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THE GREAT PROMISE.

A

SERMON,

Preached at Providence, R. I., September 8, 1857,

BEFORE THE

AMERICAN BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

FOR

FOREIGN MISSIONS,

AT THEIR

FORTY-EIGHTH ANNUAL MEETING.

BY M. L. P. THOMPSON, D. D.

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1857.

AMERICAN BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS FOR FOREIGN MISSIONS.

PROVIDENCE, R. I., SEPT. 11, 1857.

Resolved, That the thanks of the Board be presented to the Rev. Dr. THOMPSON, for his Sermon delivered on Tuesday evening; and that he be requested to furnish a copy for publication.

Attest,

SAMUEL M. WORCESTER, *Rec. Secretary.*

S E R M O N .

MATTHEW XXVIII. 20.

AND LO, I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS, EVEN UNTO THE END OF THE WORLD.

THE natural process of our minds, on reading this text, is first to consider Jesus—to look with adoring wonder to Him from whose lips such remarkable and gracious words proceeded; then our thoughts are turned to the little company of faithful and favored men to whom Jesus spoke, hearing not for themselves alone, but for us also, and for all that should come after them, having like faith to theirs; and finally, we ponder the words, and try to understand their meaning, and to get the weight of them on our hearts.

Who speaks? To whom does he speak? What does he say? And what should be the influence on us of his words?

Such, brethren, shall be the plan of my discourse. I desire to speak to you as on my knees, as it seems to me Jesus would have me speak, and, as well as I am able, the things which he would have me speak, and which he himself would speak, if he were personally present in our assem

bly. It is not by hearing new things that we are to have our missionary spirit improved; but by gaining a deeper impression and sense of old things. We do not need that a dealing should be had with our natural intellects, but with our spiritual understanding and our hearts. It is my becoming and proper office, as your preacher, therefore, to seek to "stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance," that you may be mindful, when this hour is past, not of my words, but "of the words which were spoken before" by the Lord himself.

The eleven were in Galilee, waiting for Jesus in a certain "mountain where he had appointed them." In due time their faith and patience were rewarded. They saw him and worshiped him. "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

It has been suggested by some, that these words may not have been spoken by our Lord on that mountain in Galilee; that Matthew, in the brief conclusion of his Gospel, recorded them without necessarily implying that they were spoken at that particular place or time, and that the real scene of them was in the Mount of Olives, near to Bethany, on that more interesting and awful occasion when, having given his final instructions to the

disciples, ‘he lifted up his hands and blessed them, and while he blessed them, was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.’

There might possibly be something gained, through the influence of association, by adopting this view, and regarding the words of the text, with the exception of the words of that loving benediction which was yet upon the Savior’s lips when he was taken up, as the *last* which were uttered by him previous to his ascension. What is mainly important, however, is to know that Jesus uttered such words; and whether on a mountain of Galilee, or in Olivet; whether some days before he ascended, or only a moment before, is comparatively of little consequence to us.

Having laid his commandment on the disciples to go and disciple all nations, Jesus added this for their assurance—“And lo! I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”

I. Let us, then, consider — *Jesus*. What we want, my brethren, is to fix upon our minds a full impression of the true divinity of this gracious utterance. We want to feel that it is no less a being than God who speaks to us; else the words lose their power, and our interest in them ceases. We want this voice, “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world,” to come to us, clear and definite and unmistakable, from the highest glory. We want it to fall upon our ears and upon our hearts, from the very throne of the kingdom. It is not enough for us to know that Jesus is God, as we know ten thousand other

things, by a mere intellectual perception of them, which fails to bring them nigh to us, and to invest them with real and substantial forms. We want to know it in the living consciousness of our inmost souls, as we are sure the eleven knew it when they heard him speak, when they stood there on the mount, and he talked with them, and when they saw him ascend up into heaven, until a cloud received him out of their sight. They could say, in their Epistles to the churches, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life, (for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness and show unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us,) that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us." That is what we want, fellowship with them—fellowship with them in the knowledge of that peculiar experience which they had as companions of the Lord and eye-witnesses of his glory. We want to know and to feel that Jesus is God, having life in himself, and able to give life to as many as he will ; that "it is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers ; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in ; that bringeth the princes to nothing, and maketh the judges of the earth as vanity." What we want, before the words of Jesus in the text can fill us with joy as they should, and with strength and confidence and courage as they

should, and constrain us to all holy obedience as they should, is the grace to get upon our souls the full power of that other utterance of his, as we are sure it came upon the soul of his servant John in Patmos: "I am the first and the last; I am he that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive forevermore, amen; and have the keys of hell and of death."

