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SERMON LXXVII.
THE CHRISTIAN'S A RISEN LIFE.
(PREACHED ON EASTER-DAY.)

COL. iii. 1.

"If ye then be risen with CHRIST, seek those things which are above, where CHRIST sitteth on the right hand of GOD."

WE are come to the close of a solemn and blessed period; a period, to sinners perhaps the most full of comfort in the whole year, GOD'S most gracious gift to man; a period of humiliation, repentance, privation, discomfort. True, that we have need to repent of the unevenness of our repentances, to pray GOD to pardon them as well as the sins whereof we so repent! Still, a season of penitence and self-abasement is a season of joy; we may trust that it helps, by GOD'S appointment, to efface those spots of sin, which we by our frailty have contracted; that it makes us more such, as GOD will have mercy upon; such, as His SON'S atoning Blood shall cleanse and heal. That season is now past; another Lent, which has been vouchsafed us to purge our souls for the Presence of the All-holy GOD, is gone; a record, it is to be feared, against many who trample upon it; lost to many more: yet to many, it is to be hoped, and especially in this congregation, who know its privileges, thrice-blessed; rich in mercy according to the faithfulness of each, infusing, we trust, serious and humble thoughts into many; deepening the penitence of some; nailing some to the very Cross of their LORD, and making them, in however slight a degree, partakers of His sufferings and so of His consolation also. On all such, we doubt not, some healing drop has fallen from His Cross; some gleam of hope has flashed across them; the clouds have parted, and discovered to them some glimpse of things unseen; some ray of that nightless Morning has shone unto them; some yearnings of the soul been given them, which seemed a foretaste of everlasting peace. While they bewailed and chastened their spotted and leprous selves, "virtue has" again "gone out of" HIM to heal those who in penitence approached HIM, an earnest of His gracious purpose towards them, and of their final cleansing at the Great Day. None who have in any way used Lent aright, will have missed some fruit of their enlarged fasts, alms, and prayers; and may GOD, if HE of His goodness purpose to bring us to another Lent, give us all grace to use it more according to His will, and bless it to the increase of our present holiness and our future glory!

But now that season is past, and we are this day entered upon a very different one, for which the discipline of Lent was meant to prepare us; that having been, in Lent, partakers, in whatever little degree, of the Death of our LORD, we might now be partakers

of His Resurrection; that having then sorrowed for the sins for which HE died, we might now triumph in His Life for us, which is the source and earnest of our own; that having then lain low, we might now with safety be raised up; that having then mourned, we might now, according to His promise, laugh with a holy joy.

This season also the poor world abuses. The season of holy triumph in HIM Who hath overcome the world is distorted into a slavish service of the world from which HE came to free us. The world would have joy without sorrow, gladness of heart without previous grief for sin, Easter mirth without the sadness and humiliation of Lent, life without death, the joy of the Resurrection without watching by the Cross, or hearing it with HIM Who Alone bore it meritoriously for us, and hallowed the instrument of punishment into the pledge of victory and glory. And so, since the world severs what GOD has joined, it cannot but the more abuse and defile what it takes; it would joy, but it is not “the joy of the LORD” with Whom it refuses to sorrow; not “joy in the HOLY Ghost;” not “joy in GOD’S countenance;” not “joy and peace in believing;” not “joy before GOD;” not “joy” which shall “not be taken from them,” because it is not “sorrow turned into joy;” not joy which, as well as the wisdom from above, is “pure, peaceable, gentle, full of mercy and good fruits,” but one which descendeth not from above, but is “earthly, sensual, devilish.” The Easter joys of the world are joys in the world which it once renounced, in the flesh which it is to subdue, and the god of the world from whom it receives them; joy which, like the crackling of thorns, shall be but for a moment; a mirth which, for the time, is madness, and “the end whereof is heaviness;” for which “God shall bring it into judgment.” We must fear too, that the hearts of many whose joy is not of the grosser sort, are still set on a joy in the world as opposed to God; a joy in its pomps, its vanities, its excitements, dissipations, festivities, pleasures, amusements; a joy in it for itself, and ending in it and with it, not in HIM Who hath purified it for the pure with His own precious Blood, and made it to such as would lead a heavenly life, the visiting-place of Angels, the witness of CHRIST’S Presence, the sleeping-place of the Saints, an earnest of the Resurrection.

