
DISTRACTED WITH MUCH SERVING
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"Martha was distracted with much serving." Luke 10:40.

THE preacher will have one hearer tonight to whom his text will be amazingly applicable—himself! Here we have meeting after meeting and engagement after engagement. We are always working as hard as we can, but we have put on much extra canvas just now, serving much and not being exempt from Martha's sin of being distracted with much serving. I should not wonder but what there may be some others here besides the preacher who may have fallen into the same state of mind and, perhaps, just now while engaged more than ever in God's work, it may be well for us to pull ourselves up a little and look around us, and see what state we are in, lest, like Martha, we get more and more distracted, till at last we speak as we ought not to speak and begin to upbraid others who are less wrong than ourselves!

I. We will first say a little on this point—WHAT WAS IT THAT MARTHA WAS PROBABLY DISTRACTED ABOUT?

Her fault was not that she served. Oh, that is no fault! The condition of a servant should be the condition of every Christian. "I serve," should be the motto of all the princes of the royal family of God! It was not her fault that she had "much serving." We cannot do too much. Let us do all that we possibly can—head, heart and hands—let every single power and passion of our nature be engaged in the Master's service! "Hereby shall you be My disciples, if you bring forth much fruit." It was no fault of hers that she was

busy preparing a feast for the Master. Happy Martha to have an opportunity of entertaining so blessed a guest! And happy Martha too, to have the spirit to throw her whole soul so heartily into the engagement. But her fault was that she grew “distracted with much serving,” so that she forgot Him and only remembered the service! She overrode her union with Christ by her service of Christ—and herein was the mischief.

I do not know what particular part of the service it was that distracted her, but I do know that any part of it distracts me, sometimes, and that as the minister of this church, with our large college and with all sorts of work from morning till night, it is the easiest and most natural thing in the world to get “distracted with much serving,” and to get into such a state of head and heart that it is almost impossible to sit at the Saviour’s feet and at the same time to be serving Him as we ought to do. We ought to be Martha and Mary rolled into one. We should do much service and yet have much communion at the same time.

Martha’s fault, then, was that she grew bothered. In thinking this matter over, I thought she might, perhaps, have been distracted in this way. She was the housewife and there were a great many guests coming—more than she had expected—and she thought there was not enough in the house for them. “Surely,” she said, “I have provided for only fifty, and here are a hundred! What shall I do? I did not ask that person over there to come, I am sure, but there is no getting rid of him. I wish I had laid in more store, I told Mary so. I told her there would be more, but she said, ‘No, provide for only so many.’ I do not believe there is enough.” So she fretted over that—and any good housewife might be supposed to do the same. How often have you and I, who are serving God, fretted in the same way? We have said, “Oh, what can our poor little church do? How can such a sum of money be raised? There is much more needed than we shall ever get!” The minister has come before his congregation and has felt —“One, two, three, four, five, yes, five loaves—and these only barley loaves—and a few fishes, and these but small. What are they among so many? I wish I

had a narrower sphere of labor and had fewer people dependent upon my exertions!" This is how we have sometimes thought. Then at other seasons we have said— "How shall I keep on? I have so little strength. I have scarcely had power to do good up till now, how shall I be sustained to the end of the journey?" We begin calculating and fear there is not enough meat in the house. With a sincere desire that every child of God should be supplied and that not a single guest at the table should go unfed, we begin to be bothered because we think there will not be enough!

