

THE BRIDEGROOM'S PARTING WORD

NO. 1716

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 15, 1883
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

*"Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions hearken to thy voice:
cause me to hear it."
Song of Solomon 8:13*

THE Song is almost ended—the bride and bridegroom have come to their last stanzas—and they are about to part for a while. They utter their adieux, and the bridegroom says to His beloved, "Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions hearken to thy voice: cause me to hear it." In other words—when I am far away from you, fill this garden with my name, and let your heart commune with me. She promptly replies, and it is her last word till He comes, "Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of spices."

These farewell words of the Well-beloved are very precious to His chosen bride. Last words are always noticed—the last words of those who loved us dearly are much valued—the last words of one who loved us to the death are worthy of a deathless memory.

The last words of the Lord in this canticle remind me of the commission which the Master gave to His disciples or ever He was taken up, when He said to them, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Then, scattering benedictions with both His hands, He ascended into glory, and "a cloud received him out of their sight."

As the sermon progresses you will see why I say this, and you will detect a striking likeness between the commission connected with the ascension and the present adieu, wherein the spiritual Solomon says to His espoused Solyma, "Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions hearken to thy voice: cause me to hear it."

I. We will get to our text at once, without further preface, and we notice in it, first of all, AN APPOINTED RESIDENCE.

The bridegroom, speaking of His bride, says, "Thou that dwellest in the gardens." The Hebrew is in the feminine, and hence we are bound to regard it as the word of the Bridegroom to His bride. It is the mystical word of the church's Lord to His elect one. He calls her "Inhabitress of the gardens"—that is the word. So then, dear friends, we who make up the church of God are here addressed this morning under that term, "Thou that inhabitest the gardens."

This title is given to believers here on earth, first, by way of *distinction*—distinction from the Lord Himself. He whom we love dwells in the ivory palaces, wherein they make Him glad. He is gone up to His Father's throne, and has left these gardens down below. He came down awhile that He might look upon His garden, that He might see how the vines flourished, and gather lilies.

But He has now returned to His Father and our Father. He watered the soil of His garden with His bloody sweat in Gethsemane, and made it to bear fruit unto life by being Himself laid to sleep in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea—but all this lowly work is now over.

He does not dwell in the gardens as to His corporeal presence. His dwelling place is on the throne. Jesus has not taken us up with Him—He will come another time to do that—but now He leaves us among the seeds and flowers and growing plants to do the King's work until He comes. He was a visitor here, and the visit cost Him dearly.

But He has gone back unto the place whence He came, having finished the work which His Father gave Him. Our lifework is *not* finished, and hence we must tarry awhile below, and be known as inhabitants of the gardens.

It is expedient that we should be here, even as it is expedient that He should *not* be here. God's glory is to come of our sojourn here, else He would have taken us away long ago. He said to His Father, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil."

He Himself is an inhabitant of the palaces, for there He best accomplishes the eternal purposes of love. But His church is the inhabitress of the gardens, for there she best fulfils the decrees of the Most High. Here she must abide awhile until all the will of the Lord shall be accomplished in her and by her—and then she also shall be taken up, and shall dwell with her Lord above. The title is given by way of distinction, and marks the difference between her condition and that of her Lord.

Next, it is given by way of *enjoyment*. She dwells in the gardens, which are places of delight. Once you and I pined in the wilderness, and sighed after God from a barren land. We trusted in man, made flesh our arm, and then we were like the heath in the desert, which seeth not when good comes. All around us was the wilderness of this world, a howling wilderness of danger, and need, and disorder.

We said of the world at its very best, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." Do you remember how you roamed, seeking rest and finding none? Your way was the path of darkness which leads unto death. Then you were poor and needy, and sought water and there was none—and your tongue cleaved unto the roof of your mouth for thirst. ‘

Then came the Lord that bought you, and He sought you until He brought you into the gardens of His love, where He satisfied you with the river of the water of life, and filled you with the fruits of His Spirit. And now you dwell in a goodly land—"The fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine; also his heavens shall drop down dew."