Yet not to such only, but to ourselves, who in our different measures have been taught somewhat of the Cross of CHRIST, there are temptations peculiar to this season, as contrasted with that which we have gone through. The whole period from Easter to Whitsunday is on the whole a period of the greatest joy (whence the Ancient Church used not even to kneel during this period, but prayed erect, in token of the forgiveness sealed by the Resurrection), as the whole period of Lent is that of deepest sorrow, and our last week the deepest sorrow of Lent. We are now allowed refreshment and enjoyments, which, if we were wise, we then put from us. There is a degree of risk in all enjoyment, lest we use it immoderately. There is the more risk now, lest we should seek over-hastily to recruit ourselves from our past discomforts. Joy has always more trials than sorrow, feasting than fasting, lifting up than casting down, triumph than humiliation. It is easy, in comparison, to submit ourselves to a strict rule: to preserve due moderation, and keep careful watch over ourselves, when no longer under such discipline, is the harder task.

Strict discipline suits best our state as strangers and pilgrims, journeying slowly to our heavenly inheritance; easiness of obedience amid a sea of joy is the blessedness of the happy spirits who have attained or are in possession of it.

It is then with tender care that the Church takes us by the hand at this season, and, especially on this day, in the Anthem and Epistle which she has selected as peculiar to it, speaks to us in tones of earnest warning, or bids us exhort ourselves to a pure and new life, conformable to the new blessings of this day. "Let us keep the feast," we began our Easter Anthem, "not with the old leaven, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth," i. e. let us celebrate the Resurrection of our Lord by putting away anew all remains of corruption in us (for "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump"), that so we may be wholly pure and undefiled. "Christ," it goes on, "being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over HIM; likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto GOD, through JESUS CHRIST our LORD," i. e. as CHRIST died for sin once only, and thenceforth death had no more power over HIM, but HE liveth ever with His Father, so are we to have died to sin once for all, and thenceforth sin, the source of death, is to have no more dominion over us. We are no more to serve it, but to be free from it, and live to GOD; and so, in the concluding words of that Anthem, "as in Adam we all died, even so in CHRIST shall all be made alive."

And this teaching the Church carries on in the Epistle, of which I repeated to you the first words, "If ye be risen with CHRIST, seek those things which are above, where CHRIST sitteth at the right hand of GOD." The festival, then, of the Resurrection is the festival of newness of life, which HE hath imparted; of newness of life, which we are to live here; and so of that new and happy life which, if we be faithful, we shall live where HE liveth, in the presence of GOD, Himself with the FATHER One GOD.

It is the 'festival of newness of life which HE imparted;' for the Apostle, when he bids us "seek those things that be above," calls us not so to do on the ground of any strength which we have of our own (for this he knew to be weakness), but through that which GOD imparted. He (and with him the Church) trusts not to any feelings or longings of our own; they bid us not, "since ye celebrate those great mercies vouchsafed to you in the Resurrection, seek the things which be above;" they bid us not alone to "raise ourselves in thought whither our Saviour is gone, and to seek our treasure there;" they appeal not to any motives, or power, or will merely of our own, 'CHRIST hath died for your sins, therefore die ye to sin;' 'CHRIST hath risen and burst the tomb, therefore do ye rise.' St. Paul goes deeper: he says not, "if ye have risen," as if it were an act of our own; but he says, "Since ye were co-raised with CHRIST:" an act done for us and in us. He speaks not only of our LORD'S having risen for us, but of our having been made partakers of that Resurrection, of our having been co-raised with CHRIST? And when was that? When but when we were made members of HIM Who rose again for us? Then all of His was pledged to us as ours; then, when baptized in His Name, in the Name of the HOLY TRINITY, little as we knew of the gift, were we translated from our birth in Adam to our birth in HIM, from death to life, from being under the curse to blessings unspeakable in

