

SERIES OF SERMONS.

No. 2.

A SERMON

PREACHED

AT THE RE-OPENING

BY

ST. PAUL'S CHURCH,

PORT ADELAIDE,

DECEMBER 13th 1861,

BY THE

VERY REV^d. THE DEAN
OF ADELAIDE.

PROCEEDS TO BE DEVOTED TO THE ENLARGEMENT FUND.

PORT ADELAIDE :

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ERRATA IN SERMON No. 1.

Page 8, line 4--for *now in*, read *now is*; and omit *follow*, after
"least as." In line 5, insert [] after *rest*.

SERMON.

II CORINTHIANS, VIII, 9.—For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye, through his poverty might be rich.

I suppose I am only giving utterance to an acknowledged truism when I say that, whether you build a house for the shelter of your head, or for the worship of your God, you alike need funds.

I also presume that you alike know that I am to ask you this evening to contribute something towards the latter object.

This I should not have done (I should not have been here to do) were it not that I was *so* pressed by your minister to undertake the duty, that I could not well or becomingly refuse. He thought that as I had been, in years now long past, connected with the Church at the Port, my preaching on this occasion would be fit and becoming.

I at first objected; I thought, that no person can so effectually advocate the claims he may have to make on the purses of his congregation as the man who ministers to them; particularly if the man has, by painstaking and a faithful discharge of his duty, rendered himself acceptable and dear to the people to whom he ministers, and this is, I believe, the case with you and your minister.

You will admit then, that no appeal from a stranger (though I am not exactly one), or from any other person, can come with half the force that it can from him whose exertions to increase your accommodation have not been confined to the pulpit *only*, but have come under your notice in a hundred different ways, and have been acknowledged and appreciated by you.

Your contributions this evening, then, I shall ask for his sake as well as on his account, and I shall say very little more on the subject, for I have one of a higher order to ask your attention to.

Not that I mean to say that it is not (at times) the duty of the preacher to exhort his hearers to liberality in the cause of God, in the building of his houses or in whatever way tends to the promotion of his glory; nor would eloquence (if I had it) be unworthily employed on such a subject, but the force of my appeal lies in the affection you bear your minister, and in the due appreciation you entertain of his services.

But am I to conclude that you are wanting in either should the collection this evening be small? No, not so: I do not believe that that would be a fair criterion for the people any more than for the preacher, for I have sometimes known persons who have come to hear a charity sermon—one after which a collection was to be made—with a fixed determination only to give a certain sum. I sincerely hope that that habit has not found its way here, but that a larger sum than was at first, perhaps, intended, may find its way to the collector's hands.

This I am sure of, and this I think you will agree with me in, that when another December comes round, should you be spared to see it, you will not then be sorry that you were now liberal. Sure I am that you will not "in the hour of death and in the day of judgment."

One other thought would press itself on my memory when penning these remarks. I could not but think of him* who opened the first church that stood upon this spot. He has not been spared as I have been—his only fellow-laborer then—to see that building give place to one more commodious and appropriate.

Had it been so ordained, in the good providence of God, some who now hear me know how his heart, so gentle and so generous, would have rejoiced: for some here know that, heavy as were his duties, he would on every

* Rev. C. B. Howard, M.A., first Colonial Chaplain, and Incumbent of Trinity Church. He died 19th, July, 1843.

alternate sabbath give between his morning and evening services in Adelaide a service in this place, where, before the wooden church was erected, a store was our temple, and a woolpack not unfrequently our pulpit.

These recollections are not all sorrowful, thank God, for we sorrow not as those who have no hope; and while we mourn his loss, or ours rather, we know that others have entered on his labors, and that the cause of our church and its God has made good progress in the land. Since then the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ has been proclaimed from many a pulpit connected with our church, and the love of God, I trust, shed abroad through the Holy Ghost in many a heart, and that grace I would now, after this lengthened preface, bring, as best I am able, under your consideration.

“For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.”

To the man who uses *even* a little thought and reflection there is presented in these lines a wonder surpassing all of which he could have had any conception before exercising such reflection. Full and firm and decided should be our conviction that the book that relates it emanates from the source of truth—that it is *indeed* the word of God—in order to be assured that we are not the victims of imposture in giving heed to such a declaration. But, blessed be God, to this conviction every man may attain if he *will*, and great as is the wonder, it is no less true.

