

THANKFUL FOR EVERYTHING

A DISCOURSE

PREACHED ON

THANKSGIVING DAY, 1861,

IN THE

Second Presbyterian Church, Cincinnati,

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A DISCOURSE FOR THANKSGIVING

IN THE TIME OF THE GREAT REBELLION, 1861.

EPHESIANS v.: 20. Giving thanks always, for all things unto God and the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I SUPPOSE there is hardly an individual among us that has not been conscious of a certain undefined sense of unfitness, in the observation this year, of a day of public national thanksgiving. The recent day of fasting, humiliation, and prayer, appointed for the acknowledgment of national sins, and for publicly imploring the divine mercy in the midst of unparalleled divine judgments, accorded perfectly with our thoughts, and we welcomed it with universal and spontaneous approval. But why should we render *thanks*, when those same judgments under which we mourned are still upon us, not only unabated, but grown even to larger and more terrible proportions? What have we to be thankful for in such a time of tremendous and awful visitation as this, when the sword of the Lord is passing through the land, and in every quarter of it are heard already the cries of widows and orphans? What have we to be thankful for when our substance is consumed, and our young men are being slain by thousands in our streets; when in this land, hitherto so peaceful and prosperous, the pursuits of industry are arrested, and the arms of productive labor, that but yes-

terday were urging the loom, or forging at the anvil, or turning at the lathe, or heaving in the quarry, or scattering seed upon the fertile earth, are now bearing in the field the implements of fraternal slaughter, and the hills and the valleys that have been wont to ring with the songs of harvesters, are shaking with the tramp of armies, and the roar of death-dealing musketry and cannon? What have we to be thankful for, when the grass is beginning to flourish in the paths which so recently were aglow with the fervid march of commerce and trade, and when our ships, in so many instances, are rotting at their wharves, or have been transferred from the service of the public wealth, to the service of destruction? For what shall we render national thanks, when so many minds are suspended between hope and fear on the question of our continued national existence—when it is even doubtful to some whether God has not already arisen in his wrath to destroy us utterly from among the nations, and to make our very name a scorn?

From end to end of our great land, there is this day nothing but tumult and agitation. We feel that we are in the midst of such a fearful crisis as scarcely any nation ever encountered, and such as few nations, even the oldest and the strongest, could survive; and in the very heat and agony of it, in the moment of extremest peril and apprehension, when not less than a million of armed men, with prodigious preparations on either side, stand grimly fronting each other, ready for the onset and the sharp struggle of death—when the whole world stands agaze, and the whole world's heart has almost ceased its beating in painful suspense for the tremendous issue, which is to be decisive not only of freedom here, but of mighty interests of humanity every where—at such a moment we are called together in ten thousand public assemblies of the people of God, to render praise and thanksgiving to him who is judge of all, and in whose hands are all the kingdoms of the earth!

Are we not reminded of Paul and Silas praying and singing praises to God at midnight, as they lay bleeding and sore from the scourge of the public executioner, in the inner prison at Philippi, with their feet made fast in the stocks?

Are we not reminded of Daniel celebrating the Lord's goodness, and recounting his gracious deliverances in the lion's den; and of Jonah crying from the belly of hell unto God, and sacrificing with the voice of thanksgiving unto him that ordereth all things for his praise, looking again toward his holy temple, when the waters compassed him about even to the soul; when the depth closed round about him, and the weeds were wrapped about his head?

God is always to be praised. There is no earthly condition so terrible, but there are still occasions in it for thanksgiving; and the terrible condition itself, when properly understood, may be only the token of a wrath that has been kindled to save; or it may be even a device of love, a disguised mercy, for our higher exaltation. Did not a light for the gospel of Christ break forth from the Philippian prison, which is shining to-day over all the Christian earth; and from the inner dungeon in which they had been thrust, and from their stocks, did not the Lord's apostles go forth revived and strengthened to achieve their mightiest successes? In the den of lions, did not Daniel triumph over his adversaries; and did he not ascend from it to be second in the kingdom of Darius? And did not Jonah find salvation in the deep?