HIM, from slavery to freedom, from darkness to His marvellous light, from the power of Satan unto GOD. Then were we made partakers of CHRIST'S Death, and having been made partakers of His Death, we were made partakers of His Resurrection; for so St. Paul teaches us in other places, as to the Romans (in this morning's lesson), "Know ye not that all of us, as many as have been baptized to CHRIST JESUS, were baptized into His Death? We were buried then with HIM through Baptism into death, that like as CHRIST was raised from the dead through the glory of the FATHER, so we also should walk in newness of life." Then had we, in earnest, given to us "that thing which by nature we could not have." We had it given us in the bud, as it were, to open in the flower, and hereafter to bear fruit. Then was the old man slain in us, by partaking of our Blessed LORD'S Death; then were we made partakers of His Resurrection, being made members of our risen LORD; then was the virtue which is inherent in our LORD, our Head, transfused into us, the members of His Body; then were we made partakers of His might, Who had taken upon HIM our weakness, that we might be partakers of His glory, Who had stooped to take upon HIM our shame. Thenceforth all of His was made ours; for it was our nature which was nailed to the Cross; ours which, as yesterday, lay lifeless in the grave; ours which, as to day, rose from the dead; ours which, risen, was placed above the highest heaven at the right hand of the glory of the FATHER, whence HE sheds down on those whom HE makes members of HIMSELF, that SPIRIT whereof HE was, as man, born, that they, through It, might be re-born, members of His kingdom, heirs of His glory, here, with HIM, to suffer and obey, and to reign with HIM for ever. Then "gave HE us power to become the sons of GOD," "and if sons, then heirs; heirs of GOD and joint-heirs with CHRIST: if so be that we suffer with HIM, that we may also be co-glorified."

This is it, "since you were co-raised with CHRIST," an union with CHRIST imparting the virtue of His Resurrection, a new life which HE hath given. And to what end? The Apostle says, that having shared the Resurrection, we should share the Life of our risen LORD; that having received power, we should use it; that we should walk in the newness of life to which He raised us from our decay and death, ever conformed to His life, of Whose life we have been made partakers; that we should seek the things above, where CHRIST, our risen LORD, sitteth at the right hand of GOD. We have been made members of HIM Who is above. Our life is not here, since HE Who is our Life is not here, but above. Our life is not here, since that which is seen, our life in the flesh, is not our life: our life in the flesh were death, rather than life. Our life is above, the Apostle goes on to say, "hidden" with HIM Who is our Life, "with CHRIST in GOD," and to be revealed in glory at His coming. "When CHRIST Who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with HIM in glory." Then shall the saints of God appear and shine forth; now they are hidden, hidden from the world, hidden from themselves; their hidden life formed in them day by day; growing, they know not how or how much, through obedience to GOD'S holy guiding, by simple performances of duty, simple acts of self-denial.

But to what doth the Apostle call us, when he bids us, "since we have been raised with CHRIST," to "seek the things which are above?" wherein do they consist? how may