If Jesus be not God, if he be not the Almighty, if he be not Lord of all things, Lord of heaven and Lord of earth, then there can be no binding force in his commandment, nor any ground of confidence to undertake so mighty an enterprise. We need the full sense of his divine authority, and of his divine power, to constrain our consciences, and to strengthen our hearts and our hands. What less than this could have been availing for the first disciples? What less can be availing for us? Disciple all nations! Make the faith and worship of Jesus universal! Are we with this Gospel to subdue the world, until 'every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father;' until the kingdoms of the world shall become his kingdoms, and he shall reign from the rising of the sun until the going down thereof? Is this the commandment? And shall it be undertaken? Can it be accomplished? Never, if Jesus be not God; but if Jesus be God, then *yes*. If Jesus be God, it is his right to require this of his servants; and if he be God, the work can and must be accomplished.

JESUS IS GOD. His resurrection from the dead has crowned him. This, in the thought of his

own mind, was the very ground and reason of the commandment. He “came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth; go ye, therefore, and disciple all nations.” Because I am God, and have authority to send you, Go! Because I am the Almighty, and have power to prosper you, Go! Go! because I am the Lord God Almighty, whom ye are bound to serve, and who is able both to defend his servants, and to crown their labors with success.

We need not listen to Isaiah, as with prophetic finger pointing to the manger at Bethlehem, he exclaims: “Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.” We need not dwell upon the vision that he saw of ‘the Lord sitting upon a throne high and lifted up, while his train filled the temple, and the seraphims stood and cried one unto another, saying, Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory;’ and then take testimony of John, that it was the glory of Christ that Isaiah saw. We need not study that saying in John’s gospel: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God—All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made;” and then go and gaze with that same John into the opened heaven, on the heavenly host adoring *God*, and on the company of redeemed men from the earth casting their crowns at his feet, and saying, “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory,

and honor, and power, for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created ;” or listen with him to that new song which they sing : “ Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing.” It is enough to see Jesus risen from the dead. In the hour of his last agony, “ the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others ; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God ; let him deliver him now if he will have him ; for he said, I am the Son of God.” Jesus did not come down from the cross. He did more than that. He died, and recovered himself from death. He descended into the grave, and returned again. To have come down from the cross would indeed have been a sign which might well have overwhelmed his enemies, and filled them with terrible conviction of his divinity. But that was not the sign which he gave. A more convincing sign was reserved for them, and for the world ; even the sign of his resurrection from the dead, the third day, according to his word, declaring him to be the Son of God more mightily than all the miracles he had ever wrought before, and than any miracles, which, while living, he might have wrought. Oh, had Jesus leaped from that cross to which accursed hands had nailed him, and assuming all the majesty of the hidden Godhead, smitten with sudden blindness and death that whole throng of brutal soldiery and insulting Jews, and then, spurning with indignant foot the polluted

earth, ascended through the clouds into heaven, in the sight of all that loved him, and that stood there beholding; had he done this, would there not have been proof enough that Jesus was very God to convince the world? But this, my brethren, would have been as nothing to the proof he furnished when, “having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that he should be holden of it,” he cleaved asunder the tomb, and came forth, and stood again in the midst of his disciples—as nothing to the proof they saw, when he came, the doors being shut where they were assembled, “and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you,” and bade the incredulous Thomas, “Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing;” to whom Thomas answered and said, “My Lord and my God”—as nothing to the proof they saw when he stood by them, and spoke with them there in that mountain, where, before he suffered, he appointed to show himself unto them—as nothing to the proof which they beheld in Olivet.

YES! JESUS IS GOD. It is God who says, “And lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.”

In this very utterance, my brethren, Jesus proclaims himself to be God, for it is nothing less than a *divine grace* which he announces.

II. We may consider *to whom* Jesus speaks. Surely not to the eleven, as such; not to the eleven, as men hasting to die, and to leave no inheritors of

the promised grace ; but to them as disciples, representing a succession of disciples never to be ended while the world stands. He speaks to his own servants, present and future, living and to live in endless generations. The terms of the announcement settle this for us.

