

OUR LORD'S POSTURE IN ASCENSION

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“And He led them out as far as to Bethany, and He lifted up His hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into Heaven. And they worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God.”
Luke 24:50-53.

[This sermon was originally titled “Our Lord’s Attitude in Ascension.”]

OUR Lord Jesus, having spoiled the grave and so proved His power over things that are under the earth, tarried for 40 days among men and so claimed His power over the earth, itself, and then ascended through the air to show that the dominion of the Prince of the power of the air was broken and, finally, entered into the Heaven of Heavens to claim sovereignty there, so that, from the lowest depths up to the extreme heights, He might take possession of His vast domains. I like to think of Him as traversing His dominions from end to end, like a conqueror looking over the provinces which have been subdued by his might. Our Lord did not make a rapid passage through the world. He might have gone, on the Resurrection morning, straight from the grave, as soon as it was opened, into His Glory but He had reasons for tarrying a while, and of those reasons I will briefly speak before I come to the main theme of my discourse—our Lord’s posture in Ascension.

His Ascension occurred 40 days after He had risen from the dead. You know what a significant period 40 days has always been in Scripture and you know that in our Lord’s own case, He was 40 days in the wilderness tempted of the devil, so that it was seemly for Him to tarry here for 40 days of triumph on the scene of His first great battle and victory. Whatever instruction there may be in these 40 days, I will not attempt to give any fanciful exposition of the meaning of them, but it is quite clear that they were sufficient for certain excellent purposes.

They were sufficient to prove to all mankind that He had truly risen from the dead, not as a phantom, but in real flesh and blood. He made many appearance to His disciples in different ways and in divers places. It was not possible that 500 brethren at once could all be deceived! And if that could be imagined, it is not likely that when, by twos and threes, and even as separate *individuals*, they had the most intimate communion with Him, they could have been mistaken! It was essential, in the highest degree, that the fact of His Resurrection should be certified beyond all question—and it now remains the best ascertained fact in all history. We may doubt a great many things that are recorded by historians, but we cannot doubt the fact of Christ’s appearance after His Resurrection because it was not done in a corner, it was not done merely on one occasion, but before so many witnesses and in so many different places! The 40 days was a sufficient period for our Savior to be here to make it clear to all ages that He had really risen from the dead!

Besides that, I have no doubt He timed His sojourn on earth so that He might remove every lingering doubt from the minds of His disciples. Thomas had to be talked to and to be told to put his finger into the print of the nails and to thrust his hand into his Lord’s side. And there were others beside Thomas who had many doubts. In fact, these was not one of the disciples without some doubt or other, so their Master had to act and speak in such a way that every one of them would be thoroughly assured as to His identity and as to the nature of His risen body. Thus He said to them, “Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I, Myself; handle Me and see; for a spirit has not flesh and bones, as you see I have.”

Besides that, the instructions which Christ had previously given to His disciples needed a few finishing touches. Before His death, He had said to them, “I have yet many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now.” But

after He had risen from the dead, they could bear much more and there is no doubt that He made disclosures to them, then, which let further light into their souls. We read more than once of how He opened their understandings to receive the Scriptures and opened the Scriptures so that their understandings might grasp them!

But, chief of all, our Lord tarried here for 40 days that He might issue His commissions to His disciples. He said to one of them, "Feed My sheep" and, "Feed My lambs." And He said to all of them, "Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." He would not take His final departure until His last orders were issued—till He had, as it were, marshaled His battalions, set them in their ranks, given them His commands and bid them march forward to battle and to victory. There was an Infinite Wisdom in the delay between the Resurrection and the Ascension and the more we think of it, the more we shall see that it was so. Thus much concerning the time of our Lord's sojourn here after He rose from the dead.

Further, the spot from which the Ascension took place is very instructive. Luke tells us, "He led them out as far as to Bethany." But, in the Acts of the Apostles, he informs us that this memorable scene took place upon "the mountain called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a Sabbath day's journey." The two statements are not at all inconsistent with one another. I suppose that our Lord was upon that part of the Mount of Olives from which He could look down upon Bethany. To my mind, it is a very beautiful remark which is made by Van Oosterzee upon this incident. He says that when we stand in the place of our Lord's Ascension, we have three things—the Heaven above us opened, for Christ passed through the golden gates. We have a happy home below, close at our feet, for there was Bethany, where Mary and Martha and Lazarus had their happy abode and none are so happy as those who are joined to the risen Christ! And then we have here a pathway, often trod by Christ's blessed feet, and along that pathway the disciples were to go back to Jerusalem—the very Jerusalem out of which He had led them for His Ascension. So that His Ascension from this position gives us three beautiful things—an opened Heaven, a happy home and a pathway consecrated and smoothed by His blessed feet.