we know whether we are thus living the life of those raised with CHRIST? how cherish it? The Apostle goes on to tell us; by putting aside the things which are from the earth, earthy, tending to the earth, binding us to it, and seeking those things which are from above, heavenly graces, the good gifts which come down from HIM, and which tend again upward to HIM Who is above, by cherishing our love for HIM, and of our brethren in HIM, and weaning us from the love of all but Him. "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth;" not grosser sin only, but "all uncleanness, all passionate affections, evil desires, all covetousness, anger, wrath, malice, bad words, lying;" put off all these, and on the other hand, "put on tender mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, forbearance, forgiveness, as CHRIST forgave you; charity, the peace of GOD, thankfulness." Plain and simple duties these, for which we need not go far, but which are made nigh to us, which meet us in our every day path; duties which belong to us alike, whatever our outward lot be, whether rich or poor, honoured or despised, amid outward joys or sorrows, whether things in this world go what the world thinks well or what it deems ill. For as our life is hidden in CHRIST, so have we all an outward and an inward, a hidden life. Outwardly we seem busied for the most part about common things, eating our bread in the sweat of our brow, with mean employments, trivial duties, worthless tasks; inwardly we are, or ought to be, studying how in all to please GOD, walking in His sight, doing them in His Presence, seeking to know how HE would have them done. For so does Scripture describe the highest, most faithful performance of duty; "Enoch walked with GOD, and he was not, for GOD took him;" "for," the Apostle adds, "he had this testimony, that he pleased GOD;" and thus amid trivial things may we be, nay men are, in every station of life, pleasing GOD, that is, leading angels' lives, in that they are doing His will on earth, as they in heaven; they are servants of His, doing His pleasure." For to this end, among other ends, did our REDEEMER, Who was GOD and man, pass through our daily duties, our daily trials, that HE might sanctify them, and we no longer think "common" what HE had, by doing, "cleansed;" that we might not think slightly of them, might see that in all we might act worthily of HIM, might not be weary of them. HE, in the form of a servant, hungered, that we might learn that even this common craving is hallowed, if we feel that "man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of GOD." HE took food, that we might learn to "eat and drink to the glory of GOD." HE rested in sleep as well as watched, that we might learn to lie down in rest, reposing in GOD. HE wept, that we might learn compassion. HE sorrowed, that we might learn resignation in sorrow. HE, as man, was subject to the creature whom, as GOD, HE created, that we might learn the blessedness of simple childlike obedience. HE worked with His hands, as though HE had been what HE was called, "Is not this the carpenter's son?" that we might learn not to be ashamed of whatsoever GOD has called us to.

Herein, then, is the difference of those who, having been made partakers of the Resurrection of their LORD, are indeed living the risen life, and of those who are again losing that life in the cares, and pleasures, and toils, and vanities of the world. Outwardly,

they seem oftentimes to be doing the same things; but the one are doing them to themselves, the others to GOD; the one seeking to please themselves, the others to please GOD; the one is looking to this life, and what shall profit him for this life, and set him at ease, make him comfortable, prosperous, greater, secure him worldly advantages and worldly joys; the other is looking beyond this life, using the things of this world as means to another, content to forego earthly prosperity, ease, advancement, so he may “gain an eternal inheritance;” the one sees things present only, the other gladly foregoes things present, that he may “so pass through things temporal” that he “finally,” by GOD’S mercy, “lose not the things eternal;” the one acts as though this world were his home, the other as though he were a stranger passing through it to his unseen home, “eternal in the heavens.”

And as in doing, so also in suffering. Suffer, through GOD’S merciful discipline, Who leaves us not to the waywardness of our own hearts,—suffer we all must. But to those who are seeking the things of earth, suffering is a mere evil; by those who would seek the things above, it is often felt as the choicest gift their merciful FATHER’S healing hand can give. For the end of our life is to learn to love our CREATOR alone, not for His gifts, but for HIMSELF, as HE HIMSELF will be the object of the love of those, whom His mercy fits to love HIM with an eternal love; His creatures we should love, only as they are His, in HIM, for HIM; but the love of things on the earth creeps over us; we love them for that which is earthly also; make idols of them, give them the love which we owe to GOD only, even while we persuade ourselves that we love GOD in them; and so in His mercy HE withdraws them, that we may know ourselves, and having earthly joys withdrawn, may learn to stay ourselves upon HIM. They are withdrawn from our sight, that we may learn the less to value these things of sight, and love the things out of sight above, with GOD Who is unseen. Faith sees then not as the world sees; they are not the happy, with whom all things go well, who “have their portion in this life, who have in this world their good things,” who are “made rich, and the glory of whose house is increased;” who count themselves happy in this world, “and leave the rest of their substance unto their babes;” but “Blessed is the man,” Scripture saith, “whom THOU chastenest, O LORD, and teachest him out of THY law, that THOU mayest give him rest from the days of adversity.” Yea, “happy,” Scripture saith again, “is the man whom GOD correcteth.” This is the only test of good or ill, whether it tend to fix our thoughts on this life, or to take us off from this life, and fix them upon GOD; and so, what the world calls prosperity, happiness, honour, welldoing, are but, for the most part, dangerous trials; what it calls losses, ruin, disgrace, adversity, unhappiness, are GOD’S gracious gifts, weaning us from the world, and fixing us on the things above, where our life is, and on HIM. What men count loss is a gift of our risen SAVIOUR, wrought by JESUS CHRIST as risen, and so pouring down His gifts. And so, though HE undo, one by one, the links which bind us to this life, and make this world joyous (as HE does, as we go on in life) we shall, if we are wise, see them patiently unclasped one by one; the objects of our affections, our strength, our health, we shall resign them peacefully at His call; counting