Neither are we to understand the address of our Lord as directed, in such an exclusive sense, to the eleven as apostles, or as distinguished officially in any way from other disciples, as to lay on them the sole responsibility of the service which he had just exacted of them, or as to limit to them the grace which he now vouchsafes to pledge. Indeed, there is much good reason for supposing that the eleven were not alone with Jesus when the words were uttered, but that this manifestation of himself was the identical one mentioned by Paul in 1 Cor. xv. 6, at which it is said, "He was seen of above five hundred brethren at once." Some even have conjectured that there was at this time a general gathering of all those who at that early period had embraced the Christian faith. If this were so, then it was really the *church*, in the largest and most complete sense of that term, that Jesus had before him when he spoke.

True enough this is all uncertain. It cannot positively be affirmed that there was a soul with him in that mountain save the eleven. Let it be so. Let it be that he spoke to the eleven alone, as apostles and ministers. In part, it is very evident that his address had respect to them only, in their official character ; yet it was to them, as ministers of his church, as leaders and guides of the entire

body of his people. It was to them as representing the church in whose name they were to act, and with whom they were to be identified in all their labors. They stood before him as the present embodiment of the church in all ages. As such he laid on them this command, and as such he gave to them his promise.

If, in some sense, the promise may be regarded as made especially to Christ's ministers, engaged in their peculiar work, it is equally to be regarded, nevertheless, as made to all his disciples living and laboring for him. The promise must be looked upon as co-extensive with the command, and it would be quite idle for me to consume your time with showing that the command, in some aspects at least of the duty which it imposes, reaches to every disciple—to every member of that body of Christ, which is the church—not to the head only, but also to the hands and to the feet.

It is to the *church* that Jesus speaks. But to the church in what aspect? To the church in what attitude and what relation? To the church when, and where, and how employed?—To the church always? To the church absolutely and unconditionally? To the church doing what she will, and seeking what ends may please her?

“Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth: Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you;—

and lo! I am with you alway;—even unto the end of the world.”

It is not then to the church, absolutely and unconditionally; not to the church doing what she pleases, and seeking what ends she may propose unto herself; not to the church always, in any case—but to the church in an aspect well defined, and in an attitude and a relation clearly specified and described; to the church *doing her Lord's will—doing the commandment*, that the promise is accorded. “*Go ye therefore, and disciple all nations, and lo, I am with you alway.*”

Suppose, my brethren, that the church of the Redeemer were utterly to turn away from that distinct and specific work which he has given her to do. Suppose that, instead of going and discipling all nations, she should just content herself with occupying and strengthening the position in the world which she has already acquired—with adorning and beautifying her present possessions, and with making herself more august and dignified in the sight of men, in the limited sphere to which her existence is now confined. Suppose she were to conclude, that in the way of extension she had done already enough; that the gospel had been preached far enough; and that, as to the nations now sitting in darkness, for her, they might sit there still and forever, for she would do no more; she would cultivate the ground she had, and leave the deserts to their desolation. Suppose this, and where then would be the promise? When there was no longer any church in the world going and

discipling all nations, whose would the promise be, and who might take its consolations?

If, when Jesus was ascended into heaven, the church of the first disciples had said: Now “blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ,” — we will rejoice and be glad in him, for the salvation which he hath brought unto us, and here in Jerusalem, and in all Judea we will proclaim his grace and make disciples in his name, but we will not go discipling all nations — we will not leave our pleasant homes, and the green fields of our native land — we will not venture among the rude and barbarous peoples — here will we stay, and here shall the church be glorious. Had they said so, and done so, then whose would have been the promise? Not theirs. Who on earth might have claimed it? No man. The promise is to *the church discipling all nations* — to the church distinctly and specifically so employed, and employed no otherwise. It is to no self-seeking, or self-glorifying, or self-saving church, and it is to no home-abiding church, but to a church spreading herself abroad, seeking the glory of Christ and the extension of his kingdom, and the salvation of the world.