The most significant circumstance, perhaps, about the place of His Ascension was that He went back to Heaven from the place where He had often communed with His disciples. He had opened up many mysteries to them there. It was there that they had sat and looked over at Jerusalem and He had spoken to them about the ultimate destruction of the guilty city. It was a place which was very dear to them and which must have brought many memories to our Savior's mind. There, just under the brow of the hill, were the olive trees of Gethsemane, and His eyes may have looked upon the spot where He wrestled for our sakes with all the powers of death and Hell. It is sweet to think that He ascended to His Glory from the place of His agony and bloody sweat. And, my Brothers and Sisters, we shall do the same in our measure. From the bed whereon we die we shall ascend into Glory and there we shall be transfigured and made like unto our Lord! And from the grave of death—our Gethsemane—our bodies shall leap at the coming of the Lord and the sounding of the great trumpet into all the resurrection beauty and life! Yes, where we fight, we shall conquer! Where we suffer, there we shall reign! I like to think of the last spot of earth that Jesus touched being a mountain—for mountains have often been the places where the grandest transactions of men with God have been performed—and to find Him going as near Heaven as He could upon His feet because He would not work a miracle as long as anything could be done by ordinary means. And then gently, as it were, pushing the earth downwards and Himself ascending into the Glory where He now sits at the right hand of God, even the Father!

Think over the time and the place of our Lord's Ascension and you will have some subjects worthy of your deepest meditation.

Then think of the scene itself. There are Christ's disciples gathered around Him—certainly the Apostles and, perhaps some more of His followers. They have come out to Bethany and Olivet from Jerusalem. I cannot tell whether they walked through the streets at mid-day, but I think it is very likely and if so, many must have stared wonderingly at the Nazarene, whom they had seen nailed to the Cross on Calvary, now alive again and passing through their streets. Whether it was so or not, I cannot tell. They crossed the Kedron, that gruesome brook in which the defilements of the Temple were taken away, and then they passed by Gethsemane, by the winding path till they came to the brow of Olivet where Jesus could look down, on the one side, on Jerusalem and, on the other side, on Bethany. And He began to talk with His disciples—what if I say that He began to sing His dying song? No, I must not say that, for He did not again die, but He sang His parting hymn and gave His farewell message.

And then He began to rise. How astonished His disciples must have been! How they must have shrunk back as the majesty flamed forth from Him! He began to rise and up He went—slowly, majestically rising and the disciples looking on till He must have grown smaller and smaller to their astonished vision! And when He was about to vanish from their sight, they saw a cloud float between Himself and them and He was gone—gone to His Throne! I like to think of our Lord's Ascension in this simple but sublime manner. I might have been terrified if I had been Elisha walking with Elijah when the horses of fire and the chariots of fire came to take him away, but there was nothing terrible about this Ascension of Christ. He was not a Prophet of fire—He was gentle, meek, lowly and there was nothing to inspire terror in the way He ascended to Heaven. It is, to my mind, very beautiful to think of there being no medium employed in connection with His Ascension—no angels wings to bear Him upward—no visible arm of Omnipotence to lift Him gently from the earth—no eagle of Jupiter to steal away this choice and chosen One. No, but He rises by His own power and majesty! He needs no help.

Glad would the angels have been to come once more to earth as they had come at His birth, as they had come to the wilderness, as they had come to His tomb—gladly would they have ministered to Him! But He needed not their ministry, at least, in the beginning of His journey. He proved the innate power of His Deity by which He could depart out of the world just when He willed, breaking the law of gravity and suspending the laws usually governing matter. Well could He do this, for He made those laws and could alter or control them as He pleased. "A cloud received Him out of their sight," for I suppose they had then seen all that they ought to see and, perhaps, behind that cloud there were scenes of Glory which it was not possible for human eyes to gaze upon—and words which it was not lawful for human beings to hear. I do not know about that. I like the thought of our hymn writer concerning the angels, after the cloud had hidden Him from mortal view—

*"They brought His chariot from above,
To bear Him to His Throne—
Clapped their triumphant wings and cried,
The glorious work is done!"*

There does seem to be some guide to us in that matchless 24th Psalm—"Lift up your heads, O you gates and be lifted up, you everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in." It does read as if the warders at the top of the gate enquired, "Who is this King of Glory?" and that the attending angels replied, "The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle! Lift up your heads, O you gates and be lifted up, you everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in." Of these things we speak with bated breath, for we know not all that happened, then, but we do know that "a cloud received Him out of their sight."