it the happy lot, not to have but to lose; to “sow in tears,” if, by His mercy, we may at the last, “reap in joy.” Yea, if we are wise, we shall pray HIM oftentimes to “correct” us, though “in judgment, not in His anger,” if it be His will so to heal us; to give us trouble here, that HE may give us rest in Heaven.

And not so only, but we would of ourselves, if we be wise, part willingly with whatever we lawfully may, if we see that it binds us down to the things seen, and takes us off from things above; if they be lawful pleasures, we will restrict ourselves; if honour, avoid it when we may; if reputation, make ourselves lowly, and think upon our sins; if elated by what we have, make ourselves poorer; if beset by love of gain, be content to lose, part with treasure here, that we may find it stored for us in Heaven.

And this was ever in the Ancient Church, a portion of their risen, their Easter life, their Easter joy, to diffuse the joy which GOD had thus bestowed upon themselves, upon those whom GOD had made in this world poor; it was a worthy proof of joy in their risen LORD, that they sought to relieve HIM in His poor members; it was an excellent way of seeking things above, to give their treasures out of sight into His treasury, His keeping; to put on, “as the elect of GOD, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, love, which is the bond of perfectness;” to love one another, as HE had loved them, with a self-denying love; it made them love the things on the earth less, because they parted with the things on earth, to find them again in heaven; it made them love them less, because it made them love their SAVIOUR more; it made them love their SAVIOUR more, because it was a fulfilment of His commands, done through the grace of His Spirit, in the hope of His favour, in humble thankfulness for His Atoning love, in acknowledgment of their own unworthiness, and of His great and undeserved goodness to us miserable sinners.

Lazarus is at the door; the time is short; year by year, Easter by Easter, bids us more loudly “seek those things which are above,” where by GOD’S mercy, (if ever) ye must soon be; “while we have time, let us do good unto all men, specially unto them who are of the household of faith;” “the night cometh, when no man can work.” Alas, in this wealthy city, with its frightful contrasts of extreme luxury and extreme misery, and luxury and misery either way of tens of thousands of everliving beings, made brethren in CHRIST, yet strangers and estranged, loathing and loathed by one another, there is not a work of piety or charity, the building houses of GOD, relieving GOD’S peculiar care, the fatherless and the widow, tending CHRIST in His sick members, guarding those frail but hallowed temples of the HOLY SPIRIT, the baptized children of the poor, on whom a hundred fold more energy, than now is, should not be employed, sacrifices a thousand fold made. Alas, in this wealthy city, Lazarus lies neglected many thousand times; GOD in His mercy grant that in the Day of account there be not found in this congregation one Dives; but that there be not, great as His mercy is, we must learn more needfully, to seek HIM here also, lest haply we miss HIM. It shall not be needed to man’s condemnation at the Great Day, that he refused CHRIST, when in His members HE besought him; it will, alas! suffice, that he sought HIM not, where HE might be found, that HE “was sick,” and men thought not of HIM, nor “visited HIM.”