In no circumstances should we despair; in none should we let go the anchor of our trust in God. Even when he smites us, if we will so receive it, there is mercy in the rod. "Wherefore doth a living man complain; a man for the punishments of his sins?" Even in his deepest distresses, and when the hand of God is heaviest upon him, the good man should be prepared to say—"I know, oh Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in thy faithfulness hast

afflicted me." The rule not unreasonable in itself, nor hard to be observed by men in whom a right spirit has been created, is furnished in the text—"Giving thanks always, for all things unto God and the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

What have we to be thankful for, at such a time as this? What to-day is the especial cause for thanksgiving and praise to Almighty God, which ought to present itself before the minds of the American people? We have reason, I answer, to praise God *that it is no worse with us than it is.*

In an essay on the duty of Christian thankfulness, which I was accustomed when a boy to read in one of my school books, an anecdote was narrated of one who was afflicted with a complication of disorders, among which, chiefly, were the stone and the gout. It was said that when he suffered from the gout, he thanked God that it was not the stone, and when he suffered from the stone, he thanked God that he had not both of them together; and when both came together, then he was thankful that in his helplessness and distress he had a friend in heaven to whom he might look, and never in vain, for comfort and consolation, and so many friends on earth to minister to his necessities. "And I like," said the quaint essayist, "the story of the honest Dutchman, who when he had broken his leg by a fall from the mainmast, thanked God that it was not his neck." In another pulpit, I heard, not long since, an anecdote illustrative of this subject, which deeply affected and impressed me. An excellent clergyman in one of our western towns had lost his parish, and was sunk in the deepest poverty. Other afflictions came upon him. His health failed, and he was threatened with the total loss of his sight. His wife, not such an one as Job had, yet a little tinctured with the same distrustful and complaining spirit, for a long time illy bore their reverses. But at last, she seemed to have gained a victory. "My dear husband," she said one day to her

greatly suffering companion, "I have determined no longer to afflict you with my sinful murmurings. I will try to be submissive to God's will." "Ah, Susan, that is right," he replied. "And now that you may try intelligently, let us see what are some of the things to which your submission is demanded. First, your husband is poor and sick, but he is still alive, and by God's mercy may recover both his health and his ability to preach again the blessed gospel of salvation. You must try to be submissive to this. Next, you yourself are in perfect health, and are able to attend upon me in my feebleness. You must try to be submissive to this. Then we have five sweet children, affectionate, obedient, and good, who look as if they might live a hundred years. You must try to be submissive to God's will in this. And though many who were once our friends have forsaken us, we have hundreds of faithful friends remaining, who I am sure will never forsake us—and if they do, we have one in heaven better than them all, who sticketh closer than a brother, and whose unfailing promise is recorded that in six troubles, yea also in seven, there shall no evil befall us. You must try and be submissive to this. And then"—"Dear husband," exclaimed the sobbing wife, "you have said enough—I am sufficiently rebuked. I will say no more of submission, but with God's help will endeavor to be thankful."

How prone we are, dear brethren, in the day of our adversity, to forget our mercies, and like Jonah, angry for his gourd, to accuse the providence that has afflicted us! Our land is full of murmurers, or at the very best of people making a virtue of their graceless efforts to be submissive, while this very day the good of our condition infinitely outweighs the evil, and the blessings which we do not remember, outnumber a thousand fold the miseries of which we complain!

That we are a sinful nation and a seed of evil doers, we

must be ready to confess. Ten thousand ways, individually and collectively, we have sinned against God, showing ourselves unworthy of the benefits which he has literally been showering on us through the whole period of our national existence. We have been a proud and boastful nation, trusting in our own strength, and not in the Creator. We have been a cruel nation, oppressing the defenceless and the weak. We have been a Sabbath breaking nation. We have been a money-loving nation, heaping to ourselves gods of the gold that perisheth, and we have not honored the Lord with our substance, nor been thankful. There is no judgment which heaven might have sent upon us that we have not deserved, nor any troop of judgments that might not justly have been commissioned to execute vengeance on our guilty land. Nothing that God might have done would have exceeded our demerit—yet how gently in fact has his hand fallen! His sword is here. But the sword is only one of his four sore judgments which he holds in store for the nations that offend him. Have we not reason to be thankful that he has not emptied upon us all the vials of his wrath? Have we not reason to be thankful that he has not let loose upon us at once the whole army of his avengers?

