

HOME PREACHER OR CHURCH IN THE HOUSE.

FORTY-THIRD WEEK.

MORNING WORSHIP.

HEAVENLY Father, we welcome the return of Thine own day, the day which the Lord hath made. We will be glad and rejoice in it; and though we assemble not in Thy house, make this the place of Thine abode. It is heaven where Thou art. May we have a foretaste of heaven here. May heavenly manna descend for the nourishment of our souls, and the Holy Spirit help us to gather it and to be strengthened thereby; and thus may we be helped on our way to the rest and service above, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

HYMN, *or Psalm* cxviii. 24-29.

WELCOME, sacred day of rest,
Sweet repose from worldly care;
Day above all days the best,
When our souls for heaven prepare;

Day when our Redeemer rose
Victor o'er the hosts of hell,
Thus he vanquished all our foes:
Let our lips his glories tell.

Gracious Lord, we love this day,
When we hear thy holy word.
When we sing thy praise and pray,
Earth can no such joys afford.

But a better rest remains:
Heavenly sabbaths, happier days,
Rest from sin, and rest from pains,
Endless joys, and endless praise.

2. KINGS II. 1-16.

AND it came to pass, when the Lord would take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisah from Gilgal. 2. And Elijah said unto Elisha, Tarry here, I pray thee; for the Lord hath sent me to Beth-el. And Elisha said unto him, As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they went down to Beth-el. 3. And the sons of the prophets that were at Beth-el came forth to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Lord will

take away thy master from thy head to-day? And he said, Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace. 4. And Elijah said unto him, Elisha, tarry here I pray thee, for the Lord hath sent me to Jericho. And he said, A the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they came to Jericho. 5. And the sons of the prophets that were at Jericho came to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Lord will take away the master from thy head to-day? And he answered, Yea, I know it, hold ye your peace. 6. And Elijah said unto him, Tarry, I pray thee, here; for the Lord hath sent me to Jordan. And he said, As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And they two went on, &c.

Prayer.

HEAVENLY Father, we thank Thee for the provision made for our bodily wants. Thou hast a numerous family to provide for yet Thou openest Thine hand and satisfiest the desire of every living thing. We bless Thee for the light of this day, and that it brings with it so many spiritual blessings. May it be a day of rest to us -- a rest not only from worldly toil and care, but rest in close communion with Thee. We adore Thee that this day is a monument of

creation, and of redemption also. Thou hast erected it by the empty tomb of Jesus, to remind us that He is risen indeed. May our risen Lord manifest Himself unto us in another way than He does to the world. May He breathe upon us, and say, Receive ye the Holy Ghost. May He talk with us, that our hearts may burn within us. May He come in and tarry with us, that our dwelling may become the house of God and the gate of heaven.

We bless Thee for the abundant proof afforded that Christ hath finished the work given Him to do. We hear Him exclaim from His cross, It is finished. We know it from the empty tomb. We behold in thought the multitude which no man can number before the throne, who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. But especially we bless Thee that we ourselves are living witnesses. Lord, we once were burdened with sin, but we obtained deliverance at the cross. Sprinkled with the atoning blood, we have peace with God. Wilt Thou cleanse us, this day, from all the contracted pollution of the past week? Destroy within us the roots of sin, and may we perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord. And help us, we beseech us, to live as the children of God. As we pass through this world as pilgrims, may our affections not linger among forbidden things, but be steadfastly fixed on things above. May our meetness for heaven be advancing day by day. As Thy children, may we submit to be taught by Thy

Spirit and Thy Providence. Bring us to the Saviour's feet, that learning of Him we may in due time be fit to dwell with Him. We earnestly plead with Thee for those of our kindred who love Thee not. Spirit of God! Convince them of their sinfulness and their need of Christ. Wound their hearts by the arrows of divine truth as well as by the strokes of affliction, that broken in heart they may come to the Great Physician, and be made whole. O that none united to us by the ties of nature may be parted from us hereafter, but as a family may we all meet in our Father's house above. And we desire to thank Thee on behalf of our kindred who have already gone thither, and who wait our coming. We would not ask back any whom Jesus has taken to his bosom. They were His more than they were ours, and the right to gather them was His alone. We will go to them, but they cannot come to us.

Bless, we pray Thee, all Thy people. Begotten of Thee, may they bear much resemblance to their Father, and to Christ their elder brother. Bind them with the cords of love to the cross, that they may be brought closer to one another. May they be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. May Thy church go forth in divine strength to subdue a revolted world to Christ. May all Thy ministering servants be faithful to their Master and to the souls of men, watching for them as those that must give account. Hasten the day when the Redeemer's throne shall be set up in every

heart and His praise sung by every tongue, yea, when all the earth shall be filled with His glory.