But while ye, in this way, seek the things which are above, see that ye be consistent; see that your joy relax not your diligence, but quicken it; watch over the sins for which ye have humbled yourselves, and confessed that ye deserved to be humbled; it will not suffice to have humbled ourselves, unless thereby we have learnt to remain humble; the reward is to the persevering; lose not, by relaxing, the treasures given by GOD to enduring self-denial and humiliation; as the weekly festival of the Resurrection mingled with the season of the Passion, and was a relief to us, so let the weekly fast of the Passion, (as we are enabled) mingle with the joy of the Resurrection and chasten it. Now ye have been raised with CHRIST, and are in the midst of the festival of the Resurrection, and have been made partakers of the power of His Resurrection, and have been set on high in heavenly places, strive to live and remain with HIM there; "it is good for us to be here;" practise the sacramental response of the universal Church in all ages, "Lift up your hearts;" keep not your eyes fixed on this earth, where ye are strangers, but look up towards your home; above the starry heavens, yea above the glory of the stars, lies your home; there is your life, hid with GOD; thither ascend with your risen LORD, and thence look down upon this petty spot of earth, and wonder how its passing cares, and pleasures, and pomps, and honours, and affections, could bind down to its nothingness, your soul, which CHRIST came down to redeem, and rose again to set on high where HIMSELF is: or, if ye cannot thus learn to despise it, think what it must be to fall from such a height, how hopeless, how miserable!

This then should be the fruit of the sorrows of our Lent, this of our Easter joys; of Lent, to die to sin, of Easter to live to righteousness; of Lent, to die to Satan, of Easter, to live to our risen LORD; of Lent, to mortify all vices in us, of Easter, to lift up our cleansed souls from earth to heaven, and seek the things above; seek HIM by doing things worthy of HIM, seek HIM by seeking HIM out in His poor; seek HIM, by foregoing earthly enjoyments that we may have the more to bestow on HIM from Whom we have all things; seek HIM by studying to live to HIM, obey HIM as a gracious MASTER, not distracted by anxiety about the things below when we have them not, or puffed up when we have them; hut caring not for what we have not, and parting, in due measure, with what we have; studying His gracious countenance, as shown to us in His life below for us, and striving with our whole hearts to be conformed to our REDEEMER, Who chose us out of the world, that we might be conformed to His image.

As yet we are "saved in hope" only, but on GOD'S part all stands sure; our first Resurrection which HE has given us, in making us partakers of the Resurrection of His SON, is the pledge of that yet to come, if we be but in earnest. Look we then, while this our Easter-day lasts, to what glories we are called, what hopes are set before us, what it is to love GOD for ever, what it is to be loved by HIM, to lay aside this sinful frail flesh, and be "made like unto His glorious Body, according to that mighty working, whereby HE is able to subdue all things to HIMSELF," and sin no more, but love HIM with a whole heart; so, bearing cheerfully the healthful crosses, which HE graciously bestows upon us, laying aside the weight of our besetting sins, which clog us; parting with earth that we may gain

HIM, may we, by the virtue and merits of His Cross and Passion, be brought to the glories of His Resurrection, the Easter-Day of Eternity, when HE, Who as on this day rose again to raise us in HIMSELF, shall come again to finish His goodness to us, and receive to HIMSELF those that are His; that where HE is, they may be also. Then shall ye find all your losses gains; all your sorrows joy; all your self-denials, heavenly treasures; all your crosses, gems in the jewelry of that heavenly crown, which HE will bestow not for our worthiness, but according to His own super-abundant mercy, whereby HE pardons our unworthiness, for the sake of His worthiness, Who died and was buried, and rose again for us, JESUS CHRIST our only SAVIOUR, Who is at the right hand of the FATHER, One GOD, in the Unity of the HOLY GHOST, Blessed for evermore. Amen.