

THE GRAVE WHERE THE LORD LAY

A SERMON

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“Come, see the place where the Lord lay.” Matthew 28:6

WE see how vain are all the attempts of men to keep the people of God away from the truth of God. Men did all they could to conceal the Savior’s resurrection, and to keep the disciples unacquainted with that resurrection; but how feeble was the impediment which they threw in the way! The Lord sends an angel; that angel comes in all the purity and perfection of his standing, as indicated by the way in which he is arrayed; that angel comes in all the gladness of his heart, and with infinite ease rolls back the stone, sends the keepers into a dead sleep, preaches the gospel to the mourning and inquiring disciples, and invites them calmly and comfortably to come and see the place where the Lord lay. I shall not occupy your time about the place or spot itself, literally so, as to the topography of it, though a great many books have been written for and against the present spot at Jerusalem which is held as the sepulcher. Some believe that the present spot which is held as the sepulcher was really the sepulcher of the Savior, and others hold that it was not; and I hold that nobody knows anything about it, and so the best way is to leave the matter where it is, viz., in the dark. It matters, therefore, to us but very little whether the present site held as the sepulcher was the site or not; we have the word of God, and that gives us all that we need to know upon this matter. There is, no doubt, a meaning, and a very important meaning, in this invitation of the angel, “Come, see the place where the Lord lay.” We notice, then, in the first place, *the reasons why the Lord laid there*. Secondly, *the circumstances by which he came there*, Thirdly and lastly, *the reasons why he left there*.

First, then, *the reasons why he laid there*. The first reason was, so it seems at least to me, to show his complete endurance of the penalty of sin. “The wages of sin is death.” But then you observe, and it is worth your while to notice it, that the Savior inverted the order of the penalty; he underwent the second death first. Or else the natural order of the penalty is for the sinner to die first, and then come into the wrath of God, into hell, into the second death, afterwards. But the Savior inverted this order; he changed this order of things. He lived a life, as you know, of solemn and of wonderful devotion to God. And the more the Lord is pleased to bless us with that spirit of daily, inward devotion to him the better. We cannot be too much devoted to him, or too familiar with him. But the Lord Jesus Christ, then, endured the second death first. All our sins were laid upon him, and he suffered before he died. He began to suffer, as we see, in the garden of