Bless our native land in all its interests, religious, civil, and commercial. May peace and plenty, truth and justice, honesty and temperance, abound among us. Bless our beloved queen and all the members of the royal family; may they belong to the family of God, and their names be written in the Lamb's book of life. Remember those who have great public duties to fulfil. May they seek to promote the glory of God and the nation's good. Look down upon our sailors and soldiers and miners, and all exposed to danger whether on land or sea, and may their souls be saved from everlasting death.

And now Heavenly Father, be with us as we further wait upon Thee. May the message to be delivered be mixed with faith in them that hear it; and unto the Father, unto the Son, and unto the Holy Ghost, as unto one God, be all honour and glory, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

THE CHURCH IN THE HOUSE.

O GOD, when we are about to read Thine own word, we turn to Thyself, the author of it. Help us to understand it, that it may nourish our souls. May it be brought home to our hearts by Thy Holy Spirit, and prove a word in season, to the edification and comfort of each of us, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

HYMN, *or Psalm* lxxviii. 7-10.

WHEN on Sinai's mount I see
God descend in majesty,
To proclaim his holy law
All my spirit sinks with awe.

When, in ecstasy divine,
Tabor's glorious steep I climb,
At the top, transporting light,
Darkness rushes on my sight.

When on Calvary I rest,
God, in flesh made manifest,
Shines in my Redeemer's face
Full of beauty, truth, and grace.

Here I would for ever stay,
Weep and gaze my soul away;
Thou art heaven on earth to me,
Lovely, mournful, Calvary.

MATTHEW XVII. 1-8.

AND after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, 2. And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. 3. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him. 4. Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. 5. While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him. 6. And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid. 7. And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid. And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only.

MARK IX. 2-8.

AND after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: and he was transfigured before them. 3. And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them. 4. And there appeared unto them Elias with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus. 5. And Peter answered and said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. 6. For he wist not what to say; for they were sore afraid. 7. And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him. 8. And suddenly, when they had looked round about they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves.

SERMON XLIII.

“AND IT CAME TO PASS ABOUT AN EIGHT DAYS AFTER THESE SAYINGS, HE TOOK PETER, AND JOHN, AND JAMES, AND WENT UP INTO A MOUNTAIN TO PRAY,” &c. -- Luke ix. 28-31.

THE precise locality of our Lord's transfiguration is not given in the sacred writings; tradition, however, has fixed on Mount Tabor, in Galilee, as the scene of this wonderful event. Whether this be the precise locality or not is still open to doubt, but the locality is nothing: it is the event itself that claims our attention, and this seems to be the divine purpose in the life of our Lord upon earth -- to fix our attention on events, and not on localities. Has it never struck you that the exact spots of Christ's birth, baptism, temptation, and death, cannot be ascertained with certainty? The site of Bethlehem is still pointed out to the modern traveller, but there is not a spot on which you can stand and say, "The stable stood here, and here must have been the manger where the babe was laid." Christ was no doubt baptized in Jordan, but the exact spot is a matter on conjecture. He was tempted in the wilderness, but who can fix the precise locality? He was crucified on Calvary, but even the site of that place is doubtful. No doubt, monuments have been erected on certain spots by human hands, but the very attempt to identify localities has rather

obliterated than preserved them. Now, why is this? Surely the divine hand that has preserved the sacred writings through many centuries, could have preserved the sacred places; but they come not within the scope of supernatural care, and are therefore left to themselves. God's wisdom and forethought are seen in this. We all know the tendency of the mind to the superstitious and the sensuous: hence the Mahometan repairs every year to the shrine of the false prophet; and the Papist is taught to adore pieces of the material cross and manger, and even the thorns and nails that pierced Christ. But the religion of Jesus is a spiritual religion, and the less we have to do with what is material, the better. It appeals, not to our superstition, but to our hearts and consciences; hence its indifference to places connected with the life of our Lord.

Have you not noticed the same divine purpose in the Old Testament? Had the burial place of Moses been known, and the tables of stone been extant, what gross superstition would have been engendered? Moses was the saviour of Israel -- their leader through the sea and the wilderness, their captain in battle, and their lawgiver in peace. If the Jews had known the locality they would, doubtless, have made the pilgrimages to his tomb. How wise in God to remove him quietly from the earth when his work was done! His work survives; that is what we have to do with. But the place of his burial is unknown unto this day.