Ezekiel in his prophecy, declares—“The word of the Lord came unto me saying, son of man, when the land sinneth against me by trespassing grievously, then will I stretch out my hand upon it, and will break the staff of bread thereof, and will send famine upon it, and will cut off man and beast from it. Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord God.” God, my brethren, has not done this to us. Perhaps there never was a time when we were more abundantly supplied with all that is needful for food, than we are at this present moment. Our granaries are absolutely full and overflowing. The land is groaning with the abundance of wine, and corn, and milk. Not

only have we enough for ourselves, but enough for others. We might almost feed the world with our overplus. Is this nothing? Is it no occasion for gratitude to God that in spite of our unworthiness, he has literally opened the windows of heaven, and poured out such a blessing upon us that there is not found room to receive it? Say, you murmurers, you men that ask what there is to be thankful for now—you men, who because one blessing to which you have been accustomed is gone, are complaining against God, as if *all* were gone, reproaching him as if he had stript you of every good—is it nothing that you have the staff of bread unbroken, and that there is plenty in your houses, and plenty in your barns, plenty for you, and plenty for your children, and plenty for your cattle, and that the earth is pregnant and teeming now with ungathered harvests?

Again, by the same prophet, God says—“And if I cause noisome beasts to pass through the land and they spoil it, so that it be desolate, that no man may pass through because of the beasts: though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, as I live saith the Lord God, they shall deliver neither sons nor daughters, they only shall be delivered, but the land shall be desolate.”

We may not be able to realize our exposure to a judgment like this, but by whose grace is it that we seem to be exempt from even the danger of such a visitation? We do know something of the caterpillar and the worm, and can easily imagine how if it were God's pleasure to do so, he might in a very short period, through the agency of beasts which in themselves appear most insignificant, make our land desolate and uninhabitable. Is it nothing that he has held back from us this token of his displeasure? Is it nothing that he who showed his wrath against Egypt by causing the locusts to “cover the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened, which ate every herb of the land, and all the fruit of the trees, until there remained not

any green thing in the trees, or in the herbs of the field, through all the land of Egypt,"—and who "smote the dust of Egypt that it became lice in man and beast, that all the dust of the land became lice throughout all the land"—and who "sent swarms of flies upon Pharaoh and upon his servants, and upon his people, and into their houses, so that the houses of the Egyptians were full of flies, and also the ground whereon they were, until the whole land was corrupted by reason of the swarms of flies"—and who "smote all the borders of Egypt with frogs which came up into Pharaoh's house, and into his bedchamber and upon his bed, and into the houses of his servants and of his people, and into their ovens, and into their kneading troughs"—is it nothing that God has not dealt so with us? True enough, we have never thought of such a judgment as the judgment of noisome beasts. We have had no apprehensions of evil from such a quarter. But is there no such judgment in the hand of God, and might he not send it? If there is no apparent danger of such an evil, is it true also that there is no possibility of it? Has God never inflicted it on any rebellious nation? Is it nothing, therefore, that he has not inflicted it on us? Ah, brethren, we have something to be thankful for, even in the midst of the evils under which we are this day suffering. Let us thank God for exemption from the caterpillar and the worm, and from the army of his locusts, and from the scourge of lice, and flies, and frogs. Let us thank him that the verdure is not devoured from our fields, that our streams are not polluted with the rotting carcasses of beasts that have fallen and perished in them, and that our houses and our bedchambers and our beds, our ovens and our kneading troughs, are not infested with loathsome vermin.

And again, by the prophet, God says—"Or if I send a pestilence in that land, and pour out my fury upon it in blood to cut off from it man and beast, though these three

men were in it, as I live saith the Lord God, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter; they shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness."

With such a judgment as this we are more familiar. We have seen it, and stood appalled before it. We remember as it were yesterday, more than one occasion, when this mysterious angel of death with his terrible sword, has hovered above the land, and smitten right and left among our pale and affrighted thousands. We remember how the horror of his approach spread like the shadow of a dark cloud before his pathway, and how as he passed along a loud wail of bitter distress went up from hamlet, and village, and city. We remember it, and we remember it only to deprecate and dread its revisiting desolation.