The point upon which I want especially to dwell is this—what was the posture in which Christ was last seen by His disciples? I will read the words. "He lifted up His hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into Heaven," so that the last posture in which Christ was seen was this—His hands were uplifted in the act of blessing His disciples! I am going to keep to that one thing—Jesus Christ's hands uplifted in blessing as He took His departure from this world. There is sometimes a good deal in the posture which one assumes. The actor, the orator and the preacher all know that there should be appropriate action in whatever we do. When Raphael represents Paul as standing with uplifted hands at Athens, preaching, he did it with good purpose. Perhaps the artist's skill has not always been observed, for what was Paul saying when he lifted up his hands—"God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that He is Lord of Heaven and earth, dwells not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men's hands"—and up went his hands at once! And I can very well understand Paul lifting up his hands before Agrippa when he said, "I would to God that not only you, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am, *except these bonds*"—and the manacles rattled appropriately on his wrists!

We are not told much about the action with which our Lord Jesus Christ accompanied His speech. There is one thing recorded of Him in which it would be a great blessing if all ministers would imitate Him—"He opened His mouth and taught them, saying." We do not always know how He stood, but, on the occasion of His Ascension we know exactly what His posture was—"He lifted up His hands, and blessed them."

I. Observe, first, that HIS HANDS WERE UPLIFTED TO BLESS.

This blessing was no unusual thing, for His hands were blessed hands and nothing but blessing had ever come from them! What blessings thousands had received from those dear hands of His! Those hands had multiplied the loaves and fishes and fed the hungry thousands. Those hands had touched blind eyes and opened them. Those hands had been laid upon the leper and he was made whole. Those hands had touched the bier whereon the dead young man lay and he had been made to live again! Those blessed hands! Jesus continually went about doing good and His hands were always strewing blessings around Him—full as both of them were with rich treasure out of the storehouse of His heart of love. So, as He blessed His disciples as He was leaving them, He was only continuing to do what He had done ever since they had known Him! The richest blessing that you ever get from Christ is no new thing—it is just a continuation of His old habits and practices and if He were, at this moment, to lift His hands and give us some special blessing—as I pray that He may—it would only be another link in a long chain of which every link is more precious than the most valuable diamond in the world! He lifted His hands to bless His disciples because He had always been blessing them! And He will continue to bless us, Brothers and Sisters, because He has blessed us in the past and He changes not!

Christ blessed His disciples this time, however, in a different way, for *He blessed them with a new authority*. You know that the high priest came out after the Day of Atonement was over and all the sacrifices had been offered, and took off the white robes which he had worn in the early part of the day as a common priest. Those robes must have been all stained with blood, for the whole day he was occupied with the shedding and the sprinkling of the blood. And then the high priest put on his robe of glory and beauty, the garment of blue, and scarlet, and fine linen with its bells of sweetest sound, and its pomegranates and a glittering breastplate on his breast, and a miter on his head. And then he came out and gave to the people the blessing which could only be given when the Atonement was completed. And so, today, Jesus Christ blesses His people, not as the priest who is offering sacrifice, but as the One who has offered it! It is all finished and now, with authority, not as a pleader, but as One who has power to give, He blesses His people. He had *invoked* blessings upon them before—now He *pronounces* blessings upon them! He had looked up to Heaven for the blessing, but now, as it were, He looks down from Heaven and He, Himself, bestows the blessing, for He has it now in His own hands—

“All His work and warfare done”—

He is now going up to His Heaven and He proves His right to reign by beginning now the reign of benediction among the sons of men! If I may so say, He had before blessed His disciples as the preacher pronounces the benediction at the close of the service, but He blessed them now as He never had blessed them before—and in that sense it was the beginning of that golden discourse from yonder consecrated pulpit at the right hand of God which He still continues to preach to us from this text, “Because I live, you shall live also.”

