

## SERMON X.

### THE LORD'S SUPPER.

LUKE xxii. 19.

This do in remembrance of me.

A CHRISTIAN Pastor, anxious for the salvation of the souls committed to his charge, must be very desirous of seeing his people regular communicants at the Lord's table. He knows that nothing ought to keep them from it but absolute unfitness. He knows that if they are unfit for the Lord's Supper, they are unfit for heaven; and that if they are unfit for heaven, they are in constant danger of the condemnation of hell. He cannot therefore but be uneasy to see many—indeed, to see *any*—of his flock, of mature years and understanding, in the habit of turning their backs upon that sacred rite, which was appointed for their spiritual sustenance.

With this impression on my mind, I wish now to address you on the subject of the Lord's Supper. In doing which, I shall speak, First, of the institution and nature of this sacrament; Secondly, of the obligation which we lie under to partake of it constantly; and, Thirdly, of the qualifications necessary in order to partake of it worthily.

I. The institution of the Lord's Supper is recorded in nearly the same terms by three of the Evangelists, and by St. Paul in his first Epistle to

the Corinthians.<sup>a</sup> The substance of them all is given in the Communion Service of our Church, in "the same night that he was betrayed, took bread; and, when he had given thanks, he brake it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, Take, eat, this is my body which is given for you: do this in remembrance of me. Likewise after supper he took the cup; and, when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of this; for this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for you, and for many, for the remission of sins: do this, as oft as ye shall drink it, in remembrance of me."

From this account we find, that the Lord's Supper is to be looked upon as a memorial or commemorative act. We are commanded to eat the bread and drink the wine in "remembrance" of Christ; to put us in mind, or make us *remember*, that his body was broken or wounded upon the cross, and his blood poured forth for our sakes. And while it puts us in remembrance of these things, it ought to excite in us those affections, those emotions of heart, and especially that thankfulness, which such a wonderful instance of mercy deserves.

But though the Lord's Supper is to be regarded as a memorial or commemorative rite, yet if it were to be considered in this light *only*, it would hardly deserve to be called a sacrament. For a sacrament, as we are taught in the Church Catechism, is not only "an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace given unto us," but also, "a means whereby we receive that grace, and a pledge" or "token to assure us" that we do receive it. Now if the Lord's Supper were

<sup>a</sup> Chap. xi. 23—25.

merely an act of remembrance, it would by no means come up to this definition of a sacrament; and accordingly it is the doctrine of our Church, that the Lord's Supper was instituted, not only for the continual remembrance of the "sacrifice of the death of Christ, and of the benefits which we receive thereby;" but also as the means of conveying to the devout communicant the benefits which Christ's death was designed to procure; as "the means of strengthening and refreshing our souls, by the body and blood of Christ, as our bodies are" strengthened and refreshed by eating bread and drinking wine.<sup>b</sup> "The cup of blessing which we bless," says St. Paul, "is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?"<sup>c</sup> In compliance with this doctrine, the Lord's Supper is spoken of in the first exhortation in the Communion Service, as being to us "spiritual food and sustenance;" and soon after, devout partakers of it are said "spiritually to eat the flesh of Christ, and to drink his blood; to dwell in Christ, and Christ in them; to be one with Christ, and Christ with them." In the same sense, in the prayer immediately before the prayer of consecration, we entreat, that "we may so eat the flesh of Jesus Christ, and drink his blood, that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body, and our souls washed through his most precious blood, and that we may evermore dwell in him and he in us." And thus we ask in the prayer of consecration, that "we may be partakers of the body and blood of Christ." All these expressions of spiritually eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Christ, of dwelling in him

<sup>b</sup> See Waterland and Law, if this volume should fall into the hands of any who have access to such authors.

<sup>c</sup> 1 Cor. x. 16.

and he in us, of being partakers of his body and blood, mean precisely the same thing. They are figurative modes of expressing our partaking in the benefits which Christ's death purchased for us; and these are, forgiveness of sins, and the assistance of the Holy Spirit. In the same sense are to be understood those strong expressions in the Church Catechism, which assert, that "the body and blood of Christ are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper;" which mean nothing more than that the *faithful*, those, who with hearty repentance and true faith receive the Lord's Supper, do verily and indeed partake of the benefits which the death of Christ purchased; the forgiveness of sin, and renewed strength from the Spirit of holiness.

A sacrament, however, is said to be not only the means of imparting divine grace, but also a pledge or token to assure us that we receive it. It is usual among men to accompany, with some outward sign or token, the appointment to any dignity, or office, or possession; or the conclusion of an agreement or bargain. In this country, for instance, in several of the high offices of state, the appointment to or relinquishing of them, is accompanied by the delivery or giving back of a seal, or wand, or staff: the conveyance of land is often completed by the conveyance of the writings relating to it, or by taking bodily possession; or, to adopt a still more familiar illustration, when a farming servant is hired, it is customary to give a small piece of money as a pledge or earnest. And in a manner somewhat similar are the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper to be looked upon as an outward token, or pledge, or earnest, by the delivery of which by the hands of his minister, God conveys to the devout communicant the benefits which those symbols represent.

