

“GLADNESS IN THE WORKS OF GOD.”

A SERMON

Preached on Thanksgiving Day,

NOVEMBER 27, 1873,

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PHILADELPHIA.

PHILADELPHIA:

J. B. CHANDLER, PRINTER, 306 & 308 CHESTNUT STREET.

1873.

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PSALM XCII: 4.

*“For Thou Lord hast made me glad through Thy work;
I will triumph in the works of Thy hands.”*

GOD'S works inspire us with song; make us glad; we triumph in them. Our song is exultant. Creation, providence, grace, awaken thoughtful gratitude and praise, and furnish a triumphant vindication of infinite wisdom, goodness and power. We may sing, while others blaspheme; we may pray and praise, while others deny and scoff. A glad heart is a continual feast and a continual melody, and God makes the heart glad. Man is a creature of joy, made to be happy. Happiness was the original endowment of the Creator and the primal condition of man. Life is a joy, it is a luxury to live, and could this wondrous frame be always in accord with the laws of its being, and this more wondrous soul always in obedience to the commands of its Creator and Judge, we would

never know one moment of pain or one hour's anguish of heart. We sin, we suffer, we die; that is the history of our transgression and fall, but under all these disabilities and dwelling amid the ruins of the apostasy, ourselves a wreck, we may still be glad. Out of stony griefs we may raise monuments of praise; from stony pathways make a highway of holiness, over which the ransomed shall come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads. The soul of man was made to be in harmony with all happy beings and joyful things. It responds quickly to every song of nature and every gladsome voice of man. There is a heart-bound that springs to meet all that is joyous in our being and in our world, and yet men in this world are not always happy. With fallen countenance and bowed head, man walks amid God's works as if an alien or an exile; denies nature's presence or shuts his eyes to her glories; scorns her honest oxygen and refreshing airs; murmurs at her east wind, her northern cold and fierce western blasts; shrinks from her embrace and hides away from her beauties and grandeur, as if an enemy, and not a friend, who invites to beautiful fields, glad melodies, invigorating conflicts and rich repasts.

Glad is the soul whom God makes glad, and God makes many glad. The religion of faith, of love, of gratitude, is a religion of joy; a joy that is not afraid to speak or sing; a joy like that of waterfalls, of open

fields, of ocean floods. It will not keep silence, it will break out in this world, and its voices and song shall be heard above sighs and sobs, and tumults and strife, and even the noise of war itself. In the day when God is angry and the nations are afraid, and the wise men of earth are confounded, and the chief captains and the mighty men are broken, and the rich men bewail their losses and stand afar off and cry, "*Alas! alas! for in one hour so great riches is come to naught;*" the redeemed and reconciled soul shall say, "*Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid, for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; therefore with joy shall we draw water out of the wells of salvation.*"

Gladness is a gift of God. It comes with the gift of life, and the bounties of Providence, but like every other Divine gift to men, we mar it, misuse it, pervert it from its original intention and make it either positively evil, or minister to our wretchedness and woe, rather than to a beautiful and joyous life. The mystery is to know how, and for what to be glad. Children are glad in the exuberance of a young nature and an unclouded life. In their gambols and games the old joyfulness bursts out, and is heard in the glee-some laugh and the boisterous shout. Sports and plays, like the laughing brook or the singing bird, tell of a joy that is born with the life, and is natural to it, and ought to go with it till life shall end in this world.

But years still the childish laughter ; sober the boy into the graver man, and leave childish things and childish life far behind. We pass from the green fields into the dusty highways and barter the freedom of youth for the bondage of toil and care, and as we make the transition, we find the roads become rough and hard, the burdens heavy, and we sorrow and sigh by the way. And yet God means that we shall be glad, and always glad. He will turn our sorrows even into joy. The joy of our birthright and our proper and immortal manhood, is gone, never to return ; but all is not lost. If we cannot now rejoice in an unfallen nature, we may joy in a nature made anew, a life recovered, redeemed, made forever blessed, through the grace that can save. The man whose sin is covered, is blessed of the Lord, and there can be no higher beatitude in this world : "*Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity.*"

The first note of our song to-day strikes sharp and clear as a bell tone.

I.—GOD MAKES US GLAD.