Our Lord Jesus Christ's blessing, on that occasion, was, no doubt, *a very full one*. We are not told what He said. I am quite content not to know. I like to think that, possibly, He did not utter any words at all, but that He *looked* a blessing and, above all, *bestowed* a blessing with those blessed hands of His—not going up with His hands closed, as though they were full of something for Himself alone, but spread out, as if He would empty out of His hands the countless blessings which He had gasped for our sakes! “Look, My children,” He says, “look! I am keeping nothing for Myself. All I have is for you. Hear, My disciples, hear! Whatever the Father has made known unto Me, I have made known unto you. Look, My children! Look, My Brethren! Behold, I have given you all that I have—My Manhood and My Godhead, My life, My death, My Resurrection and My Glory.” And so, with those blessed hands uplifted, He seems to bestow the fullest conceivable blessing, for He gives us all that God can give! He gives us all that He has, to be ours forever and ever! Can you not picture Him doing this? He is before my mind's eye now. My imagination seems to help my faith and I bless His dear name that the last time His disciples saw Him, they saw Him with His hands emptied out upon them in blessing!

Note, also, that *this blessing was for His disciples*. May I not lay the emphasis there? “He lifted up His hands, and blessed *them*.” Yes, there are common blessings in which all men have a share, but there are special blessings for His chosen ones! He is universally benevolent, but He is especially generous to His own elect! He loved His Church and gave Himself for it. He has redeemed His people by His blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people and nation. There was a specialty about Christ's benediction even as there was about His intercession. He said to His Father concerning His disciples, “I pray for *them*. I pray not for the world, but for them which You have given Me” and now that He had risen from the dead, He blessed *them*. May I hope that I am among *the them*, for on those disciples the blessing came that it might come on the whole Church of Christ of which they were the representatives? Has that blessing come on you,

Beloved? Has God “blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Heavenly places in Christ according as He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world”? Have we had the blessing of forgiveness, the blessing of justification, the blessing of adoption? Have we, today, the blessing of fellowship, the blessing of power to conquer sin? All these things the Lord gives to His own who know Him—to His sheep that hear His voice and that follow Him—and to whom He is, indeed, the Good Shepherd!

Then let me whisper in your ear—if He has blessed you, you shall be blessed, for there is no power in Heaven, or earth, or Hell that can reverse the blessing which He gives! If Jesus says it, you are indeed blessed! And He will say it again in the last tremendous day, “Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” Notwithstanding all your trials and your troubles, your weaknesses and your infirmities, you are blessed—“blessed of the Lord that made Heaven and earth”—and you shall be blessed forever and ever, for He who has gone up on high, has left you the legacy of His blessing which shall never be taken away from you.

I look upon this blessing of the disciples by their ascending Lord as *a fitting finish to the Savior's life*—as if the Savior would say to them, “There, that is a summary of the whole of My life—I have lived to bless you. That is the sum total of My teaching, that is the grand end of My ministry, that is the sure result of My death—that I might bless you.” That Resurrection blessing is the culmination of our Savior's life—that is the last stone put upon the pyramid of His mighty work! That blessing is the last and highest and best thing of all! Let us glory and rejoice in it. Who shall add anything to what Christ has finished? Luke closes his Gospel most appropriately with an, “Amen,” and Amen it is. Verily, it shall be so. There are no curses to follow the Divine blessing. There shall be no terrors of wrath to follow that benediction of love. He has said it and it stands fast! Though Heaven and earth pass away, blessed shall His people be!

That is my first point, the posture of our ascending Lord. His hands were uplifted to bless.

II. Now, secondly, THOSE HANDS WERE PIERCED HANDS.

Look! He is rising from the Mount of Olives. He has not gone high enough yet for us to have quite lost sight of Him—my imagination is trying to picture the scene and I look, and say, “Yes, I know Him! I can still see the nail prints.” As long as He is in sight, holding up His hands, you can see the distinguishing marks of the Lord Jesus—the emblems and tokens of the Crucified. You cannot mistake Him! Those are the hands that were nailed to the cruel wood of the Cross.