The church of Jesus Christ has her own distinct and peculiar mission to perform. He has given her her work to do. He has defined her vocation, and appointed her task. She is to conquer the world for him. She is, by the gospel, to subdue all nations to the obedience of the faith. She is to go forth in his name, and with his word, to make

disciples of all men. From this work she is not at liberty to turn aside, or in it ever to rest. She must subordinate it to nothing, but all things else to it. To bring in Christ's universal kingdom, to fill the earth with the knowledge of him, as the waters cover the sea, to make his name glorious in every place and a sound of joy to every ear—this is the great and paramount end of her being and continuance here upon the earth. She would be no church of Jesus Christ out of this relation. She would be an army of aliens, and a synagogue of Satan. A definition of the church was given by our Lord himself, when he said, “Ye are the light of the *world*, a city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.” And Christ's own sense of what his church would be, departing from his design respecting her, is expressed when having described her as “the salt of the earth,” he said: “But if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and to be trodden under foot of men.”

No, my brethren, our blessed Lord does not say, “And lo, I am with you alway,” to any church but to one going forth to battle for him against the irreligion, and unbelief, and idolatrous superstitions of the whole world. He says it to a church in arms for him, against all the powers of the kingdom of darkness in the earth. He says it as the great Captain of salvation, to the host of his elect gathered for the subjugation of all his foes. It is dis-

tinctly in view of the universal battle-field—in view of the enemy to be encountered—in view of the tumults, and the toils, and the terrors of that strife which has for its object nothing less than the conquest of all nations, that he says, Go, and I am with you alway. It is not, *Stay*, and I am with you, but *Go*, and I am with you. It is not, Do what you will, and I am with you ; but Go, fight for me—Go, plant the standard of my cross on every land and on every island—Go, subdue the whole earth in my name, “And lo ! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.”

In the very aim and essence of her being, the church is a missionary church, a church militant against the whole empire of darkness in the world, designed and fashioned by her Lord for aggressive and onward movement, for conflict and conquest ; and that, unceasingly, till a final and complete victory shall be obtained. For this great and glorious object the church exists, and it is only with reference to it, and to the exigencies of her unavoidable state in connection with it, that the promise of my text is given to her.

Would, my brethren, that this were better understood. Would to God, that the entire church could be made to realize the fact, that there is no promise of the gracious presence of her Lord in the midst of her, only as she is actually employed in her proper work, moving on to take possession of the earth for him.

III. We are to consider the promise. *What* does Jesus say ?

We have seen that the promise is made to the church discipling all nations. It is made to the church engaged in an enterprise which even to this day she has upon her hands, and which is to occupy her energies in all future time. It is not, therefore, the promise of a grace which was soon and suddenly to terminate, leaving the church in the very midst of her labors and her wants, but of a grace which was to continue as long as the exigency should continue which created the necessity for it, "even unto the end of the world."

Literally, as you are aware, the reading from the Greek is—to the end of the age—or, to the finishing of the dispensation, or of the time; which some, regarding the promise as made especially to our Lord's first disciples, and as relating to those miraculous powers with which they were to be endowed, have understood to refer to their lifetime, or to the period about to terminate with the destruction of Jerusalem and the dissolution of the Jewish commonwealth.

Evidently, however, the age intended by our Lord, was that in which his gospel was to be preached; in which the work was to be done which he had just laid by commandment on his church, and with reference to which the promise of his gracious presence was given to her. It was the age in which all nations were to be discipled—in which the church was to be passing through the conflicts and perils of her militant state. It is, therefore, the end of the world, strictly and properly speaking, that is meant. So far, the promise extends. Jesus declares that he will be with his

obedient church through the entire period of her warfare, until time shall end, and her militant shall be exchanged for her triumphant state.

And, brethren, I am not well satisfied with that word, "*alway*," in the text. It presents its idea too comprehensively and massively. I like far better the literal and exact rendering of the original—*all days*. It is not for us, with this promise in our hands, to be looking off to the end of the world, and blessing ourselves with the assurance that the gracious presence of our Lord is to be with us even until then ; but we are joyfully to recognize the absolute coincidence of the promised grace with each intervening space. We are not to cast our thoughts onward to the final consummation, and expect that Jesus will be with us until that is reached, but we are to think of each successive day that is to elapse before that final day shall come, and expect that Jesus will be with us *each day*. We are to look upon the church in her continual march, through all her vicissitudes of conflict and of danger, going not alone any day, but *all days*, accompanied, and guided, and prospered by her almighty Lord.