Your portion is with the Lord's saints, yea, with Himself. And what can be a better portion? Is it not as the garden of the Lord? You dwell where the great Husbandman spends His care upon you, and takes a pleasure in you. You dwell where the infinite skill and tenderness and wisdom of God manifest themselves in the training of the plants which His own right hand has planted. You dwell in the church of God, which is laid out, in due order, and hedged about and guarded by heavenly power. And you are, therefore, most fitly said to dwell in the gardens.

Be thankful. It is a place of enjoyment for you. Awake and sing, for the lines have fallen unto you in pleasant places. Just as Adam was put into the garden of Eden for his own happiness, so are you put into the garden of the church for your comfort. It is not a perfect paradise of bliss, but it has many points of likeness to Paradise—for God Himself does walk therein, the river of God does water it, and the tree of life is there unguarded by the flaming sword.

Is it not written, "I the Lord do keep it: I will water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day"? See, beloved, although you are distinguished from your Lord by being here while He is there, yet you are made partakers of His joy, and are not as those who are banished into a salt land to die in desolation. The Lord's joy is in His people, and you are made to have a joy in them also—the excellent of the earth, in whom is all your delight, are made to be the comrades of your sojourning.

The title is also used by way of *employment* as well as enjoyment. Adam was not put in the garden that he might simply walk through its borders, and admire its flowers, and taste its fruits. But he was placed there to keep it and to dress it. There was sufficient to be done to prevent his stagnating from want of occupation.

He had not to toil sufficiently to make him wipe the sweat from his brow, for that came of the curse—"In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread"—but still he was not permitted to be idle, for that might have been a worse curse. Even for a perfect man unbroken leisure would not be a blessing. It is essential even to an unfallen creature that he should have work to do—fit work and honorable—seeing it is done by a creature for the great Benefactor who had created him.

If we had not our daily tasks to fulfill, rest would corrode into rust, and recreation would soon gender corruption. You and I are set in the garden of the church because there is work for us to do which will be beneficial to others and to ourselves also. Some have to take the broad axe and hew down mighty trees of error. Others of a feebler sort can, with a child's hand, train the tendril of a climbing plant, or drop into its place a tiny seed.

One may plant and another may water—one may sow and another gather fruit. One may cut up weeds and another prune vines. God has work in His church for us all to do, and He has left us here that we may do it. Our Lord Jesus would not keep a single saint out of heaven if there were not a needs-be for his being here in the lowlands, to trim these gardens of herbs, and watch these beds of spices. Would He deny His well-beloved the palm branch and the crown if it were not better for us to be holding the pruning-hook and the spade?

A schoolbook with which to teach the little children may be for a while more to our true advantage than a golden harp. To turn over the pages of Scripture wherewith to instruct the people of God may be more profitable to us than to hear the song of seraphim.

I say, the Master's love to His own which prompts Him to pray, "I will that they also whom thou have given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory," would long ago have drawn all the blood-bought up to Himself above, had it not been the fact that it is in infinite wisdom seen to be better that they should abide in the flesh. You are the lights of the world, you are the salt of the earth. Shall the light and the salt be at once withdrawn? You are to be as a dew from the Lord in this dry and thirsty land. Would you be at once exhaled?

Brothers, have you found out what you have to do in these gardens? Sisters, have you found out the plants for which you are to care? If not, arouse yourselves, and let not a moment pass till you have discovered your duty and your place. Speak unto Him who is the Lord of all true servants, and say to Him, "Show me what You would have me do. Point out, I pray You, the place wherein I may serve You."

Would you have it said of you that you were a wicked and slothful servant? Shall it be told that you dwelt in the gardens, and allowed the grass to grow up to your ankles, and suffered the thorns and the thistles to multiply until your land became as the sluggard's vineyard, pointed at as a disgrace and a warning to all that passed by? "O thou that dwellest in the gardens!" The title sets forth employment constant and engrossing.