Those pierced hands, as we look up at them, are useful and comforting because, first, *they let us know that they are really Christ's hands*. 'Tis He that blesses us! By faith we are receiving blessing from Jesus Christ—not from someone else. But those hands do far more than that for us. *They show us the price of the blessing which He has given to us*. He is blessing us, but oh, how much those blessings cost Him! Unnumbered mercies flow down to us—

“Joys, like His griefs, immense, unknown”—

but He would not have us forget the griefs with which He bought our joys—

*“There's never a gift His hand bestows
But cost His heart a groan.”*

You are blessed, Brothers and Sisters, by the Lord Jesus Christ, but *the blessing is given to you by Christ's pierced hands*. Had He never suffered, you could never have been saved. “The chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed.” The disciples saw not merely that it was a blessing from their Lord, and a blessing that cost Him the nail prints, but that it was a blessing which came by the way of His pierced hands. We get everything good through Christ and especially through His atoning Sacrifice. We cannot have His righteousness apart from His suffering. We cannot get power to conquer sin and Satan apart from the hands that were pierced—

*“When wounded sore the stricken soul
Lies bleeding and unbound,
One only hand, a pierced hand,
Can salve the sinner's wound.”*

You may try all the royal hands in the world, but they cannot cure the true “King's evil”—the terrible evil of sin—till the pierced hand of Jesus is laid upon the poor sufferer. And then straightway the fever of despair ceases and the desperate love of sin is sucked out. The wounds of Jesus alone can cure the wounds of our sick humanity! What a blessing it is to know that the way to God's heart is through the wounds of Christ! You cannot get anything from God except through

those wounds. This is that ladder which Jacob saw in his vision. This is that gate of Paradise through which the righteous must enter. This is the refuge of those poor souls that are hunted by the roaring lion of Hell—they must speed away like frightened fawns to Jesus' wounds and find protection there! You know how our hymn puts it—

*“Him and then the sinner see,
Look through Jesus' wounds on me.”*

It is a blessing even to look at those pierced hands—not with these mortal eyes, for they might have gazed upon them and yet we might not have believed on Him. But it is a great blessing to look, with the eye of faith, at the pierced hands of Jesus—to look at Him whom we have pierced and so to be caused to mourn over the sin that pierced Him. It is a great blessing to have a broken heart mourning because of sin and to look at Jesus Christ and to know that He has carried my sins right away with those dear pierced hands of His—that is a still greater blessing! I pray the Lord to enable some of you to look at the pierced hands of Jesus. There is life in a look at Him! Turn now your eyes, though dimmed with tears, almost blinded with unbelief, with a cataract of despair forming over it and look as best you can to Him—

*“Who bore, that you might never bear,
His Father's righteous ire.”*

In those pierced hands alone you can find salvation, for all power in Heaven and in earth is given to those hands, and therefore is it that we preach the Gospel to you! Jesus is able, with a touch, to bestow salvation upon the very chief of sinners! So the blessing comes by the hands that were pierced.

I think that *this action of Christ is an epitome of the Gospel*, the substance of the whole matter—pierced hands distributing benedictions! There is Jesus, going up to Heaven from the earth, out of which He has risen from the grave where He was buried after He had died as the Substitute for sinners. And as He goes up, He is blessing men with His pierced hands. To a sinner I would say, “This is the way the blessing must come—from the pierced hands of the Christ who rose from the dead. Look up to Him and live.”

III. I must not linger longer, though the theme is enticing, but must close with a third reflection. I have reminded you that the hands of Christ were uplifted to bless and that those hands were pierced hands. Now, thirdly, I have to show you that **THOSE HANDS SWAY THE SCEPTER**. We look back to Calvary and Olivet and remember that the hands that blessed us were the hands that bled for us. Now look forward and see that the hands that blessed us are the hands that rule the world!

At this very moment, *the scepter of Providence is held in the hand that was pierced*—the hand of the Man of Love, the Crucified, for, “all things were created by Him, and for Him: and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist.” There is not an angel in Heaven who does not delight to do His bidding—and the time shall come when “at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in Heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Further, *those hands which blessed us, are the hands that rule the Church of God*. At this moment Jesus walks among the golden candlesticks, bearing blessings to the divers branches of His Church, everywhere ruling in all things, for He is “the Head over all things to the Church.”

And *those are the hands which we shall see on the morning of the Resurrection* when the trumpet shall sound and that Great White Throne which, like a mirror, shall reflect every man's inmost self and shall fill the center of the wondrous assembly of all men of all nations and ages! The hand of the Judge shall be the hand of our Redeemer! The spouse in the Song of Songs says of the Bridegroom, “His hands are like gold rings set with beryl.” Whatever that charming imagery may mean, I am sure it cannot be good enough to express the beauty of Christ's hands to us. The brightest gem that monarch ever wore could not be compared, for a single second, to the beauty of those wounds of His—