I do not know what it was that bothered Martha, but I should not wonder if she got distracted about the servants. She had said to one, "Now, you must prepare the dish and mind it is to be done in a certain way. And you, Mary, are to prepare the other dish, and you the other one." There is an old proverb which says, "The more servants, the more plagues." I do not think it is a true proverb, but some people have found it to be so. Perhaps Martha did. Perhaps there was one letting that roast burn, and another spoiling another roast—and so, turning round from one to another, Martha said, "It seems as if I ought to be everywhere. There is nothing done unless I am looking after all these people. They are sure to be getting into some mischief or other! I need a hundred hands to do everything myself, or else a hundred eyes to look after those who are doing it." How often Christian ministers, especially, and each Christian in his own position, gets into this same state. You think, "Surely I thought I could trust such and such a believer with such a work, but how he blunders at it! I can never give it to him to do again!" Then you try another with a certain duty that is very important and that goes wrong. If you have a great machine to work, it is not often, but when there is some cog gets off, or some band that gets snapped, or some wheel that gets out of order—and when one has to look after all these things and to see not only to one's own personal work, but to the work of all these different people and to be sure that they are all kept in their proper place, it is no wonder that one sometimes feels—"Dear me! I cannot manage all these people!" And so one gets "distracted with much serving."

Moreover, very frequently you find that very sad and grave mistakes have been made in things which you thought nobody could make a mistake about. Perhaps you find out that you have been the author of the mistake, yourself, and then you are bothered again. You say, "How can I set that right? How can I retrace that false step? By what possible means can I undo such and such a thing that has been done?" I suppose that if a captain in battle were to leave his position in the centre of the camp and go flying about here and there, he would be pretty sure to lose the victory—and some of us do just that. We have not patience enough to sit still in the centre and just to look to the work as a whole, and keep ourselves calm and quiet. We get annoyed over every little thing and about every trifle. We get bothered, in fact, about the much serving. Now, there is a good motive at the bottom of all this—it is a desire to serve Christ well. It is a wish to do His service in the best, most useful, creditable and successful manner. But there is mischief in it, as we shall have to show, by and by. Oh, how my soul longs to have this church a perfect church! How I long to see every one of you at work for Christ! How I desire myself, especially, to preach every time with fire, force and energy! And yet I go home to my bed, sometimes, and toss there because I cannot preach up to my own standard, imperfect as that is. And how I mourn sometimes over this or that brother who does not seem to understand the dignity of his profession, nor live up to the holiness which becomes the anointed of God and the blood washed in the fountain which Christ has filled. Oh, dear friends, the being annoyed with much serving is so easy in my case, and I only instance myself because I know that as a face answers to a mirror, so the heart of man answers to man. I suppose you all, sometimes, get into this state—and in proportion as you are serving Christ will be your temptation to get distracted with much serving!

We have already said that you may be bothered about a great many things. It is amazing how many things there are to annoy one even about an ordinary service. If you are responsible for the service, you are

distracted as to whether you have got the right text and as to whether you have selected the right hymns. You pray that God would bless the word, and that is right enough, but you are distracted about it. When the hymn is given out, you are bothered, perhaps, as to whether it will be sung well, or whether the people will break down. Perhaps there is some discord and if you are anxious to have everything right, you get annoyed about that. Then you are bothered, possibly, about where the people are to sit. Even such things as these will come across the mind and I should not wonder if my brothers, the deacons and elders, get distracted about them as well as the minister! They perhaps get to thinking —“Dear me, there is Mr. So and So over there. I am glad to see him here and I hope the word will be blessed.” Then you get wrong thoughts about such and such persons and wonder how they will like such and such expressions—and so on. And so, instead of enjoying the service and entering into the soul of it, you are thinking, “I hope it will all go well. I hope the preacher will not use some of those naughty sayings of his that shock the ladies. I hope he will not say any of his rough things tonight.” And so you get distracted. Instead of enjoying the word as it is preached, and receiving it as it is delivered, there is an anxiety about this and about that, and about 50 other things! And so we are distracted with much serving.