Dear friends, it means also *eminence*. I know many Christian people who do not feel that they dwell in the gardens. They reside in a certain town or village where the Gospel may be preached, but not in demonstration of the Spirit and in power. A little Gospel is made to go a long way with some preachers. In some ministries there is no life or power, no unction or savor.

The people who meet under such preaching are cold of heart and dull in spirit. The prayer meetings are forgotten, communion of saints has well-nigh died out, and there is a general deadness as to Christian effort. Believe me, it is a dreadful thing when Christian people have almost to dread their Sabbath days. And I have known this to be the case.

When you are called to hard toil through the six days of the week, you want a good spiritual meal on the Sabbath, and if you get it, you find a blessed compensation and refreshment. Is it not a heavenly joy to sit still on the one day of rest, and to be fed with the finest of the wheat?

I have known men made capable of bearing great trials—personal, relative, pecuniary, and the like—because they have looked backward upon one Sabbatic feast, and then forward to another. They have said in their hour of trouble—"Patience, my heart. The Lord's day is coming, when I shall drink and forget my misery. I shall go and sit with God's people, and I shall have fellowship with the Father and with the Son, and my soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, till I praise the Lord with joyful lips."

But what a sorry case to dread Sunday and to mutter, "I shall get nothing next Sunday any more than I did last Sunday except some dry, philosophical essay, or a heap of the childish toys and fireworks of oratory, or the same dull mumbling of a mechanical orthodoxy."

Oh, brethren and sisters, my text is scarcely meant for those who dwell in such deserts, but it speaks with emphasis to those who dwell where sweet spiritual fruits are plentiful, where odors and perfumes load the air, where the land flows with milk and honey.

If any of you happen to dwell where Christ is set forth evidently crucified among you, and where your hearts do leap for very joy because the King Himself comes near to feast His saints, and make them glad in His presence, then it is to you that my text has a voice and a call—"Thou that dwellest in the gardens, in the choicest places of all Immanuel's land, let me hear thy voice."

Yet one more word. The title here employed is not only for eminence but for *permanence*. "O thou that dwellest in the gardens." If you are only permitted to enjoy sound Gospel teaching now and again, and then are forced to cry, "It may be another twelve months before I shall be again fed on royal dainties."

Then you are in a trying case, and you need to cry to God for help. But blessed are those who dwell in the good land, and daily fill their homers with heavenly manna. "Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee."

No spot on earth is so dear to the Christian as that whereon he meets His Lord. I can understand why the Jew asked of a certain town that was recommended to him as good for business, "Is there a synagogue there?" Being a devout man, and finding that there was no synagogue, he said he would rather remain where trade was dull, but where he could go with his brethren to worship.

Is it not so with us? How my heart has longed for these blessed assemblies! Give me a crust and a full Gospel rather than all riches and a barren ministry. The profitable hearing of the Word is the greatest enjoyment upon earth to godly men. It would be banishment to go where every week's business turned into a mint of money if one were also compelled to be a member of an unhappy, quarrelsome, or inactive church.

Our greatest joy is in you, O Jerusalem! Let our tongue cleave to the roof of our mouth if we prefer you not above our greatest joy!

*"How charming is the place
Where my Redeemer God
Unveils the beauties of His face,
And sheds His love abroad.*

*"Not the fair palaces,
To which the great resort,
Are once to be compared with this,
Where Jesus holds His court."*

Beloved, if you dwell in the gardens you have a double privilege, not only of being found in a fat and fertile place, but in living there continually. You might well forego a thousand comforts for the sake of this one delight, for under the Gospel your soul is made to drink of wines on the lees well-refined.

This, then, is my first head—appointed residence—"Thou that dwellest in the gardens." Is not this a choice abode for the Lord's beloved? I leave you to judge how far this describes yourselves. If it be your case, then listen to what the Bridegroom has to say to you.