These benefits, you will recollect, are spoken of as being received by the *faithful*, and by the faithful only. Thus while the 28th Article of our Church asserts, that "the body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten in the Lord's Supper only after an heavenly and spiritual manner; and the mean whereby it is received and eaten is faith;" the 29th says, "The wicked and such as be void of a lively faith, although they do carnally and visibly press with their teeth the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, yet in no wise are they partakers of Christ."

11. From the foregoing account of the institution and nature of the Lord's Supper, the obligation to partake of it is sufficiently plain. We are enjoined to partake of it by Christ himself. "Do this," says he, "IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME; DRINK YE ALL OF IT." If we refuse to communicate, we are guilty of disobedience to our Lord's authority, and of course expose ourselves to the penalty of disobedience. Why call ye him Lord, Lord, and do not the things that he says?

Reflect too upon the time at which our Saviour appointed this ordinance. It was in the "same night in which he was betrayed." At the time when he was upon the point of enduring the severest agony of mind and body; when he was just about to encounter the most cruel indignities, to be mocked and scourged, and spit upon, and at last to undergo a most painful death; and all for our sakes; then it was that he instituted this sacrament, in order to put us in remembrance of his sufferings. Certainly we cannot refuse to comply with this his last, his dying request, without being guilty of deep ingratitude. Had we been condemned to suffer death, and some friend had given himself to die in our stead, we should have felt *very* thankful to him. And if he had desired us to

do something to put us in mind of his kindness, we should have felt bound by the strongest ties to comply with his request. Let us not be less thankful to him who died to save us from everlasting death; who, when we were sinners, "gave his life a ransom for all."

Consider too, that the Lord's Supper was intended to convey to us the benefits, which the death of Christ purchased for us, even the forgiveness of sin, and the assistance of the Holy Ghost. If we had no sins to be forgiven, or if our own strength were sufficient to the performance of the divine will, yet still we could not neglect this sacrament, without being guilty of disobedience and ingratitude. But if we are laden with sins, and compassed about with infirmities—as, whether we feel and confess it or not, is indeed the case with every one of us—it surely concerns us in the highest degree to do what we can to procure to ourselves these inestimable benefits; and to refuse to partake of the Lord's Supper, is to act like a sick man, who throws from him the medicine by which he might be healed;—it is, in some measure, to invite and court our own condemnation.

Our Lord himself, in his very remarkable discourse to the Jews in the 6th chapter of St. John, says, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." "If a man," indeed, as our Church wisely and charitably teaches, "by reason of extremity or sickness, or by any other just impediment, do not receive the sacrament of Christ's body and blood, yet, if he do truly repent him of his sins, and steadfastly believe that Jesus Christ hath suffered death upon the cross for him, and shed his blood for his redemption, earnestly remembering the benefits he hath thereby, and giving him hearty thanks therefor, he doth eat and

“drink the body and blood of our Saviour Christ profitably to his soul's health, although he do not receive the sacrament with his mouth.”<sup>a</sup> But if a man, without such just impediment, wilfully refuses to partake of the body and blood of Christ in the way which Christ himself has appointed, he certainly acts as if he cared not for the strengthening and refreshing of his soul, or even for the soul's spiritual life.

III. But perhaps you acknowledge the obligation to communicate, but are afraid of communicating unworthily. Let us proceed then, in the third place, to consider the qualifications requisite in order to partake of the Lord's Supper. These qualifications comprise nothing but what is necessary at every part of our life, whether we receive the Lord's Supper or not; nothing but what we engaged for at baptism; nothing but what is necessary to fit us for death. They may be comprised in two words, *faith* and *repentance*. In the Church Catechism, in answer to the question, “What is required of them who come to the Lord's Supper?” it is replied, “To examine themselves whether they repent them truly of their former sins, steadfastly purposing to lead a new life have a lively faith in God's mercy through Christ, and a thankful remembrance of his death, and be in charity with all men.”

Of the nature of repentance, none of you I hope are ignorant. It consists in real heartfelt sorrow for sin, together with a sincere steadfast resolution to walk for the future in newness of life; a resolution to avoid to the utmost of our power whatever is displeasing to God, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. Faith is a real belief in the fundamental doctrines of the

<sup>a</sup> Last Rubrick in the Communion of the Sick.