I have thus laid the stress upon the ministry, because that is the service of God in a special manner. But you Sunday school teachers, if you are very anxious about your class—and remember, you ought not to be teachers if you are not anxious—you will, perhaps, get bothered by the class by looking more to the outward items of your work than to the spirituality of it. You tract distributors may be doing a great work, but you may get to be more careful about the externals of it than you are about the internals. You City Missionaries—for there are some such here—may also get to think more of the filling up of your journal and about paying a certain quantity of visits, than about living near to God and going in the strength of the Most High to your work. And if so, you will fall into the blunder of poor Martha. With all your zeal for Christ, you will disqualify yourself for any

great usefulness and, instead of getting a word of comfort and commendation, you will only get a rebuke from the Lord who will warn you that Mary chose the good part, while Martha, in some degree, despised it! I hope you will not misunderstand me— I would not have you do less than you now do. No, the more the better! I would not for a moment dissuade you from the utmost possible efforts which your zeal can suggest. Far be it for me to say, “Slacken yourselves in your sowing, or stop yourselves in your plowing.” No, go to the end of the field and back again—and have no rest until the day’s work is over! On, on, on, as the racehorse to the finish line, as the arrow to the target! On, as the world speeds on evermore in its own predestinated orbit! On, for God calls you to work while it is called today! On, for souls are perishing! On, for He is worthy for whom you would do this and Christ deserves your utmost labor at the utmost power of your whole spirit. But oh, take care that these labours do not take the place of Christ! Take care that you do not forget the Master in thinking about the dinner that you are going to put on the table for Him. Remember that He is still to be first in your thoughts—first in the morning and last at night—and that after all, while it is good to serve, it must always be attended by sitting at the Saviour’s feet, or else you will not get a reward, but a rebuke.

II. Anyone here can work out that thought if he understands anything of the spiritual life and, therefore, I will now notice, in the second place, WHAT MARTHA LOST WHILE SHE WAS THUS DISTRACTED ABOUT WITH MUCH SERVING.

She was losing what she could not get at any other time. Jesus Christ was not always at their house. She could at any time prepare a feast, but she could not, at all times hear His voice. His visits are not such everyday things with believers that they can afford to lose them. Beloved, when we come to God’s house and especially when we come to Christ’s table, I think we ought to say to ourselves, “Now, at any rate, I will bid my Martha type cares be gone. I can attend to them when I have done. There is plenty of time, besides, for my cares, even for my cares for Christ. But

now that the Lord is here, now that His people are met and He has promised to be with them, I shall have done with all my care and will give myself up to seek living and personal fellowship with Him. I will forget the dishes on the table, and the servants in the kitchen, and the fires, and everything else in the house—they must go as they may. I will give the best orders I can and then I will leave these things, for I am now going to get a privilege which I cannot always get—I am going to listen to His loving words as they come welling up fresh from my Saviour's heart. I am going to sit down right at His feet and drink in that which He would teach me." I think you will acknowledge that it is easier to serve than it is to commune. You will have observed that Joshua never grew weary when he was fighting with the Amalekites. It was hard work, but he did not get his arms weakened at it. But when Moses was on the top of the mountain in prayer, he had to have two others to hold his hands up! So is it with us. The more spiritual the exercise, the sooner the soul tires of it. We could keep on preaching better than we could keep on praying and it is easier to pray in public than it is to pray in secret. And let me say that even in secret it is easier to pray aloud than it is to sit still in your communion with Christ in the solemn silence of the soul. The choicest fruits are generally the hardest to grow—and the most spiritual engagements are the most difficult for us to manage. Beloved, we ought to have an eye to this! We ought to take care that we do not neglect these merely external things which are good enough in themselves, these outward attending to ordinances, a sermon, and so on—but we ought also to take care that while we remember these in their proper places, we do not let these things crowd out better things, but see to it that we get to Christ and enjoy living, personal fellowship with Him!