But there is no pestilence scourging us now. Never were we freer from such a visitation. The whole year now ending has been, in this respect, a year of almost unexampled blessing. Every wind that has swept over us from the sea, has been the messenger and the bearer of life and health, so that our old men have been firm in their age, and our sons have grown up as plants, and our daughters been as corner stones, polished after the similitude of a palace—while our oxen have been strong to labor, and our sheep have brought forth thousands and tens of thousands in our streets. Shall we not be thankful for this? Shall we not praise God for it? Is it no subject for national thanksgiving this day, to the Lord of life?

Yet God, for our sins, has brought upon us the sword, and the sword is going through the land. It is a terrible judgment. We would not speak lightly of it, and we cannot exaggerate it. But shall we not be thankful, while the sword is cutting off man and beast, that the staff of bread is not broken at the same time, and that the plague of noisome beasts, and the plague of pestilence, are not adding their horrors to all the horrors of famine and of war? When

God sends one of these scourges alone upon a land, it is a fearful visitation, and the land may well esteem itself smitten and afflicted by him, yet, "Thus saith the Lord God—*How much more when I send my four sore judgments upon Jerusalem?*" How much more when I combine these forces of destruction—when I let loose all the terrible enginery of my revengeful war, and drive across a rebellious land with all my fiery chariots together?

Is there famine among a people? It is indeed a horrible affliction! But this is only one of the awful arms of God's avenging wrath against guilty nations. The pestilence is only one. The noisome beast is but one, and the sword is but one. What if all the four be commissioned to smite and to destroy together a people who have broken their covenant with the Almighty, and defied his strength?

Is it no cause for thankfulness, my brethren, while we remember our transgressions, while we know and feel that as a nation we have sinned against the Lord with a high hand and an outstretched arm, and have provoked his righteous displeasure to the uttermost, that he is scourging us with only a single rod? Say, ye murmurers, ye heavy-tongued complainers, ye accusers of God's providence, you that hang your despondent heads, and are ready, like the prophet of Nineveh, when his gourd withered after the deep had spared him, to say, "It is better for us to die than to live"—say, are there no mercies left? Have all God's billows and his waves gone over you? Has he altogether forgotten to be gracious? Shame on you! There is no truth nor reason in your lamentations. You have still a glorious heritage, and the lines are fallen to you in pleasant places. Praise God, praise him with heart and voice, for you yourselves, this day, are living witnesses unto him, that his mercy endureth forever.

But, my brethren, looking simply at the war, we have abundant reason for praise and thanksgiving to Almighty

God, that even with respect to that, it is as well with us as it is.

We know now that this war was absolutely in store for us, and that it was inevitable. We see, now what our fathers did not, and what we wonder that they did not, that the seeds of it were unmistakable wrapt up in the very structure, at the first, of our American Union, and that the only question in regard to it, was a question of time, under the influence of causes operating according to no exact and clearly definable laws, yet operating as surely as heat and moisture on the seeds of grain that are planted in the earth. Looking back now through the vista of years, we can observe the successive stages through which this dreadful harvest, which it has fallen to the lot of the present generation to gather, has been developed and matured. We know what suns have warmed it, and what rains have given it sap. We know the period at which these evil seeds germinated, and can trace now the whole process of their growth, marking first the blade, and then the ear, until in these recent months we have seen the full corn in the ear.

We need not marvel at our fathers, or reproach them for their short-sightedness. They did not foresee the harvest from the seed. We, alas! did not foresee it from the blade, nor from the ear, and we questioned our very senses when the full corn appeared. We would not believe that the freest and happiest, and most prospered nation on the globe, could be rent with intestine war. We would not believe that any considerable portion of our fellow citizens could be so frenzied, so bereft of sense and conscience, as to rise in serious revolt against the constitution and the laws. We supposed that the flag of the Union which our fathers baptized with their blood, under which they fought and conquered, and died for freedom and the right, was sacred in all American eyes; that next to the symbol of the covenant of God, it was the dearest and the sacredest thing on earth