But it is not *one* wonder, 'tis a series of wonders of which those who here know most, know next to nothing, but in the knowledge of which they shall grow during the countless ages of eternity, without ceasing to be filled with profoundest admiration.

Here we can know but in part—know but little—but he who has been made to know even that little—who has tasted of the grace would not unknow it for all the knowledge this world could confer, yea, would not part with it for all the glory, wealth, and power the universe

contains. No, for he knows that thereby he would be but exchanging joy for sorrow, light for darkness, heaven for earth. Why so? Well, just look at this wonder; do, consider it. What is it? That he who was *rich* became *poor*, i.e. that God became man—the Creator, the creature—and this, in order that man from being *poor* might become *rich*. But what poverty! and what riches!

A poverty to be entered on at the gate of death, and to be endured in the realms of darkness as long as the lake of fire and brimstone burneth! To know this exchanged for riches which should endure as long as the throne and the glory of Jehovah!

Blessed knowledge! though here but in part; and, oh, how small that part—but never to be lost, never to be done away with, till that which is perfect shall come.

There are three things which chiefly strike us in the passage which I have selected for a text, which I shall notice as briefly as I can; and to which I invite your serious consideration—

I. The dignity of Jesus before his incarnation.

II. The deep poverty into which he voluntarily descended.

III. The object he had in view in his self-humiliation.

So many mirrors, as it were, uniting their rays in one common focus, and casting their concentrated light on this *one* already brilliant spot—"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." May his spirit guide us to the truth, and bless it to our souls! Amen.

I. It is difficult to avoid "darkening counsel by words without knowledge" while speaking of the dignity of Jesus before he took our nature upon him. We know that Jehovah, God the Father, possessed none which *He* did not possess. In majesty and glory He was his co-equal and co-eternal. In his intercessory prayer, (John xvii.) he says: "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I *had* with thee before the world was." Were he else, than, as saith a prophet, "Jehovah's fellow;" this language was not that of humble prayer, but of arrogant presumption—not of pious humility, but of blasphemous pride.

But he was God from everlasting, humbled into the form of a servant, on a message of mercy, and hence the propriety of such language. To Jesus is ascribed every highest attribute of Deity, omniscience, omnipresence, creation, the pardoning of sin, the giving of life.

Of him it is written: "That all things are open to his eyes;" and, again, "that he discerns the thoughts of the heart." For his omnipresence, he himself declares, "That where two or three are gathered together in *his* Name there will he be amongst them." And when he sends forth his disciples it is with the encouragement of his being with them: "Lo, I am with you *always*, even unto the end of the world." It is written "That all things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made—in heaven or in earth, visible or invisible, thrones or dominions, principalities or powers. *All things were created by him and for him.*" Again, it is written: "For as the Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them, *even so* the Son quickeneth whom *he will.*"

Now to suppose the being of whom all this is spoken to be a creature, even though the highest archangel of God, and to ascribe to him these attributes, presents this difficulty—I might fairly say involves this absurdity—that it precludes our distinguishing, as, in fact, it removes the distinction between the Creator and the creature.

It is but in grouping these attributes together that we attain some small perception of his power—in ascribing to him figuratively properties with which we are acquainted that we can see it in its exercise. Thus; in thinking of that *word* at whose bidding a world stepped forth; of that *ear* which is open to the slightest sigh that heaves the heart of sorrow; of that *eye* which scans the soul's inmost secrets; of that *presence* which filleth all in all—only thus can we perceive somewhat of those riches of which the Apostle would remind the Corinthians, when he said "He who was rich."

But these riches he, as it were, momentarily laid aside when he took upon him our nature. He who thought it

not robbery to be equal with God, emptied himself of the glory which he had, when he took upon himself the form of a servant, and voluntarily descended into the lowest humility.

II. Here was the poverty: Leaving the throne of his glory to take upon him the likeness of sinful flesh, and become obedient to an ignominious death; nay, more, made sin (He who knew no sin,) yea even a curse. And this the Apostle would that the Corinthians should bear in mind when he says: "He became poor."