I am afraid, too, that at this time Martha was losing her reverence for her Saviour. You will ask how she did this. I do not like her expression, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Bid her that she help me." I do not think she ought to have spoken so to her Saviour. The words do not sound gentle. It seems as if she had got to be so familiar with waiting upon Him, that she had lost some of the due

respect which she should have paid to the great prophet of Israel, her Saviour and her Lord! This is one of the great dangers of those who serve God in the engagements of the sanctuary. I have had to confess and have mentioned it at ministers' meetings often, and have heard others confess that familiarity with sacred things is a temptation, very often, to lead us to read our Bibles for our congregations and not for ourselves—and to pray *ex officio* instead of praying with our whole hearts to God, ourselves, as though we ourselves needed the blessing! I am sure, too, that this is true of all the other officials in God's house. If a man is not saved, and becomes a minister, I do not think there is a chance of his being saved afterwards—he had better be anything than be an unsaved minister! I have noticed the same thing with regard to ushers and such like persons who are not converted before they take their offices—and I pray that those of you who have the filling up of such positions, never to appoint unconverted people, for they may not be converted afterwards. They will be so busy putting people into their seats and doing different things, that they will be distracted with much serving!

I did once say, and gave very great offence, indeed, by it, that the people who take down my sermons ought to have the grace of God in their hearts, or else they would not get a blessing, for certainly the mechanical act of writing must prevent the mind from entering in all its fullness into the meaning of the utterance! Our dear brothers here who take such an interest in our services, and to whose kind care and watchfulness we owe so much of the quiet we enjoy on Sabbath days with our great crowds, I am sure will excuse me—indeed I will not asked to be excused—when I say they must mind that these things do not run away with their spirituality, for there is such a fear in serving Christ that familiarity with His service will tend to make us lose our respect for Him! God grant that instead of this, our reverence for Christ may grow more and more—and the more we serve Him, the more humbly may we lie down at His feet.

But I think Martha was losing something more than this, and that was

her humility. If she had had much humility, she would have known that Mary was quite as good as she was, herself, and even a little better. But instead of that she took it upon herself to call Mary to account and even to complain to Christ about her. Many of our complaints about ministers and other good people show our own lack of humility. When I think that my brothers have many faults, I may well remember how many I have, myself—and instead of thinking how badly some people do, I ought to suspect that I might have done a great deal worse if I had been in their place! Indeed, it strikes me that the wise man is rather delighted that things are as well as they are, than displeased that they are not any better, for he knows that the best of men are but men at the best. He knows from his own experience that men are very likely to go fast in the way of error and to travel very slowly in the way of right—and so when he does see a cause prosper, or a holy deed done, he is grateful to God for it! Though he does wish that there were more, yet he is grateful to God that there is so much genuine piety, so much brotherly love, so much earnestness, so much prayerfulness as there is in the midst of the world. Let us not be so censorious, always judging this man and that man. If you had been in his place would you have done better? Have you to pay his wages at the last? Is he your servant? Then who are you that judge another's servant? To his own Master shall he stand or fall, and perhaps the very man you judge is more acceptable to God than you are! He does not serve so much as you do. He does not preach so many sermons, nor teach so many people, nor publish so many books and so on—but he sits more at Jesus' feet than you do, lives nearer to Christ and is bringing more honour to the Redeemer's name in his humble, quiet obscurity than you are with all your publicity and with all your work! It seems to me that we are in danger of losing our respect for our fellows if we think so much of ourselves.

Does it not strike you, by the way, that very often when we get distracted about much serving, there is pride at the bottom of it? Why do we want to serve God in this way or in that way? The preacher wants those who come to say, "What a capital sermon," and, "What a fine fellow he is!"

Or, perhaps, the hearers want people to say when they go out, "Now I enjoyed it!" When we do all this and when we want to see our Sunday school class very numerous, and to see many conversions, is it not just possible that at the bottom of it all we think, "it would look so well and we should be able to say that there is so much done"? Brother, if you say you have never felt like this, I can only say that you must be a very superior person. I know I have often felt like it and I here make confession of that wicked vanity which is so very common a complaint among us! We get distracted, not so much about whether Christ is served, but whether we shall be thought to have done anything and to have done it in a proper way! Oh, to shake one's self from all these beggarly rags of selfishness and to be content to do God's work to the best of one's ability and to say, "My Master, as to whether this looks well or does not look well in the sight of my fellows, is nothing! I gave it to You as You gave it to me. Accept it, my Master. Accept it because I love You and yet more, because You love me!"