"*Thou hast made me glad!*" He clothes us with a nature charged with all possibilities of joyfulness ; he plants us in a world where every voice not marred by sin, is melody, and gives us mind and soul, that are in

accord with the harmonies of nature and the gladness of all noble life. He endows us, equips us for our life-service and joy, and makes all creatures and things minister to our delight. Not only does he summon all creatures to our service and to ministries of good for our comfort and happiness, but God gives himself and makes us glad in Him. "I will be glad and rejoice in *Thee!*" Our very highest joy springs from a right perception of the nature and perfections of God, and a complete accord with his word and government. We rejoice because "*the Lord reigneth,*" reigns over us, reigns in us, reigns supreme and absolute in the universe. Through his creatures, he draws us nearer to himself, and by direct communication imparts his graces and gives his blessing. In a way we cannot explain, the spirit of the Lord witnesseth with our spirit, that we are born of God. God communes with the soul, and fills the heart with all fulness, "*Then was our mouth filled with laughter and our tongue with singing.*"

II.—GOD MAKES US GLAD THROUGH HIS WORKS.

We see his creations, we watch his providence, we wonder at his grace. The "works" of God, which gladden the hearts of men, are all the creations of his hand, and all the ways of his providence and grace. These furnish grand themes for thought and praise.

The rhythmic swing of planets, the steady revolutions of suns, the times and seasons which mark ages and cycles, the affairs of men, the events of our world, these belong to his works and are parts of his ways. We study them to-day, we seek to know more of the divine character and work, and to come to a better understanding of the wonders which God hath wrought. "*The works (or deeds or doings) of God are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein.*"

We can never be at a loss for themes of praise while we study the works or the providence of God. He is always doing "wondrous things." We may be always glad in his work, but our joy may have times and seasons. There are red-letter days in every calendar. Times of fulness, seasons of overflow, grand occasions of life, supreme moments. We may have an even and cheerful temper, a spirit habitually joyful, the current of life may flow steadily through meadows and fields, but it will sometimes pass gardens and orchards, through the land of Beulah itself. The sweep of thought may be along lines of fulness and joy, but there will come times when the thought and life will rise to exultant gladness and ecstasy. There come festal seasons, feasts of ingathering, when the soul shouts its treasures home, ponders the wealth of its mercies, and lifts a new song to the Giver of all good and the God of all grace. There are days of

special thanksgiving, and this is one. It is the day which our country has set apart and our God has honored, and we will rejoice and be glad in it.

And for what shall we be glad? First of all,

1. *That God has not left this world, nor left us without a witness of his work in it.*

The times are evil and the signs are startling enough; they cast heavy shadows, portend great events; upheavals of empires, downfall of thrones, clash of armies and crush of dynasties; but the keenest vision and the watcher on the utmost wall finds no evidence that God has forgotten the earth, or left man in it alone to work out the fearful problems of his probation and his destiny. Atheism is here: *a Theos*, no God! But it is the "*fool only who has said in his heart there is no God.*" Creation never said that, Christianity never thought it. Atheism may be in the hearts of men, may be heard in the speech of men, but God is still in his own world, and there is room for both. God gives time and place for human pride to play its tricks, and human passion to send its rank offences up to high heaven, but he never ceases to control human madness and folly, or fails to cause the "wrath of man to praise him" and restrain the remainder. He may leave a man, forsake nations who are mad upon their idols, but he never forsakes the

earth. He is in it, over it, watching all its interests, moving forward all its concerns, and everywhere making his power felt and causing his presence to be acknowledged. No year of modern times, perhaps of all times, has God so signally made himself felt in the affairs of our world as in the past. His providences have been clear, swift and telling. The most careless observer has seen the signs of the times redden in the sky, and flash out over the earth. Men's hearts have failed them as they have heard the thunder of his voice and seen the majesty of his going. And even now, do the multitude stand aghast or gather in the places of concourse to ask what these things mean. And it is God's work which is passing before us; his deeds among the children of men, that we are here to contemplate. We come up to this height to sweep the horizon, to scan the heavens, to cry to the watchmen at every gate and on every outlook: "What of the night, and what of the day." *"I will meditate also of all Thy work, and talk of Thy doings."*

2. *We may rejoice to-day over the steady and large advances made in human knowledge.*

God teaches men, inspires thought, gives wisdom to invent and plan, skill to construct and power to carry forward great works for the renovation of our world, or for the higher intelligence and happiness of our race.