*“Now resplendent shine His nail prints,
Every eye shall see His wounds.
They who pierced Him
Shall at His appearance wail”—*

but we shall not, for we shall say, “Those are the very hands that blessed us! The last time they were seen of mortal men, they were extended in blessing His disciples, so they cannot be the hands to smite us, for He does not first bless and then curse.” It shall never be said of Him, “Out of the same mouth proceeds blessing and cursing” to His people. No, He says,

"I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands." And in those nail prints Jesus reads the names of all His people. For love of them He bore all that He endured for their sakes. Jacob's hands, no doubt, bore the marks of his 14 years of toil for Rachel. And if he ever showed them to her, they must have appeared fair in her sight because they were tokens of his long-trying love. But, oh, what blessed tokens of love will Christ's nail prints be to us and what blessed assurances will they be to us that, having loved us so much, He will never curse us—that having bought us with His blood, He cannot cast us away! "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" You cannot separate the nail prints from the hands, nor can you separate those who were redeemed by the blood of Jesus from the heart of Him who redeemed them! In His flesh He bears the tokens of His eternal union with us and that nail print is like the marriage ring—the token that He is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, and one with us forever. "We are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones." Paul truly wrote, "This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the Church."

What is to come out of all this? Have you seen Christ in any measure tonight? Has the Holy Spirit made use of my tongue, as a truth, to paint a picture? Have you, by faith, seen Christ rising with uplifted hands, the pierced hands, the hands that are to sway the scepter of universal Sovereignty? Then do just what His disciples did. First, "they worshipped Him." Let us render to Jesus now, in our minds, a distinct act of worship. Let not the day close till, in addition to all those devotions which we are accustomed to render to Him, we adore Him! A cloud is between us and Him, but the comfort is that it is *only* a cloud and the sun soon breaks through a cloud. It is a cloud that is raining blessings on us, for it was expedient for us that Christ should go away and the descent of the Spirit is one of the results of His Ascension to Heaven! He can shine through that cloud and shine through it gloriously, too! Let us worship Him now. "Blessed be Your name, O Eternal God, Immanuel, God With Us!" Adore Him, Brothers and Sisters, in the silence of your soul.

Then, next, like the disciples, let us be filled with joy, for we are told that "they worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy." Yes, you must go back to your Jerusalem. You must go home. You must go among ungodly men and women to serve your Lord. But go, as the disciples did, "with great joy"—go with this jubilant note on your lips—

*"Our Lord is risen from the dead!
Our Jesus is gone up on high!
The powers of Hell are captive led—
Dragged to the portals of the sky."*

I have known that one thought of our Lord's exaltation lifts me up from the borders of despair. In a dread hour, long since past, when reason almost reeled after great calamities had overtaken me, I recovered my balance and my peace of mind in a single moment by the recollection of that one text, "Therefore God also has highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name." I felt, after the tragedy in the Surrey Gardens Music Hall, like the soldier who was mortally wounded and lying in a ditch, but I seemed to hear the shout, "God has highly exalted HIM," so I did not care what became of me as long as my Lord was exalted. It is said that one of the great Napoleon's soldiers lay wounded and bleeding to death, but he saw the Emperor ride by and his eyes flashed fire again! And he said, "Never mind what becomes of me, for the Emperor is safe." That was how I felt, in a far higher sense, concerning my exalted Lord. And I said to myself, "So long as He lives and reigns, all is well! Men may rave at me as they will, but what does it matter so long as He is exalted? "I want you, dear Friends, to feel like that concerning your ascended Lord. Go home and worship Him and be filled with great joy!

Then there was another thing that the disciples did. They "were continually in the Temple, praising and blessing God." Let your joy have adequate expression. Jesus is risen, so begin to praise Him and, having once begun, keep on praising Him and never leave off as long as there is cause for praising Him—and that will be forever and ever! Jesus has gone up to Heaven and cleared an open way for us right up to the Throne of God! So send your praises up to Him! Let your heart mount from the earth right up to the heart of God! I can urge you to do this, but only the Holy Spirit can *enable* you to do it—and I pray that He may do this for all the Lord's people now.

If outsiders are asking, "What have we to do with this Jesus who has gone up into Heaven?" let me remind you of another purpose of His exaltation. Peter said to the high priest, "Him has God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel"—that is, to the very chief of sinners—"to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." And it is through faith in Him that this forgiveness may be given to you. If you trust in Him who has

risen from the dead and gone into His Glory, you shall be saved, for, "He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them." That is what He is doing now, so trust Him with your case, trust Him now, for His dear name's sake. Amen.

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

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