Martha, then, was losing a great deal, but in addition to all this, she was also losing communion with Christ. Mrs. Rowe says somewhere—"If all the 12 apostles were to preach at the time when I ought to be in prayer, I would not leave my closet to hear one of them, or all of them." And another used to say—"I would not be kept out of my closet for all the world." But we are so easily turned away from sitting at Christ's feet to go to work! We so easily cut short the time of prayer for the sake of doing more for Christ! Communion with Christ is the most precious thing! And once lost, I do not care what you did in the time when you ought to have been communing with Christ—you may have won coppers, but you have lost sovereigns, for many have earned pence, but you have lost diamonds! For your own sake, and for the sake of those whom you would bless, you must see to it that sitting at the Saviour's feet is not neglected, even though it is under the specious pretext of waiting upon Him. The first thing for our soul's health, the first thing for His glory and the first thing for our own usefulness is to keep ourselves in perpetual communion with the Lord Jesus—and to see

that the vital spirituality of our religion is maintained over and above everything else in the world!

III. Having thus shown you what Martha lost, I would now like to OFFER SOME CONSIDERATIONS WHICH MAY PREVENT OUR BEING DISTRACTED WITH MUCH SERVING.

There is one consideration which has done me a deal of good and it is this—that the Lord Jesus got on very well before we were born, and it is very likely that He will get on exceedingly well when we are dead. When one thinks, “Oh, it is so important that such and such a point should be attended to. I must throw my whole strength into that.” And then the next day there seems to be something else so very necessary to be done! And then something goes amiss there and something else here—because one cannot be everywhere—and one begins to be troubled. It might well be said to us at such a time, “Now, are you really such a very important person after all?” Before we were born, God’s cause prospered and when we are dead, if we have been useful in our lives, we may, perhaps, leave a little gap for a little time, but it will soon be filled up and nobody will know it—and God’s cause will go on just as well without us! “I hope I do not inconvenience you,” said the gnat when he settled on the horn of a bull. “I did not know you were there,” said the bull. So, sometimes we seem to think, “I hope my absence will not cause inconvenience to such and such a cause.” And we might very well be answered, “Why, nobody knew you had anything to do with it! What difference will your absence make?” I do not want you to be careless about things on this account, but I do want you not to be distracted about them on this account. That is not a bad philosophy, though it is very often very wickedly applied—“It will be all be the same in a hundred years’ time.” Well, really, it will. Though the waves do go back, each one of them, after they have come up on the shore, yet none of them need regret that they die because every wave comes up beyond its fellow, and though there may be no advance in each one particular wave, but even a receding, yet the great ocean, itself, is going

forward! And so, if one little particular part of the work that has been left to me does not go on as I could wish, yet, O God, the great sea of Your church is going on in the fullness of its glory and it shall yet cover the sands of time and break upon the cliffs in an eternal spray of everlasting song! Let us be consoled in this matter. We are not such big bodies, after all, and if the thing which we devise may not succeed, yet that is not the main thing, for Jehovah still reigns and Christ still prospers!

There is another consideration—namely, that it is pretty certain that if we have done our best for our Master, our fretting will not improve things. Farmers have been troubled, sometimes, when the rain has been coming on at harvest time, but I never remember to have observed that the glass went up on that account, nor have I ever heard of a single raindrop whose little watery heart relented because of the sorrow of the agriculturist—it came down just the same. So, if our fretting over God's work would improve it, brothers and sisters, let us fret! Let us fret together in harmony! But if it really will not, and if after having done all we can in prayer and holy work, the thing does not go on quite as well as we could wish it, then let us say, "My Master, let it be according to Your will, and if it is according to Your mind, it is sure to be according to my mind, or if not, Lord, give me a better mind." May we be brought down to this—"Your will be done." If we had more of the spirit of Christian resignation, we should feel that as we cannot add one cubit to our own stature by our own thought, so neither can we add a single drachma of success to the church of God by all our unbelieving annoyances of ourselves about much serving!