Men make wonderful discoveries, strange inventions, find new forms of power, make new applications of old forces and bless themselves. Brunel tunneled the bed of the Thames and made a roadway under its waters from the city to the Surrey side, but he took his thought and his plan from the Teredo, a simple Mollusk, who without tools and without noise, runs drifts and galleries through ramparts of limestone and piers of granite. Stephenson built his vast tubular bridges at Conway and over the Menai Straits, with four hundred feet span, through which trains can pass with scarcely slackened speed; but his tubular bridge was but an imitation of the human bone, with its double arch, which God fashioned for strength and lightness when he made man. Our corrugated roofs and iron tubing for water spouts, are the old story of the compound arches of the Nautilus and Ammonite used for ages before man was born. The Crystal Palace at Sydenham, sprang out of the beautiful net work of the leaf of the gigantic tropical lily, the *Victoria regina*; so God teaches men.

Much knowledge once attained in our world has passed out of the minds and memories of men. Arts are lost, libraries have been burned, wise men have died and left no heir. Whatever was needless for the help of man, or his growth in intellectual and moral greatness, has been forgotten. We cannot

build pyramids or move stones of thousands of tons for hundreds of miles, and lift them upon pedestals or to place in the wall. Pyramids are not needed. Men sleep as well in six feet of simple earth as in a rocky mausoleum which covers many acres. A steam engine or a cotton jenny is worth more to our world than all the pyramids ever built by man. A Jacquard loom has done more to civilize and humanize our race than all the obelisks and pillars of Egypt and Rome. A simple sewing machine has done more for man, and more to make woman kindly and genial and loving, and helpful to herself and her husband and her children, than Cleopatra's granite shafts, which cost multitudes of human lives and have been the wonder of all the ages. A single line of railway piercing through the wilderness, or striking to the heart of some undeveloped country, is a greater power in our world than all the armies of the Pharaohs, or the legions of Rome under all its emperors. Baron Reuter and his corps of engineers, will do more for Eastern empire and Western civilization than all the Persian hordes whom Xerxes led to the Hellespont or massed before the strong holds of Greece. Every year men have become more clear and precise in their knowledge and its practical application to the wants or the comfort of the human race. The last year has gathered its spoils and added its treasures to the rich stores of the past.

3. *We rejoice to-day in the work which God is doing for our world, in the advancement of true science.*

Timid hearts shrink at the very mention of scientific investigation or knowledge. There has been so much noise and bluster and such loud claims urged by men called "scientists" that devout men and women have grown restive and fearful and have begun to question the foundation, and even the reality of faith itself. They have been told that there is no faith, for there is no God in whom we can have faith; no soul, but a mere spirit or wind; no virtue, for moral worth is a fluid or gas; no immortality, because fluids and gases pass into new forms and find their equivalents in matter under new conditions; that all organized being is evolved from unorganized matter, and that the higher types are the outgrowth of the lower and the less, that men came from monkeys, and beasts from birds, and birds from reptiles, and reptiles from fish, and fish from crustacea, and crustacea from mollusks, and mollusks from monads, and monads from protoplasm, and protoplasm made itself!

And so under the shield and in the name of science, mighty men are making fierce assaults upon Christian faith. But these great swelling words should alarm nobody. There is no cause for fear, but the rather for joy. Scientific men are digging about the foundations

of the Christian Church. They have done it before, and if they go deep enough, they will come down to the Rock of Ages, on which the Church is built, and find it fixed, sure, a "chief corner stone" that cannot be moved. They explore all fields, put every element to the test, examine every order of life and every form of matter; battery and balance, compass and magnet, acid and alkali are always at hand and always in use. It is well. The keener the search, the more careful the experiment; the more skilful the dissection, the more patient and prolonged the investigation, the nearer will they come to the truth and to God who is himself the truth. They may not themselves light on the secret towards which they make their way; they may dig deep and search wide, and miss God, but they will open paths in which others can walk, and find him. They may develop exact scientific knowledge and popularize scientific truth, and give it to the common people as they have already done, and in this we joy. The "common people" is the court of last resort, and we venture the religious instinct of humanity and the God inspired faith of the poor of this world, against all science and philosophy falsely so called. From real science, neither rich or poor, learned or unlearned have anything to fear. God cannot deny himself and his works will never belie him. I have far more fear of the spiritual unconcern, the fashion and worldliness,

the godless lives within the church, than of all the sappers and miners who are at work at her walls, or digging about her foundation stones. When unbelief is bold and scepticism offensive in its boasts, thoughtful minds will be stirred and men will examine for themselves, and find the solid ground on which they have built their faith. These very conflicts are needed to awaken Christian men and rouse the disciples of Jesus to the necessity of demonstrating their Christianity, not by compass and chain, or dissecting knife, electric battery or chemical test, but by a Christian life. We want no better proof or higher demonstration of a Christian faith, or the existence of a God, than the Christian life of a man who believes in God. You can get no nearer to the heart of things, the very core of all this controversy, and the very source of all this blatant unbelief, than when you get at the heart of a man. The unbelief, or the belief lies not in the world, but in a man's own soul.