to Americans, and we could not believe that American hands would assail it, and American feet trample it in the dust; and when such monstrous sacrilege was openly threatened, we scorned the threat, and when it was even done, we doubted. When the fiery front of war heaved itself upon our view, and the very roar of its thunder smote our ears, we said—it is not so, it cannot be—this is certainly some hideous dream that has come upon us sleeping. We were sleeping, and the war itself awakened us, so astounded by its unlooked for advent, that even awake we have come slowly to the consciousness of the terrible reality—and now, wondering at the mistakes of our fathers, we wonder more profoundly at our own. How is it that our eyes were so holden that we could not see? How is it that what should have been so apparent from the beginning to every mind, was not apparent at all even to our statesmen, or that if they saw it, they shut their eyes against it and disbelieved, hoping against hope? And how is it that while we have seen the seeds sprouting, and the green shoots growing in the field, and the tender blades springing upward, and the heads bursting into tassel, and the kernel forming in the husk, and the green of the unripe harvest verging day by day to yellow, we ourselves have been so utterly incredulous of that which all along we should have known was coming?

The war was inevitable. That which was sown to the wind, was predestined to bring forth the whirlwind. There was an “irrepressible conflict” in the land, which sooner or later was under a necessity to develop the state of things which to-day exists. Freedom and slavery cannot live peaceably together in the same house. Their natures and their interests are diverse, and as oil and water cannot be mingled, so these two cannot be harmonized. They antagonize each other always and everywhere. They are in conflict by the very constitution which God has established over the world, and no marriage bond which it is possible for

man to enact upon them, can ever force them into relations of harmony and love. This is a truth which Americans are bound to learn, and the sooner they come to it the better it will be for them.

I consider it a cause for thanksgiving to God, that this inevitable war of incompatible institutions has happened in our time—that providence has held it in reserve, until as a nation we have acquired strength to cope with it. Never in the whole history of the republic have we been in a better condition for meeting so tremendous an issue. While the South has made comparatively little progress in material strength or population, the North has grown to be itself a mighty empire, combining in its own power all the materials of greatness and of wealth, and whatever else appertains to the sinews of successful war. It is true, also, that there never has been a period in which the relative attitudes and conditions of political parties were so favorable as they are at this moment for meeting the exigencies of this great conflict. There never was, perhaps, until now, since the nation was begotten, a time in which all political parties in the Northern States could have been harmonized as they are, in their views of policy and of patriotism in dealing with such a rebellion. This is of God, who has chosen his own time, or rather who has prepared his own time for the development of his own purposes. And as heartily as I can thank him for not suffering this war to be precipitated on us sooner, can I thank him also for not withholding it longer. It is well, if the evil which must come, comes when we are possibly as ready as ever we could be, for meeting and enduring it. And who is there of us that would have bequeathed this terrible necessity to our children? I am sure, not one. It is the very passion of fathers to provide an inheritance for those whom they have begotten, and what inheritance can we imagine so worthy of us to leave to our offspring

when we die, as a country? Without this, any other would be worthless.

But there are other things connected with the war, for which thanksgiving is due to God. It is occasion for heartfelt joy and humble praise that the war has been confined within such narrow limits. True enough it has spread over a vast territory, but not so vast as we had reason at the first to fear. The wonder is, that it has found a limit so soon. Shall we not thank God for Maryland, so long wavering yet now faithful to the constitution? And for glorious little Delaware, like Bethlehem of old among the Princes of Judah, least in extent, except Rhode Island, of all the States, yet not least in virtue or in fame? Delaware, the very waves of the sea trumpeting her praises, as they dash along her coast! And for Western Virginia, faithful among the faithless, uttering from the ridges of the Alleghanies her burning protests against the treason that was calling to her? and for Missouri, breasting the floods, interposing herself as a mighty rock before the deluge that was bearing on against us? And is it no cause for gratitude to God, that giant old Kentucky has roused herself at length from her supineness, and has spoken out in voices of thunder for the Union of her fathers? Is it no cause for thanksgiving, that reaching her hand across the Mississippi and linking it with the hand of her sister Missouri, she has pledged her untarnished faith to stand side by side with her in this great conflict, and to be with her a wall of fire against which the waves of rebellion may dash and be consumed? Yes, indeed, my brethren, there is much to be thankful for in the war itself. Who could tell when it began that even the whole North would be united in resisting it? Who knew or could have guessed that all sections and all parties would rush together as they have done, to meet and resist, shoulder to shoulder, the aggressive forces of revolt that were marching on to dictate terms to the nation on the sacred hill of the capitol? Who knew