Another consideration may help us—namely, that, after all, it is not our work, but His work in which we are engaged. I once heard a very pretty illustration from one of our ministers who said that he was moving his books from his study downstairs to another room which he had taken for his study upstairs, and his little boy said, "Papa, let me help you." The little boy was not able to do anything, but the father thought he must encourage his desire for industry and he said, "Yes, you can take that little book." But

the boy did not like to take the little book—he wanted to be a man and carry a big book. So he took a big book and got it to the foot of the stairs—and there he sank down and began to cry, for he could carry it no further. “And what,” said the father, “do you think it came to? Why, I had to carry the book upstairs and the boy, too!” So it is with us—we ask Christ to let us do something for Him and we are not satisfied to do only that—we have a natural and a very proper desire to be doing more. And so we undertake something which we cannot do and we sit down and fret as if the book never would get upstairs till we carried it up—and then the good Father comes along and takes the book and the little child, too, and carries both. Oh, instead of sitting down and crying, say, “My Father, I have the will to do this, but I cannot. Come and do it, my Father, for it is not my work, it is Your work.” You remember how Moses put it. I have often put it in that shape, and may the Master forgive me if I have done it unbelievably. Moses said, “Have I begotten all this people?” And often when the enormous weight of this church has pressed upon my soul, I have said to Christ, “Lord Jesus, I never married this church. It is no spouse of mine—it is Your wife and I am but as one that unties the laces of her shoes. I am but as one that pours water upon her feet that she may wash them. I am your present servant in the body, but the work is too much for me—You must do it. I have cared for Your flock till I could say that by night it has distressed me, and by day—*‘My joys and sorrows mingled seem As if they would consume me.’* But, Lord, I never bought this flock with blood. I am not to have this flock at the last! It is no flock of Mine. I am only Your hired shepherd. You will give me my wage, but oh, it is Yours to keep off the wolf! It is Yours to preserve each lamb and carry it in Your bosom and gently to lead each troubled one in the whole flock.” I think we must often do this—throw it off upon our God, for it is His burden, not ours. Cast all our care on Him, for He cares for us. And especially leaving the serving of Himself to Him whose service and whose work it really is.

Yet, again. Another thing that may comfort you is that sometimes

when things are going very badly, as we think, they are really going best. We do not always know, I fancy, when things are prospering. We imagine that the church is in good health because certain outward signs manifest themselves. Persons sometimes meet those of us who are rather stout, and they say, "How well you look!" I do not know about that. In our flesh there dwells no good thing. I am afraid that with some of us that is no very great sign of health and we might be glad enough to get rid of it. So sometimes when the church seems to be in a prosperous condition, we congratulate ourselves upon its wonderful healthiness. I do not know that we ought to do that! Sometimes the corn is best when an onlooker who does not understand it thinks it is worst—and sometimes when a little boat is borne on one side till she almost ships a sea through the tremendous gale that is blowing, the landsman thinks there is mischief ahead, but the old sailor who understands all about it says, "No, they are going at a great rate now." So, at times our ship lurches a bit, and seems as if it shipped whole seas of mischief, but it is then that the mighty breeze of the divine Spirit is really given to us! Do you not think, beloved, that some of the worst sermons that are ever preached, in the judgment of critics, are really the best? What a fool I have been dozens of times! I have thought in my conceit—"Well, now, that is a sermon that is likely to be blest"—and yet I have never heard of any blessing from it! I have thought at other times when I am finished, "Please, God, if I ever get that subject again, I will treat it better. What a poor sermon!" And yet two or three church meetings later, there will come one, two, three, perhaps half a dozen who were blessed and converted to God by my poor sermon. The Lord help me, then, to preach poor sermons and grant that I may always preach so that He will bless it, no matter whether I like it or whether you like it, as long as God is pleased to bless the sermon! I dare say you Sunday school teachers have often found that when you have done worst, God has done best, and He has permitted you to think it was worst in order that you might bring all the glory to His feet and praise His name!