"And lo! *I am with you*." Brethren, what is that? In what sense does Jesus promise to be *with* his faithful and obedient Church? There is no difficulty in understanding him. As it is said, "And the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man," so is the promise of our Lord, "Lo, I am with you," and ye shall *prosper* in the work which I have given you to do. Ye shall have success in it; ye shall triumph gloriously; and in due time, "the kingdom and dominion, and the

greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.”

1. I am with you in sympathy and in desire. My *heart* is with you. O, blessed Jesus! can there ever be a doubt of this in the minds of any of thy people? Can we ever question with ourselves, as we go forth obeying thy command to disciple the nations, whether on thy throne thou rememberest us, and carest for us, and hast delight in our work? We know that thou art with us, and that no heart in all the universe like thine own is concerned for the enterprise which thou hast committed to our hands. Is not Jesus with us, my brethren? Is he not with us in our counsels? Is he not with us in our prayers? Is he not with us in our labors? Is he not with us in every thought we think, in every word we speak, in every act we do for him, for the furtherance of his cause and the upbuilding of his kingdom? Whose servants are we? Are we not *his* servants? Whose work are we performing? Is it not *his* work? Whose kingdom are we seeking to promote? Is it not *his* kingdom? and is not *he* with us? He, of all the beings on earth or in heaven, is the being whom we should suspect last of all of not being with us. Nay, whomsoever else we might suspect of looking with indifference, or with feeble interest on the work in which we are engaged, he is the being on whom suspicion in this regard can never fall. Men may fail us; the kings and the princes of this world may look on us in our gospel work with unconcern, or even with hostile eyes; professed friends may

prove treacherous and deceitful ; but there is One higher than all men, higher than all earthly potentates ; one Friend dearer than all friends, whose fidelity may be trusted forever, and of whose friendly sympathies we never can be deprived — Jesus, with all the capacity of his infinite heart, is with us. He looks down upon us from that height of glory to which he is exalted, and yearns over us, and over the enterprise committed to us, with an interest which no creature, no angel even, can ever fully comprehend.

Why, my dear brethren, we ought not to require the word of our Redeemer's promise to assure us of this. It is enough to know that we have but entered into his labors ; for this salvation " first began to be preached by the Lord himself." He inaugurated, personally, the work in which we are engaged. And think you that the zeal which consumed him consumed itself ? Was it quenched by the agonies and blood of Calvary ? Who is he that sits on the throne of heaven, but the very same that hung upon the cross ? — the very same that, by the shedding of his blood, was made " the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world ? " — the very same who, after his resurrection from the dead, in one of his appearances to his disciples, when they doubted and were amazed before him, supposing that it was a spirit and not his real self that they beheld, after he had persuaded them by infallible signs, " opened their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and

that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem?" And now, when we go forth preaching that gospel to the nations, and discipling them to its faith, is not *he* with us? Has Jesus forgotten? Has he ceased to care? Oh, Christian brethren, whatever else we doubt, let us never dare to doubt that we have the sympathy of Jesus in our missionary work. It would be impious to question this. Nay, verily, the heart of the Lord is with us.

2. I am with you by my power and by my providence. My *hand* is with you. The sympathy of Christ is not a barren sympathy, like the sympathy of some men. It is not his *heart* only that he gives, but his *hand* with it. He pledges to the Church the effectual co-operation of his omnipotence.

"All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth; go ye, therefore, and disciple all nations; and lo, I am with you"—with you, to defend you against your enemies, to defeat their counsels, and to bring all their devices to nought; with you, to strengthen you in every conflict, and to make you victorious; with you, to overthrow the mountains and to cast up the valleys, and to make a highway before you in all your goings; with you, to make all things work together for your good, to bring good out of evil, light out of darkness, order out of confusion; with you, to cause even the wrath of men to serve your purposes, and to restrain the remainder; with you, sometimes indeed 'riding on the wings of the wind, making darkness my secret place, and my pavilion round about me dark waters and thick clouds of the sky,' yet truly with you,

ordering your paths and developing your conclusions, to make your paths straight, and your conclusions glorious. "Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. Behold, all they that are incensed against thee shall be ashamed and confounded; they shall be as nothing; and they that strive with thee shall perish. For I the Lord will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee. Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. Behold, I will make thee a new threshing instrument having teeth; and thou shalt thresh the mountains and beat them small, and make the hills as chaff. Thou shalt fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them, and thou shalt rejoice in the Lord, and glory in the Holy One of Israel."