that even New Jersey was to be relied upon, or the great cities of New York and Philadelphia? Who could have answered with absolute certainty for the mighty Northwest? Or who could have foretold the generous and noble spirit with which the adherents of disappointed and defeated political parties, have, for the time being and for the occasion, thrown away their differences and their antipathies, and given themselves heart and soul and body to the support of an Administration to which in principle they were opposed, and whose incoming to power they had earnestly and honestly resisted? Really, it is wonderful, when we think of it, that God has brought the whole North so completely together in this fearful crisis, and harmonized into one so many conflicting minds. We can easily trace the events which have led to so happy a consummation. From the assembling of the last democratic convention in Charleston, to the conflagration kindled by rebel guns, that drove the gallant Anderson and his gallant men from their beleaguered fort in the harbor of that same accursed city, we can lay our fingers on the very points from which the influences came that have accomplished it, yet is it none the less of God, and none the less does he deserve the praise.

When we consider how in this marvellous unanimity of Northern minds and hearts, is seated the sure and only promise of our eventual success in overcoming the rebellion and re-establishing the ancient union of the States, the sole palladium of liberty on this continent, and of the hope of liberty in the world—then, and not sooner, shall we understand how vast the debt is, which in this particular, we owe to the providence of God.

There was a time, my brethren, when the nation stood upon the very verge of anarchy. There was a day when it seemed as if the turn of a finger might precipitate us into that dreadful gulf. The whole national fabric seemed ready to be dissolved. The South was in arms, and the North

was irresolute. The voices of public sentiment here, fell upon us like the sound of many waters. At the time when I preached my first sermon on the national crisis, and ventured to say that this rebellion must be crushed—that war, gigantic and energetic, was the only remedy for the occasion, I give you my word of honor, that I did not know whether I should ever preach again in this pulpit, so divided were we, so dissonant were the voices which from every side assailed my ear. And what was true of this community, was true of the country. Thank God, that day is passed. Thank God, we have a nation, and a government, and a people. Thank God, the disintegrating elements have cohered again, and, though a fierce and cruel and bitter war is upon us, which may cost us rivers of blood and incalculable treasure, we can yet stand up before the world and vindicate the honor of our ancient name. We are still the United States, respected abroad, and able to make ourselves respectable at home.

I am not sure that it is only for the circumstances of the war that we should praise God to-day; I am not sure, my brethren, but we should praise him for the *war*. War is a fearful remedy for political disorders, yet it is often a remedy, and sometimes the only availing one. Earthquakes, and volcanic eruptions and thunder storms have their necessary uses—so in the present imperfect state of human society have wars. This war may not have been simply inevitable, a fixed necessity of fate, but it may be found in the end that it was even a blessing to be desired. I can see many ways in which it may minister health and happiness to our nation, for which the cost of it, both in treasure and lives, will be an easy price. If it shall put an end forever to the aspirations and assumptions of the slave power, and inaugurate a system of gradual diminution, to end eventually in the extinction of that giant wrong—if it shall settle on a firmer and undisturbable basis the true theory of our political union,‡ if

it shall wash out the Augean stables of political demagogism and corruption; if it shall revive the ancient spirit of patriotism amongst us; if it shall teach us lessons of moderation in our political partizan strifes—above all, if it shall serve to impress upon our minds a due sense of the instability of all human things, of the utter insufficiency of mere human institutions to give permanent security and prosperity and peace to our nation, and to make us know that God only is our defender—then, in all coming time, we and our children to their latest generations will have cause for praising the providence which has sent it upon us. Its epoch we shall count forever the epoch of our grandest deliverance, and it will become in our national calendar what hitherto the war of the revolution has been.