Gethsemane. "Now is my soul exceeding sorrowful." Then our sins began to bear upon him in their tremendous force; then deep began to call unto deep at the noise of God's waterspouts; then the waves and billows of wrath began to go over him. So that for myself I believe that whatever we must have endured to eternity, that Jesus Christ compassed in his own person. Yes, I must go further than that perhaps, namely, that as we never could have reached the end of the penalty, though there is a reason for that, there is a reason why we could not reach the end of the penalty, not only because of our inability to suffer all that sin demerited, but because in hell they do not there suffer without sinning. So that the lost man, perhaps, suffers more than the penalty due to his sins on earth, because, when he comes into hell, he is still an enemy to God, he is still a blasphemer, he still wishes to have his own way. When the rich man lifted up his eyes in hell, he proposed a plan of conversion contrary to God's plan; there was the blindness and enmity of the mind even in hell. So that Jesus Christ suffering without sinning, he suffered all the penalty, but did nothing to augment that penalty; so that he suffered no more than just so much as the sins of the people had demerited, the measurement of which could be understood, of course, by Jehovah alone, could be understood by the Savior alone. He himself did all this, and suffered all there was to suffer. And hence it is that there is no more curse for us; it is gone; Jesus Christ being made a curse for us, there is no more curse. Here one is almost tempted to say what, perhaps, some would call a little extravagant, but it is a solemn, and yet at the same time a delightful truth, that many of the circumstances that befall the people of God through time look like curses, and do curse a great many of their comforts and hopes, and blast a great many things that they would wish to keep, perhaps, alive and in prosperity; and yet even in this worst of things there is no curse. Let any calamity, whatever that calamity may be, overtake the Christian, there is in that calamity no curse, for Jesus Christ has taken away the curse, he has endured the penalty. He thus, then, took the second death first. He would not yield up his life until sin had yielded up its life; he would not yield up his life until death had yielded up its power; he would not yield up his life until the law said, "It is enough" until justice, with its flaming sword, said, "It is enough." Then comes the other part of the penalty, death. The perfection of human love. Christ showed the perfection of divine love in being made a curse for us, and he showed the perfection of human love in dying for us. "Greater love has no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends." So that, "Come, see the place where *the Lord* lay." There lay the Prince of life, silent in death; there lay the Lord of life and glory, silent in death. But do not lose sight of one thing, the name by which the dear Savior is here called, "the Lord." He is spoken of here by a term of dignity. "The place where *the Lord* lay." What, then, was sin, that which none but the Lord could bear away? Was the curse that which none but the Lord could bear away? And did justice demand the life of the Lord of life, the life of the Prince of life, the life, as it were, of the God of life? Is this the life justice demanded? Yes. "Come, see the place where *the Lord* lay." As though the angel should say, reflect upon it, who he was, and remember that he laid here in the grave declarative of his having undergone all the parts of the penalty of sin, of his having endured all the parts of the curse of the law; so that there is, as we just now said, no more curse. Sin carries the sinner into *hell*, but it carries the Savior only into the *grave*, because he atoned for sin, and so triumphed over all. So, with them that love him: sin has reign only unto the death of the body; after that, there is *no more* that it can do. It is a matter of great lamentation to me in my own soul that I have not more faith in what Jesus Christ has done. I want to obey more and more that scripture in the 9th of Zechariah, "Turn you to the stronghold, you prisoners of hope." And what is this stronghold but Jesus Christ, that which Jesus Christ has done? Would we seek and obtain forgiveness? would we seek to be washed? would we seek to be justified? would we seek the presence of God? would we seek every grace and every blessing?

Then let it be by faith in the Lord of life and glory. "Turn you to the stronghold, you prisoners of hope; even today do I declare that I will render double unto you." And I cannot get any better thought upon the word *double* than that I have lately several times stated, namely, grace here, and glory hereafter. "I will render double unto you." I know very well the word frequently means simply abundance; it is a kind of Hebraism to denote abundance; "a double portion of your Spirit;" abundance of your Spirit. But still I think it will bear that definition, grace here, and glory hereafter. So that the Lord will take care of us all the time we live; and then, when he has been gracious to us here, he will be eternally glorious unto us there. Then it goes on to set before us this stronghold "As for you also, by the blood of your covenant I have sent forth your prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water." Here, then, if we would get out of the pit, and if we would see the Savior as having endured all the parts of the penalty of the curse, I think this is one thing intended by the invitation of the angel. And as I have said before, the name by which the Savior is here called "the Lord;" the Lord Jesus Christ. There never was such a thing before, and there never will be again.