Gospel, particularly in that *most* fundamental doctrine, the death of Christ for the sins of the world; a belief, which is not the mere assent of the understanding, but the persuasion of the heart, showing itself to be living and active by the good fruits which it produces on the conduct; a faith, in short, which worketh by love. Of such a faith the natural consequence is *thankfulness*—“a thankful remembrance of the death of Christ.” For certainly a man, who really believes that when he was exposed to eternal death, the Son of God died to rescue him, will feel thankful for such a stupendous instance of loving-kindness. The being in perfect charity with all men, implies the harbouring no ill-will, a freedom from all desire of revenge, a readiness to forgive injuries, and to promote the welfare of all within our reach. This in fact may be considered as a part of repentance. The qualifications for the Lord's Supper are mentioned rather more at length in the Communion Service. “The way and means thereto is, first, to examine your lives and conversations by the rule of God's commandments, and wherein soever ye shall perceive yourselves to have offended, either by will, word, or deed, there to bewail your own sinfulness, and confess yourselves to Almighty God, with full purpose of amendment of life. And if ye shall perceive your offences to be such as are not only against God, but also against your neighbours, then ye shall reconcile yourselves unto them, being ready to make satisfaction according to the uttermost of your power for all injuries and wrongs done by you to any other; and being likewise ready to forgive others that have offended you, as ye would have forgiveness of your offences at God's hand.” And again, more shortly, thus; “Judge therefore yourselves, brethren, that ye be not judged of the Lord;

“repent you truly for your sins past, have a lively and steadfast faith in Christ our Saviour, amend your lives, and be in perfect charity with all men.” And what is there here which is not the bounden duty of every one of us, whether we receive the Lord's Supper or not? What is there here, which is not necessary to entitle us to the common privileges of Christianity? What is there here that can be neglected by any one, who wishes to meet death with comfort? Those who have opportunity, do well, if before communicating they give more time than usual to prayer and self-examination; but the qualifications above mentioned comprise all that is absolutely requisite.

Many persons seem to entertain the mistaken and dangerous idea, that though a man is not fit for the sacrament, he yet may be in a state of acceptance with God, and his eternal interests safe. Believe me, my friends, it is, generally speaking, impossible for a person of mature years to be unfit to partake of the Lord's Supper, and at the same time fit for heaven. For in what does your unfitness for the sacrament consist? in the neglect of repentance? in a determination not to quit your sins? in an obstinate refusal to lead a new life? Alas! if this be so, you are in a most perilous situation, whether you receive the Lord's Supper or not. You are in a state of death, and eternal sufferings are hanging over your head. For you cannot hope for forgiveness without repentance, and if your sins are unforgiven, they will ruin you for ever. “Except ye repent, ye shall certainly perish.” Or is it that you are wholly without faith? Is it that though you profess and call yourself a Christian, you really believe neither in God the Father, nor in Jesus Christ whom he hath sent? If this be so, you are yet in your sins; for without faith it is impossible to

please God, and it is through faith in Christ alone that forgiveness is offered.

If however you tell me that you are heartily sorry for having offended God, and wish and intend to use your best endeavours to please him for the time to come, but that you fear that your sorrow for sin has not been deep enough, that your repentance is imperfect; if you say farther, that you really believe the great articles of the Christian religion, and are influenced in your conduct by this belief, but that your faith is weak, and not sufficiently vigorous and active; I should then exhort you to dismiss your fears, and to draw near to the table of your Lord in humble reliance upon the mercy of God. As long as we are in the body, we shall continue full of imperfections; and if none could partake of the Lord's Supper, but those whose faith and repentance are in every respect perfect, who could venture to approach it? We profess to come, “not trusting in our own righteousness, but in God's manifold and great mercies;” we there confess “our manifold sins and wickedness,” and acknowledge that “we are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under his table.”

Or perhaps you apprehend, though your repentance be now sincere, that at some future period you may fall into sin. If none were to receive the Lord's Supper but those who can be sure that they shall henceforward be perfectly free from sin, no one ought to receive it, for there is no man living that sinneth not. It is because we are continually exposed to temptation, and continually in need of having our souls strengthened and refreshed, that the Lord's Supper ought to be continually received. This sacrament was appointed, not for angels, not for glorified saints, but for *sinners*; for sinners who are penitent, and wish to subdue their sins, although

they expect not to subdue them entirely while they continue in the body.

Serious attention to what has been said of the qualifications requisite in order to partake of the Lord's Supper, ought to remove all the groundless obstacles which prevent men from communicating. I wish however particularly to address two descriptions of persons.