And I must not close without affirming my conviction that hitherto the war in its progress has developed nothing at all but occasions for thankfulness. True it is we have not realized our hopes. We have not walked over this rebellion, and crushed it with exultant heel. We have not dashed it down with speedy and instant blows. And when we remember the manner of its commencement, how artful treason had for years been tampering with the powers of the government, how the treasury and the arsenals had been robbed, how the army had been corrupted, and the navy infected with its poison, how the forces of the national strength had been dissipated, and how we had literally been stripped almost to nakedness by the vile harpies that were preying on us—when we remember all this there is no cause for wonder that just vengeance has been so slow in its advances. The wonder is that we have done so much. I cannot but feel the profoundest amazement at the rapidity with which the nation has armed itself, and at the majestic force with which it has met and checked the rebellion at every point. I wonder that at the outset our enemies did not rush upon us and overwhelm us. I wonder that at a hundred points they did

not break through our lines and bring the war to our own door stones and firesides. So far from it, however, is the fact, that they have gained not one strategical point. On every side, except where a divided sentiment in two States has given them a little desperate foothold for the moment, we have hemmed them in as by a wall of fire, and made their own home the theatre of the conflict; and from many important points which they once occupied, already we have expelled them. How can we be sufficiently grateful that by God's help we have been enabled to hold the war in check until time has been afforded us for collecting and disciplining our armies, and for gathering our preparations, and fully girding ourselves to meet it. If we could hold it off in the moment of our utter unpreparedness, when it came upon us in our sleep, shall we not be able, now that we are awake and equipped and girded, to beat it back? Let no man feel an uncomfortable doubt. Already, in fact, the victory is gained. We needed nothing but delay, that delay we have wrested from our enemies, and now let them look to it, for the sword of the Lord and of Gideon is upon them.

Every hope upon which our enemies relied has failed them. They counted on a divided North. They counted on the sympathy of foreign nations. Cotton was their inevitable passport to the friendship and favor of the dominant European powers. They were sure of recognition, and they were sure of aid; but they at least have realized in their rebellion Rabshakeh's taunt of Israel, when he said, in the name of his master, to Hezekiah, "What confidence is this wherein thou trustest? Thou sayest, I have counsel and strength for war. Now, on whom doest thou trust when thou rebellest against me? Now behold thou trustest in the staff of a bruised reed, on which if a man lean, it shall go into his hand and pierce it." Where is their divided North? And where are their foreign supports and recognitions? They have found that in the North at least, if not in the South,

the spirit of '76 is still alive in the bosoms of the people, and that if cotton is king in Richmond, its absolute dominion has not yet been recognized either in London or in Paris. Could these facts have been known a year ago, does any one suppose that this rebellion would have transpired? Never. They have ventured upon a frozen stream whose ice has proved of insufficient thickness to support them. They have digged a pit and fallen into it themselves. So it ever has been, and so may God grant that it ever shall be with such excuseless conspirators and traitors.

I say therefore, my brethren, bad as our condition is, much as we have this day to fill us with grief and sadness, much as there is all around us in our afflicted land to call for mourning, and to beget shame in us, and deep humiliation of soul and spirit before God, we have also abundant occasion for joy, and for thanksgiving to the great disposer of events, that it is as well with us as it is, and that we have so many mercies left, so much to be thankful for now, and so much to hope for in the future.

We cannot fail to mingle our tears with the thousands that are weeping this day over their loved ones, fathers, husbands, brothers, sons, friends dear as brothers and as sons, that have fallen on the field of battle, or that are sighing in the prisons of our misguided foe. We lament for the honored dead, and we sympathize tenderly with the unhappy captives; yet we cannot but think that for the slain a happier lot has been appointed than for the survivors who bewail them. It is sweet and beautiful to die for one's country, and the names of Ellsworth, and Grebble, and Cameron, and Lyon, and Winthrop, and Baker, and of the hundreds more that already lie in their glorious graves, and of the thousands alive whose graves await them, shall never be forgotten, or cease to be cherished with grateful reverence and affection in the hearts of their countrymen; and our prisoners also shall re-

turn to us in a better day, to be rewarded a hundred fold for all their sufferings and their sacrifices.

Peace be to the ashes of the departed, and to us who live, with our brethren and friends in the prisons of the enemy, may God grant, now and ever, all needful grace to exemplify in our lives, whether prosperous or afflicted, the doctrine of the text—“*Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*”
Amen.