And thus is it in connection with Christ's transfiguration. As we have said, the precise spot is not known -- that is quite immaterial. But the event itself is recorded, which is the material point that concerns us. It is recorded by three evangelists, almost in the same words, with only those points of difference that show they wrote independently, and did not copy from one another.

Let us then notice two or three points in this remarkable event: --

I. "He went up into a mountain to pray; and as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening." It is evident this remarkable event was preceded by prayer: it was, in fact, an answer to prayer. Though Jesus was God and man in one person, yet even he could not do without prayer. The most striking events in his life were always preceded by prayer. When he fed the thousands in the desert he prayed; when he was in the garden of Gethsemane he prayed; and when he hung on the cross he prayed. No wonder, then, that he prayed at his transfiguration. The words of the prayer are not recorded: perhaps no words were uttered, for are there not deep feelings in the heart that cannot be put into words? The best and most effectual prayers are offered when alone with God, and when the heart prays without the aid of the lips. Still we may conceive what the burden of Christ's prayer was, from the answer to it. Remember his death

was drawing nigh. What Moses and Elias on the mount spake of, be assured Jesus thought of; and “they spake of the decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.” It was all they could do. Peter, and John, and James might accompany Jesus to the mount, but they could not share his sufferings. He trode the wine-press alone; of his people there were none with him. It was the prospect of suffering -- it was the burden of a world’s guilt pressing upon his soul -- that led him to pray; his humanity shrank from suffering, and therefore he needed strength; he was, even now, bearing the cross and staggering under its awful weight, and he must pray to his Father for support.

Where was his closet for prayer? It was in the mountain solitude; to him this was like a quiet haven by a stormy sea, and there, far removed from the strife of men, the light and glory of heaven came in answer to prayer. And why should the answer to prayer come in this particular form-- “the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening?” In his approaching sufferings “his countenance was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men.” Was not his brow lacerated with thorns and his back with the scourge? Was not even his raiment stripped off him, and lots cast whose it should be? The answer to prayer is thus sent as a foretaste of the glory when all his shame and sufferings were past: “for the joy that was set

before him he endured the cross and despised the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” Yes, after the shame and pain of the cross there awaited him the glory and honour of the crown; after the wounding and bruising of the body there would be the glorified body which pain could not touch, and its exaltation to the right hand of God. Was not the answer to prayer, coming thus, sufficient to strengthen him for his approaching trial? And as it has been with the Master, so has it been with his servants who have suffered shame and death for his name. They have had such ravishing views of heavenly glory, that in the midst of floods and flames they have sung hymns of praise, rejoicing they were counted worthy to suffer martyrdom for Christ. Is there not in this a great lesson given to ourselves? We, too, may prove the power of prayer: we, too, can ascend the mount of communion with our Father, and there, far away from the tumult of life, we can pray to him who seeth in secret, and obtain grace to help us in time of need, and --

“Who that knows the worth of prayer
But wishes to be often there?”

There have we not often been? There we have felt the clouds of sorrow roll away, and we have emerged from the shadows of earth into marvelous light; there we have been

lifted out of ourselves, as it were, into the serene calm and assurance of faith. Our hearts have been burdened with care, but there they have let fall the load. Our countenances have been darkened with grief, but there they have been lighted up with joy. What is all this but a kind of transfiguration passed upon ourselves? and it is in answer to prayer: and the end thereof, in our case, is the same as it was to Christ. We have got strength for present trials and coming sorrows, and have descended from the holy mount with our countenances radiant with heavenly glory. Oh! Let us try to be more in this mount with Jesus; there will be less doubt on our minds, less fear in our hearts, less feebleness in our purposes, less worldliness in our affections. We should have more of heaven in our souls, and less of earth -- more of the better world to which we are going, and less of this we soon must quit; and "men would take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus."

II. Observe, there were three witnesses of the transfiguration -- Peter, John, and James. Why three only, and not the twelve? In the divine plan nothing is superfluous -- no waste of power, no unnecessary expenditure of means. Three witnesses were therefore sufficient, for they had only to attest a fact: in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established." Remember, the fact of Christ's transfiguration was to be kept secret until after he was risen from the dead. Read the

36th verse -- “They told no man of those things which they had seen.” The transfiguration was a secret, and we all know the fewer persons intrusted with a secret the better. The selection of three disciples, and these the chief of them, was therefore in harmony with the end to be accomplished.