In the mean time true science is advanced. The deep sea bottom is dredged, and its multitudinous life and recent deposits made to correct the geological theories of the past; Swiss lakes are dragged and Scandinavian peat-bogs explored to find evidence of the vast antiquity of man, and when the spoils are gathered and carefully studied and compared, the evidence still is on the side of the more recent date of

his advent in our World. The spectroscope is revealing the nature and constitution of our sun, of distant suns and even nebular wisps. The telescope is resolving the larger and more accessible nebular groups and giving us exact knowledge of the hitherto unknown regions of the stellar universe. The microscope is decyphering the minute and mystic hieroglyphs of an ancient Creation, and the whole universe yielding secrets that have been hidden since the foundation of the World.

4. *God has made many hearts glad by purifying the political atmosphere of our times.*

Gigantic frauds in high places, robberies of municipal and state treasuries, defaulters in banks and moneyed institutions, can now be held to accountability and brought both to trial and punishment. The popular voice once again is in favor of honesty and integrity, and the swift recompense of all betrayals of trust, peculations, forgeries, false entries, perversion and misuse of entrusted funds. Juries can be found who will convict men of murder in the first degree, if they have shed human blood with malice aforethought, or bring in a verdict of guilty, when the evidence unmistakably proves the crime, even though the culprits stand high in political circles and can use wealth freely to defeat the ends of justice. Political parties are

becoming weary of false election returns, corrupt legislation, and judges who are too timid or too venal to mete out even-handed punishment to evil-doers. Men of the best sense and soundest judgment in all parties urge reform, demand a free and fair expression of the people through the sanctity of the ballot-box, and the whole political life of the nation seems to be rising to purer and more patriotic conditions. Notably is this true in the unanimity which marks the action in all parts of the country in defence of our common schools. Party spirit is laid to rest and factions forgotten in the face of an enemy who seeks to subvert our government and ruin our country by corrupting our children. It is one of the most hopeful signs of our evil times, that our country is aroused, to watch and defend with such jealous care its grand system of common school education; and we may be glad to-day that God has gathered about these national schools the true hearts and strong arms of the noblest and best of our land. Assaults on these will be resisted, if need be, unto blood. Our country's flag shall float over them as the sacred citadels of our liberty and our rights, and the command shall be echoed again, "if any man attempts to pull it down, shoot him on the spot."

Another bright spot gleams through the clouds to-day, and we rejoice as we see the war-spirit growing less fierce, more ready to try arguments rather than

arms, and willing to fall back upon arbitration as a final issue, rather than fight.

5. *God makes us glad in the work he is doing in the world by his Church.*

God has a church. It has lived through all changes, outlived all assaults and all enemies. It is here, to-day, palpable, a presence, a power, seen, felt, acknowledged of men. Zion is a city, not a vision, with solid foundations, or men would not dig about them; towers, bulwarks, palaces, strong-holds, or men could not walk about them and study how to assault them. The "CITY of our God," beautiful for situation on the sides of the north, and the south, and the east, and the west. God is known in her palaces, and in the hearts of her citizens, and in the works of her people. There was something visible, actual, tangible in the gathering of the friends of Jesus just now in a neighboring city. Men of thought and mark, scholars, nobles, artisans, yeoman, merchants, lawyers, judges, sound of judgment, pure in life, Christ-like in utterance; a demonstration of christian life and prayer and unity, such as the world has never seen. It was a grand church march which the world will not soon forget. Church works are just now making *material demonstrations in acts of beneficence*; charities to the poor, bestowments for the suffering and unfortunate;

institutes of education, and institutions for the lapsed, the forgotten, the old, the weak of mind and body, the sick, the sailor, the soldier, the orphan, the widow, the blind, the deaf and dumb. Hospitals that will receive the sick and the wounded of all nations, without regard to religion, color or caste. Homes, where the homeless can find welcome and rest, where the friendless can have care and feel again the warm throb of human sympathy, and hear again the kindly words of human and christian love; and these are the "works" of Christianity, inspired of God. In all the heathen world there is not a home for aged women, or men, or widows, or sick children. Among all the ruins of Babylon, Tyre, Egypt, Carthage, Rome, Athens, there is not a fragment of a column or wall that once made part of a charitable institution. What a work is doing just now for Christian education. It is bewildering to hear of the princely sums that men like Vassar, Cornell, Pardee Packer and Small, and a host of others, have given to build and endow Christian colleges and institutes.