Should it not be one reason, then, why we should cast off our care,

that we serve a very generous Master? There are some masters whom you cannot please—when you have done your best, they will still find some fault—for they have a quick eye for a fault. But our Lord Jesus seems as if He could not find fault with His people, and when we have done our best, though it is a poor, poor thing, yet He takes it and so transforms it by one touch of His own gracious and pierced hands, that we do not know it again! It is more His than ours and it is accepted by Him. He does not receive our works because of their intrinsic excellences, but because He worked them in us and because the motive for which we have performed them is honourable to Himself. Master Brooks says that, “Fond friends will accept crooked six pences, and a little piece of forget-me-not, and set great store by these love tokens.” Even so does the Saviour! He takes our poor worthless works which have no intrinsic value in them and sets great store by them, saying of that cup of cold water which you gave away and which you never thought of again— “Inasmuch as you did it unto one of the least of these, My brethren, you did it unto Me.” I do not doubt He will say at the last—“You did want to serve Me. You did long to honour Me and I accept it.” John Bunyan says if you send a servant off for the doctor and you tell him to go on horseback as fast as ever he can—and there is but a very sorry nag in the stable, so the man uses the spur and the whip, and tugs at the bridle, but cannot make the horse go—you see that the man would go if he could, and so you do not blame him. So, he says, our poor flesh is that sorry nag, but the spirit is willing, and Jesus Christ looks on us and says—“Truly the flesh is weak, he would go if he could.” And so He takes the will for the deed and does not blame us, but covers our faults in the mantle of His love.

Now I hope we are beginning to feel better. I hope we are not going to leave off caring about the work, but only leave off being bothered about it. I hope we shall be anxious to see souls saved and desirous to conduct all our labours for Christ in the best possible manner— but I hope we shall not sit down and worry ourselves as though there were no God to bless, no Christ to perfume our works with the incense of His merits and no Holy

Spirit to make our very infirmities yield His glory! Let us remember that our Father lives, that our God lives, that He who brings good out of evil lives. Let us set up our banners in His name and go forward rejoicing that He is with us and will be with us to the end!

Come, you Marys—if you have been chastened, mind not the chastening! Your living near to Christ is “that good part”; always stay there. Serve the Master, but do not break your fellowship. Do all that in you lies for Christ, but also sit down under His shadow and let His fruit be sweet to your taste. If we sometimes did less, we should do more. If we had fewer outward engagement and more private dealings with God, we should be richer. The best commerce is commerce with heaven. The richest merchants are those who negotiate with a covenant God. Those who get the largest estates are those who have learned to traffic in heaven’s markets. If you would be strong, live upon the promises! If you would be happy, live with the promise keeper. If you would be mighty to win souls, be mighty on your knees! And if you would be like your Master with a shining face among the multitude, be much with your Master where He is transfigured upon the Mount.

I preach but poorly to you, but I must not begin to be distracted about that. Here I would leave the matter, only I would to God that you all had an interest in the things I have been speaking of! Some of you do not care to serve God at all. You serve yourselves—you serve your own passions. May the Lord bring you to serve Him—and the door of service is at the cross. The way to begin to be a servant is to go to the place where He took upon Himself the form of a servant and was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Trust Jesus. This is the work of God, if you would do it, that you believe on Him whom He has sent. May God enable you now to trust His dear Son with all your hearts! And then after that may you go and serve Him, and serve Him effectively—but God grant that you be not “distracted with much serving.”