And is it not also remarkable, that this event in Christ’s life was foreshadowed by an event in the life of Moses? When Moses was installed as the Jewish lawgiver, he too went up into a mountain, and three witnesses accompanied him -- Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu; thus the type is fulfilled in the antitype; Moses was transfigured on the mount: his countenance was so radiant with the divine glory, that when he descended the people could not look upon him. Jesus was likewise transfigured: “and the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening.” But why should the witnesses be Peter, and John, and James? Marvel not that Jesus had his special favourites, whom he loved and honoured more than the rest. Within the circle of the twelve there was an inner circle, and these three disciples composed it. And just as to our most intimate friends we speak more unreservedly, so Jesus spake more unreservedly to them; he told them more, and revealed his heart more to them than to the others. Nor was the witnessing of his transfiguration the only honour given to them: they were the witnesses of his agony in Gethsemane also. Not only were they permitted to behold

his highest glory on earth, but his lowest abasement likewise; and the results of this close intimacy with Christ may be traced still further in the subsequent career of these three apostles. Their devotedness to Christ stands out more prominently than the rest. Take the writings of Peter, and John, and James out of the New Testament, and (except Paul, who also had a transfiguration) the remainder would be but small. Let us then bear this in mind: because they lived nearer to Jesus than the rest, therefore they were more highly honoured, and is it not so still? If we live not near to Christ we shall not be honoured; we shall feel a chill in our souls which will paralyze all our spiritual movements. Mark a Christian who is cold in his religious duties, heartless in his devotions, feeble in the execution of his purposes; it is unnecessary to ask the cause -- he is not walking with Christ. True, he may continue to follow him, but it is afar off; he may come to the table of the Lord, but he sits at the foot of the table, and is not at the head where Jesus is; his place can never be where John was seated, so near the Master that he could lean on his bosom. "Them that honour me I will honour, but they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed." And so it comes to this: if we would possess the seat of honour we must live nearer to Jesus than we have ever done; and such honour and privilege every Christian may have, for the condition of attaining it is within the reach of all. It is not intellect that is wanted --

not learning -- not knowledge. What evidence have we that Peter, and John, and James had higher natural gifts or culture than the rest of the twelve? But they had more love, and this was the secret of all their honour and usefulness. What wonderful power in love! It is love that will enable you to speak for Christ, to win souls to Christ. The most successful winners of souls have been the most ardent lovers of Jesus. Are any of us occupying the lowest place in Christ's esteem? Why not strive to gain the highest? Why remain at the bottom of the table when you might be at the head? Then climb the mount as these three apostles did. Enter into thy closet and shut to the door, and in closer and more frequent communion with Christ we shall be strong for duty and bold in our testimony for him.

III. Observe, Moses and Elias appeared in glory talking with Jesus. Why should these two servants of God, long since gone, appear on this great occasion? Most died on Mount Nebo fourteen hundred years before; Elias went up in a chariot of fire some six hundred years later, and they both went to heaven. Why did they reappear now? Moses represented the law; Elias represented the prophets: and taking them both together, the whole Old Testament economy was represented by them, and they both appear in conference with Jesus, the sole head and representative of the New Testament economy. Is not this at once an announcement that Moses, and Elias, and Jesus were all in

perfect harmony? Christ came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it; and also to fulfil all that the prophets had spoken. In him the law and the prophets met, even as in his presence Moses and Elias stood. Was that church a perfect church to which these representatives had previously belonged? Perfect in its way it was, even as a scaffolding is perfect in the erection of a permanent building. But when the building is completed, the scaffolding must be removed. The law was only a shadow of good things to come, and not the substance of the things themselves. The law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did. Here, then, Moses opportunely appears on the mount with Jesus, to attest the completion of the law and its perfect harmony with the gospel system: that which was perfect had now come, and that which was imperfect was to be done away. Strange! that the priests and scribes would have nothing to do with Christ. They regarded him as a revolutionist, who sought to disestablish the ancient church of Moses. But, behold, Moses himself appears and approves; and if the acknowledged founder of the Jewish church is satisfied, the priests and scribes are rebuked to silence. But alas! they were blinded, and hence their opposition to Christ. In the same way the appearance of Elias was significant: for while he lived he stood forth as the reformer of the Jewish church; he sought to turn the hearts of the children of Israel to the God whom they had

forsaken. He was what John the Baptist, the herald of Christ was, eight hundred years after; and here he too lays aside his rod of office in the presence of One greater than he, even Jesus of whom he spake. "What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sent his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