And if we pass on to the *Evangelistic movements of the church*, we are amazed to find how much has been done, and what swift progress has been made in evangelizing the nations.

Spain, the land of the Inquisition and the *Auto de fe*, has Bibles for sale in the open market, chapels where Christ is preached in her chiefest cities, schools where

the scriptures are a text book in her greatest thoroughfares. Italy, open and occupied; Rome, with schools and Bibles and chapels, and freedom to hear and believe the gospel of Jesus.

The Inquisition itself at bay, with a Protestant minister waiting on its balcony at night, with lifted finger, to give a signal, if necessary, for the deliverance of an imperiled priest, who was in one of its secret chambers. Aye! has it come to that? A German Emperor blandly saying to the Pope, "The Evangelical creed, which I, like my ancestors and the majority of my subjects profess, does not permit us to accept, in our relations with God, any other mediator than our Lord Jesus Christ." And that? Mexico is stirring with a new life. Brazil is occupied at many points and by noble workers for God. South American republics have opened their doors to Christian missionaries. Madagascar is won. The Sandwich Islands have decided for God, and the South Sea Islands wait for his law. Japan is awake. China has forgotten her long dream of countless ages and dynasties, and begins to mark time, and in some parts of her empire, to march with the hosts, who are pressing toward knowledge and liberty, and a life with God.

And while the work goes on abroad, and the Christian missionary is making his way to every country and preaching Christ in every language, the Evangelistic

spirit is quickened and intensified at home. Woman catches the inspiration; children practice self-denial; men of business tithe their incomes, or give all beyond a support for themselves and family; while veteran workers and aged saints cry out—"*Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation.*"

6. *God makes us glad with a grand outlook to the future.*

Signs of promise thicken on every side. Advances are made in every direction. The long and patient labors of the past are beginning to tell upon the world's superstition and strong holds. Caste is broken. Color is no longer a bar to fellowship or faith.

The seed-corn of the kingdom has fallen upon and filled the earth, and the harvest will follow. Others will enter into our labors and follow us to our rest, bringing their sheaves with them. Successes of the past and victories of the present are pledges of wider conquests in the future. We have passed the desert and in our march have come to the mountains of Abarim, which look toward the river and the goodly land beyond. We gaze afar and forecast the time. We look to a future in our world far in advance of the present, in all material interests and all moral worth. The world waits a promised Sabbath and the rest will

come. We look toward a future of larger intelligence, wider prosperity and universal order and peace. We see a day coming, when intemperance will be banished from human society; fraud and licentiousness be unknown, and war forever impossible to men; a future in which tribes and tongues and peoples shall be born into a new life, and freedom be the birthright and inheritance of man. Even now the times do travail and the throes are for the birth of nations. Moral and religious forces will hold on their way, gather new strength, win larger and more decided victories, come to the high places of power, reach and control legislation, guide in empire and administration, and at last, rule in the hearts and lives of all men. JEHOVAH, CHRIST SHALL HAVE DOMINION FROM SEA TO SEA, AND FROM THE RIVER TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH.

God has made us glad, let us make others glad.

We may be full and others empty. Not all share alike. In these times of financial disturbance and stoppage of mills and manufactories, many are thrown out of employment, and that means destitution, want, lack of bread. Give employment where it is possible. That is the true charity. There are hungry families to-day. Send of your fulness to them. Make some human hearts glad that need your sympathy, and wait for your blessing; and let your countenance be glad

as well as your hands full. Speak words of cheer; sing and make others sing. Make little children glad; let the widow's heart bless you. Your homes may be made bright and happy to-day by the return and joyful greetings of long absent ones. Children and children's children may come back to the old fire-side; strange little feet may cross your threshold, and the old home ring again with the joy. Other homes will be desolate, for the absent come not to-day. Your circle may be complete, others gathered only in fragments. Your little ones may come around you like a flock, but longing eyes and aching hearts will wait in vain, for Joseph is not; the childless will mourn, and the fatherless feel afresh the desolations of orphanage. Let us bless our own households to-day, and make other homes blessed. Let us share our joys with the less favored and the less glad; so shall our own joy be full and we be children of the Highest.