The second thing intended is the fulfilment of the Scriptures. "Come, see the place where the Lord lay;" and see that it is not the place that once appeared likely to be the place; that it is not the place that men intended should be the place. For men had intended that he should be buried as a malefactor, that he should be thrown into the criminal's grave, and that his burial should every way have a tendency to degrade him, and make people ashamed of him. "Come, see the place where he lay." See that it is not the malefactor's grave, it is not the grave of the wicked. "He made his grave with the wicked" by submitting to be crucified between two wicked men, though his mercy made one of those men a righteous man, and that mercy that made one of those men a righteous man took him into glory. "Come, see the place where he lay;" that it is a new sepulcher, wherein man never lay. You will see that it is not an old grave, and you will see there is no one else there, for no man ever laid there. And so "he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth." Presently the time comes, and of course he was to be taken down from the cross, and thrown dishonorably into the malefactor's grave. But no. Here is an honorable man, whose heart the Lord had touched, and that will make any man honorable, where the Lord touches the heart in the right place, and this man was a lover of Jesus Christ, this man was a follower of Jesus Christ. And God had a prophecy for that man to fulfil. I cannot say that Joseph of Arimathea saw at the time that he was the appointed instrument of fulfilling that prophecy; but you may depend upon it, that whatever parts of God's service we take, if we do not see at the time we shall see afterwards that it was the carrying out of some promise or of some prophecy that we, perhaps, at the time were not acquainted with. Not perhaps but Joseph of Arimathea was well acquainted with the 53rd of Isaiah, but it might not have struck him at the time that he was doing what was there predicted. And so, he went in boldly unto Pilate, at the risk of his life, and craved the body of Jesus, and laid him in a new tomb, wherein man never lay. Thus, then, "Come, see the place *where* the Lord lay." See him endure the last part of the penalty of sin;" second, "Come, see the place where the Lord lay," as fulfilling the Scriptures, that though he died with the wicked, he was not buried with the wicked. He made his grave with the wicked, but into that grave he never went. A learned man alters that scripture, and puts in a plural pronoun in the place of the singular, which I do not approve of. He makes it read thus: "*They* made his grave with the wicked; he with the rich in his death." But then if we are to substitute the plural for the singular, and take such liberties as this with the word of God, why, we may as well have no Bible at all if we make it read just as we wish it to read. Therefore, let us take it just as we find it; the Christian can understand it. He made his grave with

the wicked in appearance by suffering himself to be dealt with, and treated, and crucified as a malefactor between two malefactors. "But with the rich in his death." The former clauses, part of them, are implied, though not repeated, in the latter part of that verse; thus, he made his grave with the wicked, but he made his grave with the rich in his death. Before his death, by suffering himself to be numbered with the transgressors, he made his grave with the wicked; but in his death he made his grave with the rich; for he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. No indignity can come after this, because he has thus endured the last part of the penalty. We shall have to touch upon that again presently, or something bordering upon it. You know what the inference is. Satan and his agents may get you pretty near to the grave, the destiny of the wicked apparently at hand; there is the pit open; we will get you in, you will be damned by-and-bye, as well as the rest. The Christian may come very near; but just at the needed time, the Lord interposes his hand, and either with or without means rescues his child, and takes care that it shall not suffer one iota beyond that which is good and profitable, nor shall it go into any real danger.

The third reason that the Lord lay there was because he would not do anything without God. He would have laid there to this day rather than move without God. Yes; would not move without him. Laid there, and meant to do so, until God should be pleased to raise him from the dead. He did nothing without God when he came into the world; he did nothing in his life without God, he did nothing in his death without God. All he did was embodied in the will of God. "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work."

Now I am in the grave, for he was the living God while he was the dying man, and while his human, soul left his body divinity never left his body; I do not understand that the Savior's body was ever severed from his divinity; there certainly was a separation of soul and body; "Into your hands I commend my spirit;" but I do not believe that there was a separation between divinity and manhood; so that there was divinity, as it were, lying in the grave; "Come, see the place where the Lord lay;" and therefore, by virtue of what he was as God, he could have taken up his life in the twinkling of an eye; but no, no; I will lie here till God shall fetch me; I will remain here as long as he pleases. So that in the grave he left himself in the hands of the Lord, even this speaks submission to the blessed God; and while he could have taken up his life in a moment, he preferred, for that was the order of things, leaving the matter with the Lord. It is a great thing to be able to do so under the worst circumstances. And his flesh rested in hope; for "you will not leave my soul in hell, nor suffer your Holy One to see corruption;" so his flesh rested in hope. So then, where we cannot move consistently with the word of God, let us stand still; where we cannot get on as we could wish, let us be quiet, and if we cannot come to God, remember he not only can, but will come unto us. That is the third reason why he laid there. First, to show he had endured all the parts of the penalty; second, to show the fulfilment of prophecy; third, to show he would do nothing without God. And it is equally true, and most delightfully true, that while he would do nothing without God, God will do nothing without him. Therefore, the Lord God will regard the Savior before he ministers judgment even. But if we apply the declaration to the people of God, how delightful it is that God in his dealings with us will do nothing without his dear Son! There is the devil cursing you; the Lord looks down and says, Am I going to curse that man? No; I have blessed him. There is Balaam seeking to curse you. Ah! but the Lord says, They are blessed. There is the world reproaching you, but the Lord approving and justifying you. There is the world glad to bring your faults against you, but there is the Lord glad to take your faults from you. There is the world glad to make use of real faults or imaginary faults to degrade you all they can; there is the Lord