From all this we have a striking proof how little of God's plan, in reference to his church, we can take in. It has all along been a gradual development; and yet not the last, for the heavenly church is to be the last development of all. Things that are still unfinished we are not competent judges of: and our views of Christ's church are often confused and narrow, so that it well becometh us not to be dogmatic in our opinions respecting it. Had the patriarchs lived in the days of Moses, and seen their simple form of religion superseded by a most elaborate one; had they beheld the temple in its architectural splendour, and the priests in their magnificent robes, and all the elaborate ritualism connected with the worship of God -- they would have concluded that true religion had disappeared. Had the Jews who lived in the days of Moses and Elias, lived in Christ's day and of his apostles; had they seen a new system inaugurated and carried on, in which neither temple, nor priests, nor altars, nor sacrifices, were to be found -- they

would have concluded that real religion had died out. What! a religion disconnected with the state and stripped of its outward grandeur -- a religion entirely spiritual! they would surely have opposed it with all their might. And thus the priest and the people in Christ's day did; they tried to put Christianity down by crucifying its Founder, and by persecuting the apostles. Oh! had they but known better, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory, nor treated his servants thus. But the church has outlived all opposition, because Jesus its Founder lives; and all the events that have happened have but helped to extend it in the world. There have various dispensations from God, and there are various religious denominations among men; but there is only one church -- one holy catholic church -- which supersedes, because it has absorbed, the patriarchal and Mosaic churches; and this is the church of the living God -- the one spiritual house built into a habitation of God through the Spirit. It is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets; Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone. And as Christ's church hath absorbed these, so the heavenly church shall ultimately absorb this; and they "shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven."

"Apostles, patriarchs, prophets there,
Around my Saviour stand;
And soon my friends in Christ below

Will join the glorious band.”

Shall we be among them? Then let us look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. What made glory on the mount in Galilee? the presence of Jesus. This heavenly glory may be experienced on earth, with “Jesus in the midst.” It may be experienced here: to the soul resting on the finished work of Christ, heavenly glory is already begun.

Amen.

-- ROBERT BALGARNIE.

THE CHILDREN'S SERVICE.

THE STORY OF RUTH.

AT one time there was a great dearth in the land of Israel. A dearth, you know, is a want of food. We have not, in our days, so many dearths as they had in old times. We can help each other better now than they were able to do long ago; and we can guard against want better. Yet some fearful famines do come even in our times. A quarter of a century ago, when the potato crop failed from a strange disease, there was a great dearth in Ireland, and many persons, little children among them, died. People long spoke of that sad time, as the time of the hunger. Not so far back as that, we heard of famine in India, and children in

this country gathered money to buy rice and other kinds of food, to save the starving. It is a fearful thing when people are well and hungry, and can find nothing to eat. It is a terrible death to die, stricken through for want of the fruits of the field.

I do not quite know what caused the famine in the land of Israel at the time of which I speak. But I suppose there had been no rain for a long time, and things sown and planted in the ground did not grow. The earth grew dry and hot; the very wells became empty, and hunger and thirst together made a very sad state of things. It was at the time when God ruled his people by raising up brave, strong, wise men to help them in distress. But famine is a foe very hard to fight against. I suppose as much was done as could be done to help poor people while the drought lasted; but who could bring water to fill the wells, and refresh the fields? No doubt many died, and the rest had to suffer and wait. Some of the people went off to other countries. That must have been a very hard thing for an Israelite to do in those days. The Jews are scattered everywhere now. But, at present, their land is kept from them and desolate. There is no temple for them in it, nor ark of God. Yet even to this day they yearn over their lost country. In those days the tabernacle and the ark were in Canaan, and to go away from it, to one that knew and loved God, was like going from His presence. Yet some even of

the good had to go, just as God's children still have to suffer like others, that they may be humbled and tried, and blessed in the end.

Among the good Israelites who left their country to go to some other land, where the dearth was not raging, was a man of the name of Elimelech. It was a fine name to wear in a time of distress: for it means My God is king, and it would seem to say, Never mind the famine; God is reigning, and will make all things work for good to those who trust him. This man Elimelech had a wife, who was called Naomi, and two grown sons. He had a farm in the neighbourhood of Bethlehem; but though the very name of the little town means House of bread, there was no bread to be got out of the farm for Elimelech and his family. So they went away east, over the river Jordan, into the land of Moab, and sought a living there among strangers. A singular and beautiful thing grew out of this emigration of theirs.

