfully and well the city of his love! And who fears now the cry of the bird of night that builds her nest on the battlements?

These prophets of alarm are false prophets, all of them. Abundant indeed they are—crowding press-rooms and pulpits

and platforms—men mighty to dream dreams, to whom every child's rocket is a flaming comet of wrath, and every mosquito-drone in the night is the burst of the last trumpet—who mistake the rapids of the Blue Ridge for another deluge, and poor John Brown for the destroying angel—looking with blood-shot eyes toward the future, and eloquent with great swelling words of vanity and vexation of spirit. As if the bond wherewith an Eternal purpose holds us together, were a spider's web—and our American nationality every fool's football! But believe them not, my brethren. Spite of all this scolding cant of shallowness and fanaticism—the great masses—the bone and sinew and soul of American life—the countless and ever increasing majority of men everywhere—east and west, north and south—are wise men, all of them, and will never cut down a mighty oak tree because it overshadows a gourd—nor sell their grand national birthright for a mess of black pottage.

This great western Nationality—this glorious creation of God, before whose guiding Shekinah great seas have been parted, and the armies of kings fled discomfitted—this young Giant of empires and ages, that breasted triumphantly the ocean-surges of old conflicts—*can abide John Brown's raid, and ford Harper's Ferry!*

One of these "wise men of the East," with his "golden mouth" full of curses, wandered hither on a pilgrimage of lamentation over the "lost arts" of the earlier civilization. But sure we are, that amid all our losings, our American civilization hath not lost these two noble old arts—perhaps he would call them—*castrametation* and *cement*; we call them—*resisting the devil, and sticking together!*

Every year's experience of the working of this American system is strengthening a wise man's faith in its permanency. Such sacrifices of thanksgiving as we offer this day—these mingling and ascending prayers from ten thousand,

thousand, thousand hearts, as with chains of adamant are binding us together, and binding us to God! They sanctify this low, selfish, jealous federation of expedients and compromises, into the loftier and immortal brotherhood of Christian adoption! And standing together by these altars in our common Bethel, our selfish earthly glory rises till it is blent and lost in God's own light, and along the ladder of our higher patriotism there are seen the angels of God ascending and descending; and our National Thanksgiving seems but the first outburst of the song of universal praise, that, going forth from our Zion, shall pervade all nations, and we will keep in the length and breadth of our land a Pentecost unto our God "*with the joy of Harvest.*"

But our text has a further application. It teaches us that God deserves at our hands not merely an occasional but a constant Thanksgiving, and exhorts us to see to it hereafter—*that the whole spirit of our Christian lives be pervaded with this gladness*; that having devoted this day to sacred pleasures, we be not found to-morrow dark-browed, gloomy, despondent—our joys, like the cold remains of our feast, left to beast and bird again; that we honor a Divine command at least as reverently as an Executive Proclamation; and having obeyed our worthy Governor and rejoiced for a day, we should now obey the everlasting Jehovah and "rejoice in God always."

Alas for our fitful moods of gratitude and thanksgiving! God calls us graciously to a better spirit. "Awake, awake, put on thy strength, oh Zion! put on thy beautiful garments, oh Jerusalem, the Holy City!"

Life, life, the whole life of a redeemed man on earth, should be like that glad Pentecost, when the tribes of Israel, going up to Zion, made that fair old land of the covenant jubilant with praises, and woke glad echoes even in the dark dells and gloomy caverns of the earth that lay along their

pathway. For we, too, beloved of the Lord, even on our wearied pilgrim feet, are going up to Zion—to the city of our God—the heavenly Jerusalem! Though our way is still on the earth, yet it lies through “the land of promise”—a goodly land of fig-trees, and fountains of water, and olive, and honey! Even now are our locks soft with the dews of Hermon, and our garments odorous with the breath of the roses of Sharon! This wind that fans the pale cheek, comes fresh from the glorious heights and waving cedars of Lebanon! And this murmur of waters in the ear is the joyous rippling to the shore of the blue waves of Galilee! Just behind us lies Bethel, all lustrous yet with its old vision of Angels! And yonder away, the stars shine fair and soft on the hills of Bethlehem! Presently! *Presently!* For oh how near seem to-day, through this cloudless air of faith, the eternal hills that are round about Zion! Presently we shall be, “even at the descent of the Mount of Olives,” and our feet stand within thy gates, oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the Holy City! Awake then, oh awake from these dreams of sadness! Awake psaltery and harp! Oh people of God, break forth into singing! Behold the pinnacles of the Eternal City are crowded with shining forms in white robes, that watch for your coming! They have caught the cadences of your distant songs, and the faint tread of your pilgrim feet, and the lustrous gates stand wide open, and the golden harps are strung, and the glorious temple is all ablaze with its uncreated Light, that you may be welcomed fittingly from the laborer’s toil, *and joy before the Lord with the great joy of the Harvest!*

THE END.