delighting to hide the whole, to bury the whole, forgive the whole, forget the whole, and that for ever and ever. The fourth reason he lay there was because the Scriptures required, his own testimony required, that he should be in the grave three days and three nights current; not three days and three nights complete, because he was to rise the third day. He was in the grave, therefore, only two nights, and he was to rise the third day; but the mode of speech, the idiom of language in that day, called that space of time three days and three nights. So if we would get something towards completion, we must take the Thursday evening on which he was taken, then the Friday night, then the Saturday night; then we get three days, which are called three days; but even then we do not get three days and three nights complete, but we get three days and three nights current. Now the Holy Scriptures required that he should remain in the grave that distance of time, so that he fulfilled the Scriptures and his own testimony, for "the Scriptures cannot be broken." And I need not remind you of Jonah, who was a striking type of the Savior in this matter. And I have often thought the first part of the 6th chapter of Hosea describes that kind of experience that enables the people of God to appreciate what the Savior has done, and to appreciate him in his resurrection, and to appreciate him in the manner in which he will live with us, and bring us to live with him. "The Lord has torn," great mercy when the Lord tears a sinner asunder from an ungodly world; when the Lord tears a sinner asunder from all false confidences the man feels torn all to pieces. Now "the Lord has torn, and he will heal us." How will he heal? By faith in Christ Jesus. "He has smitten," the Pharisee has brought him down, "and he will bind us up. After two days will he revive us; in the third day he will raise us up." I am aware this refers to the appointed time of soul-trouble, but is there not a reference there to the resurrection of Christ? And does not the soul-trouble, this being torn asunder from an ungodly world, and from all false confidences, this being smitten down by reproof and by tribulation, so as to know but need of the healing and soothing power of the Savior's death, does not the Lord in this way make us appreciate the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ? "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord, his going forth is prepared as the morning" and what morning is that but the morning of the resurrection? "and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth." Now you know the truths of the gospel that proclaim the peaceful name of the Savior, and that proclaim the perfection of his work, that these truths are compared to rain; so that the Lord shall live with us in all the genialities of his loving-kindness, and pouring upon us from time to time showers of blessing. These appear to me, then, to be the four reasons why the Lord lay there. First, to show he had endured every part of the penalty of sin; second, to show that he was buried, according to the Scriptures, not with the wicked, but with the rich, the righteous, in his death; third, to show he would do nothing without God; fourth, to show the fulfilment of his own prediction, that he would rise the third day.

Let us now look for a moment at *the circumstances that brought him there*. How did he come there? In respect to man he came there in this way: Men said, "Away with him! away with him!" How can you, and how can I, and how can any of us expect by our testimony, or if we could live a life of martyrdom, and die a death of martyrdom when we had done, how could we expect to win the affections of the carnal mind, or to open the eyes of men, by any testimony we can bear, or by any life we can live? No, it is God's work. Here is Jesus Christ, his life spotless, his discourses divine, his miracles wonderful, went about doing all manner of good, healing the bodies of men, healing the souls of men, feeding men, raising them from the dead; hardly a good you can imagine but what the Savior did. And yet, in the face of it all, the carnal enmity of the mind against the truths he uttered was such, that those that ruled over the main body of the people impressed their