The famine continued for years in the land of Canaan, and Elimelech and his household lived on in the country of Moab. At first, I suppose, they felt much from home, and longed to get back. But as months and years went past, Moab became less strange to them. Several things helped this. Elimelech, first of all, died shortly after they went there. Then the two sons of Naomi, who was left a widow with them, saw young maidens of the people of Moab that

pleased them, and they asked them in marriage, and had wives whom they loved in the strange country. Then both the young husbands died, and the three widows were left to weep by the three graves of their dead husbands. To two of them Moab was home; and even to Naomi the country where the dust of her wedded lord and two beloved sons was lying, could not help being dear.

Still the widow of Elimelech would not forget Judah, and the farm that was her own in the land of God's promise. So when after ten years had passed she heard that the dearth had ceased, and that there was bread again in the old country, she felt desirous to return, and see the home she had left in the day of want. One day she proposed to her daughters-in-law to leave the place where they were, and set out on a journey to the country of Israel. Now both of them were very fond of their mother-in-law, and they said they were quite ready to go with her, and set out at once. After they had gone some distance, Naomi, wishing, I suppose, to try them, how far they were willing to go through trouble for her sake, or perhaps, beginning to doubt whether she was doing right in taking them away from their own people, said to them, "Go back now, my children, each of you to your mother's house. The Lord be kind to you, for you have been very good and kind to my dead sons, and to me. I hope that each of you will, ere long, be happy and at home in the house of a loving husband. God bless you

both.” But they both said, “No, surely we will go with you; we would like to live with you among your own people, in the land about which you have often told us such wonderful stories.” The widowed Naomi, however, still urged them to go back; she said she could not get them homes such as they had had, and they had better stay and be married in Moab. At last one of them (her name was Orpah) was persuaded to return. But it was a sad and yet sweet thing to see how they parted. They wept and kissed, and wept and kissed again. At length the farewell was over, and Orpah went home. Then Naomi said to the other, “See, your sister is gone back to her people and their gods; go you too.” But Ruth (that was her name) would not hear a word more from her mother-in-law. She said, “Do not ask me again to leave you; nothing but death will part you and me; I will not go back. I have quite made up my mind that, wherever you go, I will go with you. Your people shall be my people, and your God shall be my God. When you come to die, mother, if I live after you, I will live till I die in the same place, and my grave shall be made close by yours. Nothing shall separate us.” When Naomi heard Ruth say that, she said no more. Indeed Ruth was so perfectly in earnest that she had made an oath about it; not lightly or profanely, but solemnly, to show that nothing could change her mind. So the two widows, older and younger, travelled on together.

After a while they came to Bethlehem, which Naomi had left ten years before. Now ten years make a great change on most people. In that space of time, boys and girls grow to be men and women, and persons in their prime get to have grey hairs. But the change is greater when grief, as well as time, has been at work. So when Naomi came back to the town where she had been so well known, all her old friends came round about her wondering. They said, "Such a change! We should not have known you. Can you be Naomi?" "Yes," she said, "but do not call me by my old name. Call me Marah." Naomi means beautiful or pleasant, and Marah means bitter. So she said, "Don't call me Pleasant, call me Bitter, for the Lord has dealt bitterly with me. I had a husband and two sons when I went away, and now I have only this widowed daughter. I was full before, now I am empty." Yet, by and by, she came to feel that her emptiness was preparing for a great fulness. That daughter-in-law was to bring to her great joy, and to be one of the mothers who were honoured to be in the line that at last gave to the world the blessed child Jesus.

QUESTIONS FROM THE BIBLE STORY.

1. Can you find a passage that speaks of a worse famine than that of bread or water?

2. Where do we read of a famine in the land of Israel when plenty came back in a single day?
3. What land was it that supplied corn to people of other countries, when dearth was trying them all?
4. Can you find texts in which the use of water to make trees grow fast and fair and fruitful is spoken of?
5. What wise man did God raise up to save many lives in dearth?
6. What poor woman, with only enough left for one meal, was wonderfully provided for in a time of famine?
7. Can you find a text where it is foretold what dreadful things would happen for want during a siege of cities in Israel?
8. What husband and wife once left their home in Israel, for fear of a king's rage against a little child dear to them?
9. What psalm shows how dear Judah and Jerusalem were to those who had been obliged for a time to live in another country?
10. Where have we a name given in sorrow, and for the purpose of keeping the sorrow in mind, changed for one expressive of joy?
11. Who was it that, being father of a numerous family, lost them all in a sudden storm?
12. Who was it that thought himself bereaved of two sons, when it was not the fact?