Many of you say that you are *too young* to communicate. But are you too young to *repent* and *believe*? Are you too young to fear and to serve God? too young to wish to go to heaven rather than to hell? Our church considers all who are old enough to be confirmed,—certainly all of the age of sixteen years,<sup>e</sup>—as old enough also to receive the sacrament; and so they certainly are. If many young people are in the habit of neglecting the Lord's Supper, their bad example furnishes no excuse for you, and does not lessen your obligation. Do you think that because you are young, you need not think of these things, but may lightly follow your own wills and fancies, and that it will be soon enough to attend to religion when you are old? But you may not live to be old. You may be cut off in the beginning of life. If in the strength and confidence of youth you resolve to “walk in the ways of thine heart, and the sight of thine eyes,—know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.”<sup>f</sup> The Scriptures exhort you to attend to religion in the morning of your life:—“Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.”<sup>g</sup> God has a right to the best of your days, and the best of your strength. Do not then suffer the plea of youth to prevent you from complying with the dying *request*, the dying *command* of your crucified Saviour. Do you say

<sup>e</sup> See the 112th Canon.    <sup>f</sup> Eccles. xi. 9.    <sup>g</sup> Eccles. xii. 1.

that youth is exposed to peculiar temptations? There is then the greater reason why you should seek for spiritual strength at the table of your Lord. You are old enough to understand what religion is; you are old enough to be sensible of the difference between being happy or miserable for ever. You have not then any excuse for neglecting the sacrament, and you cannot neglect it without being guilty of disobedience to Christ.

Again: women of the poorer class, when they have families of children, too generally make this circumstance a pretext for absenting themselves from the Lord's table. They say that their children burden them with cares, fret and ruffle their temper, and thus render them unfit for the sacrament. But do your families prevent you from *repenting* and *believing*? If you repent and believe, you are fit to come. Your families do in fact furnish an additional motive to you for being religious, and ought to make you anxious to draw down God's blessing both upon yourselves and upon them. If they have been to you an occasion of sin, you must repent of such sin, and strive against it for the time to come; and that you may strive successfully, seek for spiritual strength at the Lord's table. Irritation of temper, and anxiety or carefulness of mind, are to be regarded as marks of human weakness, and must be prayed against, and striven against. To suffer them to keep you from the Lord's table, is as if a sick man should make his sickness an excuse for refusing to apply to the physician. In short, you are either fit to come to the Lord's table, or unfit. If fit, you have nothing to keep you from it. If unfit, you are living in an unchristian state, a state of condemnation. And can you quietly make up your mind to continue in a state of condemnation until you have ceased to have children, or until your families are grown up?

The Scriptures represent your children as a blessing. Do not make them a pretext for disobeying God; for neglecting your salvation.

Finally, let me beg of you all to believe that it cannot be wise or safe to live in the neglect of an institution of Christ. Remember that you are bound to partake of the Lord's Supper, because Jesus Christ has commanded it; because you act most unthankfully if you neglect it; because of the spiritual benefits which it is intended to convey. Remember that nothing is necessary to prepare you for this ordinance but faith and repentance; and that nothing, generally speaking, ought to keep you from it, but what, if persisted in, will keep you out of heaven. If you profess and call yourselves Christians, do not slight the Christian sacraments. If you believe that Christ died upon the cross for your sins, do not neglect to commemorate his death in the way which he himself appointed. If you acknowledge Christ as your master—if you call him Lord, Lord, refuse not to do the things that he says.†

† Among the many excellent treatises on the Lord's Supper, published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, I hardly know to which to give the preference. Perhaps the "Short Introduction to the Lord's Supper," by the apostolical Bishop Wilson, is altogether the most useful. Waldo's "Essay on the Holy Sacrament" is written with great judgment and piety, and the remarks on the Communion Service are excellent. Bishop Gibson's little book on this subject bears marks of the strong sense, learning, and pastoral fidelity of its author. Archbishop Synge's "Answer to all Excuses for not coming to the Holy Sacrament," and Bishop Fleetwood's "Reasonable Communicant," are both written with great clearness, and are particularly calculated for removing the doubts of scrupulous persons.

## SERMON XI.

### THE CHRISTIAN PRIESTHOOD.

1 Cor. iv. 1.

Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.

**EVEN** among men who profess and call themselves Christians, there are at all times too many who require to be instructed in the religion which they profess; and yet more who stand in need of exhortation, admonition, and reproof. From whom shall they receive such instruction, and admonition, but from the ministers of God? "How shall they hear without a preacher?" Public worship, too, appears to tend greatly to the promotion of the glory of God, and of the edification of man; and the Christian sacraments are acknowledged to be generally necessary to salvation. The proper celebration of public worship, however, requires the presence of some person regularly appointed to lead and direct the devotions of the people; and the sacraments having been ordained by Christ himself, must be administered by men duly authorized by him. From such considerations may be inferred the necessity of the office of the priesthood.

From the earliest ages, there appear to have been priests appointed to minister for the people in holy things. For some time, indeed, the office was