minds with the notion that this Jesus was the worst character upon the face of the earth; and, therefore, whatever you spare, do not spare him. And the truths of the gospel meet with the same now. When I hear a man call these pure and eternal truths Antinomianism, that man proclaims to me where he is. That man may have great faith, that is, fleshly faith, and do a great many fleshly things; that man may have great zeal, and great benevolence, and give his body at last to be burned for his religion, yet all the time there is that enmity of mind it shows where the man is. Let us, then, beware how we despise the blessed truth of God, for the truth of God is nothing else but the representative of the Savior on earth. Their enmity was worked up so far, they had taken his reputation away, and made him appear evil in the eyes of the public. This is not a light thing. Only imagine the mob pointing at you, There goes the winebibber; there goes the friend of publicans and harlots; there goes the deceiver; there goes that dreadful character! There would be something to endure. And yet such was the enmity of the mind against Christ, that when put to the test: There is a man that was literally and actually a murderer. Now, then, which will you spare, Jesus or Barabbas? Oh, not Jesus, not Jesus; he is the worst character that ever lived. "Not this man, but Barabbas." We can pardon a murderer, but this man has preached unpardonable doctrines; the course he is pursuing most unpardonable. Just look at his conduct; he has pronounced eight woes upon the pious of the day, he has pronounced eight woes upon all the respectable of the day, cut up the national religion, it was national, it was not of God, cut up everything to make way for his own. And, therefore, away with him, away with him! And such is the language still concerning that which represents him, namely, his blessed truth. So, "with wicked hands you have crucified and slain the Savior." In respect to man, therefore, he came under wicked hands. But, oh! how pleasing and how encouraging to us to trust in our God is the fact, in connection with his coming there by wicked hands, of the many limitations they were under. First, they could not crucify him before his time. So, the trouble you are to have is appointed, and the time when it is to commence. What, say you, do you think that I shall have trouble? Yes. Many of you have some now; and if you have not, you will have by-and-bye. They are appointed. You do not know where they will come from, nor when they will commence, nor what weight they will be, nor what color they will be, nor how far they will rack and rend your soul asunder; still it cannot be before the time. "Our times are in his hands." Second, they could not extend his sufferings beyond the time. They hoped that he would continue a few hours longer, that they might have the pleasure of breaking his legs, and no doubt they would have done so in the most barbarous manner they could have thought of. But when proceeding to do so, to please the Jews, lest the body should hang on the cross on the sabbath day, why "Pilate marveled *if*" no, that *if* has no business there; it ought to have been *that* instead of *if*, "Pilate marveled that he was already dead." Why, how is this? What a mystery is this! Why, we meant him to live a little longer; we meant to have wreaked a little more vengeance on him; we meant to have gratified our pious taste a little further, and so to have treated him in his last moments as to have made the world both ashamed and afraid of him, hate his very name. But no, his work was done. "It is finished! and he yielded up the ghost." Bless his dear name. And many, when they saw the solemn scenes attending his dying groans, the earth trembling, rocks rending, graves opening, the veil of the temple rending in two from top to bottom, exclaimed, "Truly, this was a righteous man. Truly this was the Son of God." Again, as they could not crucify him before the time, nor lengthen his sufferings one moment beyond the time, so not a bone of him could they break. See the twelfth of Exodus, the paschal lamb, not to break a bone of the paschal lamb. Who would have thought that that pointed especially to the dear Savior? There stood the lictor with his battle-axe, ready to strike the heaviest blow that the muscular arms of a Roman soldier could minister; but no, he is paralyzed, the axe drops, the man is astounded. And the very