13. Can you find a text in which *daughter-in-law* appears to be a name even dearer than that of daughter?

ANSWERS to the foregoing questions will be found in the following chapters. -- Amos viii.; 2 Kings vii.; Gen. xli.; Isa. xliv. and Ps. i.; Gen. xli. and l.; 1 Kings xvii.; Deut. xxviii.; Matt. ii.; Ps. cxxxvii.; Gen. xxxv.; Job i; Gen. xlii.; Micah vii. and Matt. x.

Prayer.

O GOD our Maker and Preserver, we thank thee that from day to day thou hast given us bread to eat, and clothing to wear. We could not live but for Thy kind care. We pray Thee to give us still our daily bread. Make us content with that; and if Thou givest us more, help us to use Thy bounty so as to glorify Thy name. Bless all rich people with kind hearts, that will prompt them to aid the poor. Bless the poor that they may look to Thee, and hope in Thy goodness. If anywhere in the world just now there is dearth, do Thou relieve the wants of the suffering people. Bring the abundance of one place to help the lack that is in another. May the days soon come when every part of the world shall be known to all the rest, and if it need help, shall have it freely. May all men soon be brethren, and know and love

Him who is our Brother in heaven. This we ask for His name's sake. *Amen.*

EVENING WORSHIP.

HEAVENLY Father, bless to us Thy word. May it be as good seed cast into a soil prepared for its reception. Water it abundantly by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. Prevent the enemy of souls from sowing tares, or in any way rendering the word unprofitable. May there be a rich harvest to Thy glory. During the remaining part of this day may we enjoy much of Thy presence. May the common duties of life be means of grace to us, because performed with a single eye to Thy glory, and thus may our sabbaths upon earth be a foretaste of the rest that remaineth for Thy people. Forgive the sins of our service, and accept us for Christ's sake. *Amen.*

HYMN, *or Psalm cvii.* 10-15.

JESUS, where'er thy people meet,
There they behold thy mercy seat;
Where'er they seek thee thou art found,
And every place is hallowed ground.

For thou, within no walls confined,

Inhabitest the humble mind;
Such ever bring thee where they come,
And going, take thee to their home.

Here may we prove the power of prayer
To strengthen faith, and sweeten care,
To teach our faint desires to rise,
And bring all heaven before our eyes.

Lord, we are few, but thou art near,
Nor short thine arm, nor deaf thine ear;
O rend the heavens, come quickly down,
And make a thousand hearts thine own.

LUKE XXII. 14-39.

AND when the hour was come he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him. 15. And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: 16. For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of heaven. 17. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves: 18. For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come. 19. And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body, which is given for

you; this do in remembrance of me. 20. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you. 21. But, behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table. 22. And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined; but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed! 23. And they began to enquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing. 24. And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest. 25. And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. 26. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. 27. For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth. 28. Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations: 29. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; 30. That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. 31. And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: 32. But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren. 33. And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death. 34.

And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me. 35. And he said unto them, When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye anything? And they said, Nothing. 36. Then he said unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one, &c.

Prayer.

HEAVENLY Father, we draw near unto Thee in the evening of Thine own day. We bless Thee that we can assemble for worship in our own dwelling, none daring to make us afraid. May our prayer come up before Thee as incense, and the lifting up of our hands as the evening sacrifice. We put our songs and petitions into the hands of our great High Priest, through whose merit alone we look for acceptance with Thee. We confess that our best services are sinful, and all our righteousness as filthy rags. Even in the calm of Thine own day we have been worldly in our affections, and grovelling in our desires. Sprinkle us afresh with with the blood of Jesus, that our sins may be taken away and our whole nature consecrated to Thy glory. We recall to remembrance the evening, when Jesus came

into the midst of his disciples, and said, Peace be unto you. Lord Jesus, deign to come unto us: make Thyself known as all our salvation and desire. Thy peace is what our souls need, and without which we are like the waves of the sea which cannot rest. As we have been forgiven much, help us to love much; and though the honour is not ours of anointing Thy feet, yet do Thou accept the love and gratitude of our hearts. And may it not be in this day alone that we have Thy presence. Having begun the week with Thee, may it be continued and ended with Thee. May a sense of Thy presence always incite us to duty, and check us when tempted to wander in forbidden paths. Help us to follow Thee fully, and to copy Thine example in everything. Bless us at this time, as forming a part of Thy worshipping people. In diverse places and many tongues they worship, yet in Thy sight they appear as one vast congregation. May our family song blend with that of the great multitude, and to our individual hearts may the answers come. Will it please Thee to bless the preaching of the Gospel this day to all who have heard it? May it prove as manna to the hungry, to strengthen them for the pilgrimage that remains. May it be as a sword in the hearts of the King's enemies, and henceforth may they acknowledge His sceptre. Bless all instruction imparted to the young this day, whether in the Sunday school or around the family altar. May the rising race be found in the ways of righteousness. Write