'Twas not alone that poverty which attended his footsteps from the cradle to the grave; which left him oft not knowing where to lay his head; which marked the "man of sorrow" from the manger at Bethlehem to the cross on Calvary. Oh, no, wonderful as all this was, yet was it a thousand times more wonderful than all this. It was the robbing himself of his glory; the veiling of his Godhead; the contact with sin, when he bore the iniquities of us all; that contact which wrung the blood-sweat from his body; the mysterious hiding of his Father's face that forced from his agonising lips the apparently despairing cry "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me." This was the poverty; and herein was an exhibition of grace and love that passeth knowledge, having a breadth, a length, a depth, a height immeasurable. And all this, saith the Apostle, for your sakes.

III. Here was the object of his self-humiliation: To reconcile sinners to God; to enrich those who without him would have been eternally poor. For this end, he who was the highest became the lowest; he who knew no sin, was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him, and thus partake of his glory. As he says in the intercessory prayer already alluded to: "And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them, that they may be *one*, even as *we* are *one*; I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved *them* as thou hast loved *me*."—John xvii, 22, 23.

What a prospect is here held out to every child of

Adam ! How inconceivable for worms of the dust ! A union with God ; a perfect identity in glory ! How all the riches of the earth—how all the splendour of thrones fade and pale before such transcendent glory—and this the portion, the sure inheritance, of every believer in Christ Jesus.

Child of the world, ambitious of name and station, can the momentary tinsel that gilds a monarch's brow vie with this ? Child of God, ought the brief concerns of a day, the pleasures of a passing hour, or the light afflictions of a moment, exclude from the eye of faith this high prize of your calling ? And brethren, and you in particular, my younger hearers, bear in mind when the name of Jesus is named, what he has done for you. Remember the short passage which I have taken for a text, and it will at once recall to you the dignity which he had before he came on earth, the deep poverty and suffering which he underwent, and the object he had in view—to enrich you—for your sakes. Yes : For your sakes, "he who was rich became poor ;" he, who was the fountain of all happiness, became the subject of all misery. This was the *grace* of the Lord Jesus Christ : Grace as boundless as eternity, as infinite as God himself. "Ye know," saith the Apostle. Do we know ? do I ? not merely in theory, not simply in profession ? That is not the real question ; but is the love of God shed abroad in my heart ? Do I thus know him, really, practically, truly ?

Oh ! if we could realize the importance of this question—this, that the time will soon arrive—and how soon—when it will be *felt* that this was the only knowledge that really deserved the name, or was worth the acquisition. And yet how little is this known.

I speak not of the myriads of the human race to whom in the inscrutable ways of God, the riches of his grace have never yet been proclaimed--of the countless multitudes scattered over earth's surface who still bow down to the stock or stone or are the unhappy subjects of the Mahomedan, or some similar imposture. No : I speak of those who are called and profess to be Christians ; and

yet who ground their hopes of salvation, not on the merits of Christ—not as purchased for them by his blood—but, as merited, at least to some extent, by themselves, by their charity, or by their good works, or by their moral lives. And here let me say that I allude not to those *cioux* who deny the Deity of Christ, and consequently the nature as well as the value of his atonement; but also to all who “go about to establish their own righteousness, not submitting themselves unto the righteousness of God—even the righteousness which is of faith.”

Such persons, whatever other knowledge they possess, and however varied, are, in my opinion, as ignorant of the Gospel of Christ as if they never heard it. But you, brethren have not so learned Christ. You, I trust, believe and are firmly persuaded that if you escape the “wrath to come” and enter into the Kingdom of God, it will be through his atoning blood and his all-perfect righteousness.

Hold by this precious truth; and if you do know the price of our Lord Jesus Christ, assuredly you will not live to yourselves, but to Him “who died and rose again, that whether we live or die we should be his.” You will endeavour to walk in his steps and to shew to others, as far as in you lieth the love which he has shewn to you.

And now, in asking you to contribute to wipe off the liabilities incurred for the enlarging of this Church I will only add one word of caution and one of encouragement. You might build houses to the Lord of Hosts—cast all your living into the Treasury of God—give all your goods to feed the poor—and yet be destitute of the principle of Christian charity, of the riches that flow from the grace of Christ.

The encouragement—“let every man do as he is disposed in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity, for God loveth a cheerful giver.”