man that was to command the exercise of this battle-axe in breaking the Savior's legs, the very man that was, to give the command, himself exclaimed, "Truly, this was a righteous man," namely, the centurion, he was the commander, and the soldier, must not act without the commander. God took the commander, neutralized the others. "Not a bone of him shall be broken." The enemy may go a long way with us, but he has his limitation, "Hitherto shall you come, and no further." Again, as they could not crucify him. before the time, nor lengthen out his sufferings one moment beyond the. time, nor break one bone of that wondrous Person, so they could not distract, confuse, or in any way deceive him. Let us give him this draught of vinegar, mingled with myrrh, several drugs, and that will stupefy him, and he will not know what he is about. He tasted thereof, just the tip of his tongue, as though he was going to drink, and to give Satan a sort of hope, in order that Satan's defeat might be greater, but would not drink thereof. He retained his self and perfect possession. While the two malefactors by his side were reviling him, that moved him not. Presently light breaks into the soul of one, and he says to the other, "Do you not fear God, seeing you are in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; but this man has done nothing amiss." He is Lord of all. "Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom." If (I speak now after the manner of men) if they could have got him to take the stupefying draught, Satan in different ages has got the people of God to take a great many stupefying draughts; I know he has me, and I suppose he has you; but the remedy is, that they never could so prevail with Jesus. And therefore, when the thief cried, There is the Savior, in entire self-possession, "This day shall you be with me in Paradise." Bless his holy and dear name! See, then, how the adversary was defeated, and in many other respects, which I must not now stop to notice. See, then, how authorized we are to cease from man, and let our faith be in the Lord. The Lord give us grace quietly to submit to whatever may be the afflictions of the way, to know the enemy is limited. And as the Savior, after he died, sorrowed no more at all, so there stands the promise for the church of God, "You shall sorrow no more at all: the days of your mourning shall be ended." I am not halfway through my subject, though I am nearly all the way through my time. Now he came into the grave in respect to God, first, by the love of God. God so loved us that he gave us this wondrous Person. He came there by the will of God; came there from his own love to us and choice; and he came there by the perfection of his work. I would not say anything, the Lord forbid I should, in matters so solemn that is improper, but I had almost said it appears to me that while he came into the grave by the perfection of his work, that if his work had not been perfect, that is, if he had not compassed all the penalty, that he himself must have remained in the wrath of God until he had endured it all. So that the very fact of his being in the grave shows his liberation from wrath, his resurrection his liberation from death. "It was not possible that he should be holden of it."

But just a word upon the last point, as I, of course, shall not take up this text again, at least, not at present. Let me, then, briefly notice *the reasons why he left there*. He is not here now, and his people are no longer dead, as it were; their death is swallowed up, and there is for them eternal life. He was raised from the dead for the following reasons, which I just name, without amplifying one. First, because he was the Son of God. The words of the second Psalm, applied in the thirteenth of Acts to Christ's resurrection, "You are my Son; this day have I begotten you," because he was the Son of God. Ah, believer, why are you a believer? Because you were, in God's eternal counsel, one of his sons. Because you are sons, you are thus raised up to sit together with the Son of God. The second reason why he was raised from the dead was because he was holy. "You will not suffer your Holy One to see corruption." He had no sin of his own. And therefore, on the ground, first, of relationship, second, of perfect holiness, he rose from the dead, defied death, and him that had

the power of death. Third, by the perfection, as I have said, of his work. "Brought again from the dead by the blood of the everlasting covenant." Fourth, by the will of God. Fifth, by his own good pleasure: "I take my life." Sixth, by the power of God; raised up by omnipotent and eternal power. And lastly, because that very Person whom, above all others, the world wanted to get rid of, God wanted to possess. God wanted him; he wanted him on earth; he wanted him in heaven; he wanted him to be in his glory all that to his people that he was ordained. God wanted him. And happy for us that we ever saw the day that we began to be in want of Jesus Christ, of his salvation, and of that eternal life which is by him. God wanted him, and therefore determined to have him. God wanted us, and therefore determined to have us, and we are made to want him, to seek him, and be decided for him.

Thus, then, the invitation of the angel furnishes matter for these, I hope not altogether unprofitable, reflections.