Thy name in each youthful heart and each name in the Book of Life; and when the fathers shall be no more, may their places in Thy church be filled by their children. We commend unto Thee all absent relatives and friends; may they share in the blessings which we have invoked upon ourselves. We commend ourselves to Thy kind protections during the night. May we lie down and be refreshed with sleep and strengthened thereby for the duties of the coming day. May the close of every day remind us of the end of life; and when life's day is done may we sleep in Jesus, and awake in His presence, and be for ever with Him. And all we ask is in the name of Jesus. *Amen.*

MORNING AND EVENING MEDITATIONS.

MONDAY.

Morning.

A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary.

O Lord, the hope of Israel, all that forsake thee shall be ashamed, and they that depart from me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the Lord, the fountain of living waters.

Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved: for thou art my praise.

Be not a terror unto me: thou art my hope in the day of evil.

But do thou for me, O God the Lord, for thy name's sake: because thy mercy is good, deliver thou me.

Jer. xvii. 12, 13, 14, 17. Ps. cix. 21.

Evening.

I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence;

And give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.

Behold, the Lord hath proclaimed unto the end of the world, Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh; behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him.

And they shall call them, The holy people.

Isa. lxii. 6, 7, 11, 12.

TUESDAY.

Morning.

My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.

Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.

And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundred -fold, and shall inherit everlasting life.

They forsook all, and followed him.

Song. ii. 10. Matt. xvi. 24, 25. Matt. xix. 29. Luke v. 11.

Evening.

I remember the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown.

Thus saith the Lord, What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and become vain?

Wherefore I will yet plead with you, saith the Lord, and with your children's children will I plead.

For my people have committed two evils, they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.

Jer. ii. 2, 5, 9, 13.

WEDNESDAY.

Morning.

The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.

O fear the Lord, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him

Hungry and thirsty, their souls fainted in them.

Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses.

And which of you, with taking thoughts, can add to his stature one cubit?

If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest?

For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things.

Ps. xxxiv. 7, 9. Ps. cvii 5, 6. Luke xii. 15, 26, 30.

Evening.

Let them exalt him also in the congregation of the people, and praise him in the assembly of the elders.

He turneth rivers into a wilderness, and the watersprings into dry ground;

A fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein.

He turneth the wilderness into a standing water, and dry ground into water-springs.

And there he maketh the hungry to dwell, that they may prepare a city for habitation;

And sow the fields, and plant vineyards, which may yield fruits of increase.

He blesseth them also, so that they are multiplied greatly, and suffereth not their cattle to decrease.

Ps. cvii. 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38.

THURSDAY.

Morning.

Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes.

Lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein;

Then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God,

And thou say in thine heart, My power, and the might of mine hand, hath gotten me this wealth.

But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth.

Deut. viii. 11, 12, 14, 17, 18.

Evening.

Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you.

Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten.

Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire.

For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

James v. 1, 2, 3. 1 John ii. 16, 17.

FRIDAY.

Morning.

The righteous considereth the cause of the poor: but the wicked regardeth not to know it.

Is this not the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?

Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? When thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?

Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily; and thy righteousness shall go before thee: the glory of the Lord shall be thy reward.

Prov. xxix. 7. Isa. lviii. 6, 7, 8.

Evening.

**Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth; and let not
thine heart be glad when he stumbleth;**

**Lest the Lord see it, and it displease him, and he turn
away his wrath from him.**

Fret not thyself because of evil men, neither be thou
envious at the wicked.

If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat: and if
he be thirsty, give him water to drink:

For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the
Lord shall reward thee.

But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life,
purpose, faith, long-suffering, charity, patience.

Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall
suffer persecution.

Prov. xxiv. 17, 18, 19. Prov. xxv. 21, 22. 2 Tim. iii. 10, 12.

SATURDAY.

Morning.

**When thou passest through the waters, I will be with
thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee:
when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be
burnt; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.**

For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy
Saviour.

Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee.

Isa. xliii. 2, 3, 4.

Evening.

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat.

Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness.

2 Pet. iii. 9, 10, 11.