Such, brethren, is the promise which Jesus gives. His divine power shall accompany his obedient Church, and, though weak in herself, she shall be strong in him to do his will.

3. With the assurance of our Lord's everlasting sympathy, and of the effectual help of his omnipotence, there is included also the pledge of his *perpetual presence by his Spirit*, to enlighten and guide, and comfort and bless his people.

We are not to think of Jesus simply as our infinite Friend far distant in the heavens, remembering us there, where he sits in glory on his throne, and caring for us, and deeply concerned

for our cause ; nor are we to think of him simply as ruling and reigning for our good, overlooking the affairs of his kingdom, and ordering all things, with however wise and gracious a reference to our advantage, or with whatever infallible certainty of compassing his ends. We are to understand that by his Spirit, his presence with us is a real presence ; that he, is with us in very deed, a God at hand and not afar off, ready with all-sufficient grace to sustain us in every emergency ; to whom we may go in every hour of trial, in every danger and every distress, in all our perplexities and our fears, just the same as if he were personally with us and we beheld him with our eyes. “ If ye love me, keep my commandments, and I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever, even the Spirit of Truth ; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him ; but ye know him ; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless : I will come to you.”

It is in no figure, my brethren, that Jesus says to us, “ Lo, I am with you,” but he speaks plainly. It is even so. The Lord is *with* his people.

4. Is it not, also, somewhat in the way of *warning* that Jesus speaks ? Is there not a caution in his words ? Do we not see a finger of faithful admonition lifted towards us when he says, “ All power is given unto me. Go ye, therefore, and disciple all nations, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you ; and lo, I am with you alway ?” Are we not reminded that our labor is to be performed under the cease-

less inspection of his eye? Does he not seem to be telling us of that solemn office which appertains to him as the searcher of hearts, and the trier of reins? Does he not seem to be purposely directing our thoughts to that day when he will judge his servants, and render to every one according to his works?

“And lo, I am with you.” O, my soul, receive the comfort of this assurance; and O, my soul, be not unmindful of the warning. Jesus is with thee, in the faithful remembrance and unfailing sympathies of his infinite heart. Jesus is with thee, by his all-conquering and sustaining power. Jesus is with thee, by his comforting and guiding Spirit; and Jesus is with thee, also, *by his searching and trying eye*. As thy Master, he is with thee, to think on thee and to care for thee; to help thee and to uphold thee; to instruct thee and to bless thee; and, in the end, to judge thee and to reward thee.

IV. Let us consider, very briefly, in conclusion, the practical influence which these words of Jesus should have upon our minds, and—

1. As it respects our judgment of the *sum* of Christian duty here upon the earth. Ten thousand duties demand our attention and our diligence; everywhere there is labor to be performed; labor on ourselves, and labor on other men; labor in the church, and labor in the world, and labor in our own families. But the one end of all labors—the sum of all duties—is to speed on the conquest of the world for Christ. Nothing is duty which does not tend to this. Nothing is great, or glorious, or good, which does not serve directly or indirectly to

hasten it. He is no disciple of Jesus, who is not living for it. He is no disciple of Jesus, with whom all things else are not subordinated to it. This is the end comprehending all ends at which we are to aim. It is the end for which Jesus reigns on his mediatorial throne, and for which he is ceaselessly directing all the energies of his kingdom ; and it is the end to which should be directed all the energies of his church on earth.

We must look upon the world as a revolted empire of God's dominions, and upon the Church of Christ as an army organized and established within its borders for the re-subjection of it to its rightful Lord. In this view, a thousand things are, indeed, imperative on the Church, not directly tending to the accomplishment of her great object. She must care for herself and for her camp. She must nurture herself, and husband her resources. She must strengthen and make sure the positions she has already taken, and multiply, in every direction, the arms and sinews of her war. She must train her soldiers, and raise up and prepare the men who are to be leaders of her host ; but she must do all these things solely with reference to her greater efficiency as an army of aggression and conquest. She must never look upon herself as doing her proper work, as fulfilling her proper mission, except when she is casting forward her bands of fighting men, and taking possession of new ground in her great Commander's name. She is doing nothing, in fact, when she is not advancing her arms against the foe ; nothing, when she is not spreading herself out on the enemy's territory, and

subduing and annexing it; nothing, when she is not “enlarging the place of her tent, and stretching forth the curtains of her habitations.” The cry of the host must be forever, *Onward!* They that lead must cry it to them that follow; and they that follow must cry it to them that lead; and from front to rear, from rear to front, cry must meet cry, *Onward! onward!* until the last enemy has been met, and the last foot of earth has been subjected.

2. In the second place, *courage*, my brethren! *courage!* Think *who* is on our side. Think who it is that says, “And lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.” “The Lord of hosts is with us: the God of Jacob is our refuge.” And hear ye the word of the Lord: “Be still and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the heathen; I will be exalted in the earth.”

“O clap your hands, all ye people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph: For the Lord most high is terrible; he is a great king over all the earth. He shall subdue the people under us, and the nations under our feet. He shall choose our inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob whom he loved. God is gone up with a shout; the Lord with the sound of a trumpet. Sing praises unto God, sing praises; sing praises unto our king, sing praises: For God is the king of all the earth; sing ye praises with the understanding. God reigneth over the heathen; God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness. The princes of the people are gathered together, even the people of the God of Abraham:
For the shields of the earth belong unto God; he is greatly exalted.”

There is no fear but we shall conquer in this war, for “if the Lord be for us, who can be against us?” Let

“The kings of the earth set themselves,
And the rulers take counsel together
Against the Lord, and against his Anointed, saying,
Let us break their bands asunder,
And cast away their cords from us.
He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh.
The Lord shall have them in derision.”

Oh, my brethren, sometimes we are tempted to despond. Sometimes, looking at the feebleness of all human resources, and at the magnitude of the enterprise in which we are engaged, we are ready even to despair. But alas, for us! Alas, for our blindness and our folly! Like Elisha's servant in Dothan, when he saw the "horses and the chariots and the great host" which the king of Syria had sent up to take Elisha, but could not see that "the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about him" for his defence, who cried, in his terror, "Alas, my master! how shall we do?"—so we often are at our wit's end, and can see no way of deliverance before us. Oh, could our eyes be opened when we are thus perplexed, as the eyes of Elisha's servant were when Elisha prayed for him, what wonders should we behold! Should we not see "the chariots of God which are twenty thousand—even thousands of angels, and the Lord among them as in Sinai?" More than Israel saw in the wilderness—more than the pillar of cloud by day, and of fire by night, should our eyes behold—even Jesus, and the host of his mighty ones encamping round about us.

Let us arm ourselves with the strength of this assurance. Let us be "strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." "Be strong, O Zerubabel, saith the Lord; be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedech, the high priest; and be strong, all ye people of the land, and work: for I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts."

Finally; there should abide with us, continually, all the weight of that solemn admonition which our text conveys. A holy fear should take possession

of our minds ; for oh, the Lord is here, and the Lord's eyes are looking on us ! How should we cleanse ourselves and keep ourselves from every evil thing !—How humble should we be ; how devoted and how earnest in our Master's cause ! How watchful against everything that can be offensive in his sight, and how faithful and courageous and steadfast in doing his will !

We need not be told, to stimulate us in the warfare to which we have been called, that the centuries are looking down upon us, or that the eyes of the world are beholding us. A mightier thought than was ever invoked on battle-fields, to inflame the ardor of men rushing to any carnal strife, should rouse and animate our souls. Jesus is here, and the eyes of Jesus are fixed upon us !

We are, indeed, a spectacle unto angels and unto men ; but this is little in comparison with the fact that we are living and acting, day by day, under the eyes of Him who loved us and gave himself for us, and who so soon shall sit in judgment on our works. Oh, let us carry with us this word of Jesus—*Lo, I am with you*, wherever we go, whatever we do. At home, abroad, preaching, praying, giving, counseling together, toiling any where, any way, for the advancement of the Redeemer's cause, let it ring upon our ears and penetrate our hearts. *Lo, I am with you*. Let it strengthen our courage, let it inflame our zeal, and constrain all the affections of our souls, until that blessed day shall come when, having been with us on earth, and found us faithful, he shall admit us to be with him, and behold his glory in his kingdom.