II. Secondly, let us note the RECORDED CONVERSATION—"Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions hearken to thy voice."

She was in the gardens, but she was not quiet there, and why should she be? God gives us tongues on purpose that they should be used. As He made birds to sing, and stars to shine, and rivers to flow, so has

He made men and women to converse with one another to His glory. Our tongue is the glory of our frame, and there would be no glory in its being forever dumb.

The monks of La Trappe, who maintain perpetual silence, do no more than the rocks among which they labor. When God makes bells, He means to ring them. It may be thought to be a desirable thing that some should speak less, but it is still more desirable that they should speak better. When the tongue indites a good matter, it is no fault if it be nimble as the pen of a ready writer. It is not the quantity, it is the quality of what we say that ought to be considered.

Now, observe that evidently the spouse held with her companions *frequent conversations*—"The companions hearken to thy voice." She frequently conversed with them. I hope it is so among those of you who dwell in this part of Christ's garden. It should be so—"Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another"—they had not now and then a crack, now and then the passing of the time of day, but they held frequent converse.

Heaven will consist largely in the communion of saints, and if we would enjoy heaven below, we must carry out the words of the creed in our practice—"I believe in the communion of saints." Let us show that we believe in it.

Some persons sit still in their pews till the time to go, and then walk down the aisle in majestic isolation, as if they were animated statues. Do children thus come in and out of their father's house with never a word for their brothers and sisters? I know professors who float through life like icebergs from whom it is safest to keep clear—surely these partake not of the spirit of Christ. It is well when such icebergs are drawn into the gulf stream of divine love, and melt away into Christ and His people.

There should be among those who are children of the common Father a mutual love. And they should show this by frequent commerce in their precious things, making a sacred barter with one another. I like to hear them making sacred exchanges—one mentioning his trials—another quoting his deliverances. One telling how God has answered prayer, and another recording how the Word of God has come to him with power. Such converse ought to be as usual as the talk of children of one family.

And next, it should be *willing and influential*. For if you notice, it is put here—"Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions *hearken* to thy voice." They do not merely hear it, and say to themselves, "I wish she would be quiet," but they hearken—they lend an ear, they listen gladly.

I know some Christians whose lips feed many. I could mention brethren and sisters who drop pearls from their lips whenever they speak. We still have among us Chrysostoms, or men of golden mouths—you cannot be with them for half an hour without being enriched. Their anointing is manifest, for it spreads to all around them.

When the Spirit of God makes our communications sweet, then the more of them the better. I like to get sometimes under the shadow of God's best people, the fathers in Israel, and to hear what they have to say to the honor of the name of the Lord. We who are young men feel gladdened by the testimonies of the ancients. And as for the babes in grace, they look up to the grey-beards, and gather strength from their words of experience and grace.

If there are any here whose language is such that others delight to listen to it, it is to such that my text is especially addressed—and when I come to open up the later part of it, I want you that have the honeyed tongues—I want you who are listened to with pleasure, to notice how the Beloved says to you—"The companions hearken to thy voice: cause me to hear it."

Give your Lord a share of your sweet utterances. Let your Savior's ears be charmed as well as your companions ears. Come, speak to *Him* as well as to your brethren, and if there be music in your voice, let that music be for the Well-beloved as well as for your fellow servants.

This is the very heart of the matter. I cannot help alluding to it even before we have fairly reached that part of the text. The converse of the bride in the gardens was constant, and it was greatly esteemed by those who enjoyed it.

I gather from the text, rather by implication, than otherwise, that the conversation was *commendable*, for the bridegroom does not say to the spouse, "Thou that dwellest in the gardens, thy companions hear

too much of thy voice.” No. He evidently mentions the fact with approval, because He draws an argument from it why *he* should also hear that selfsame voice. Brothers, I leave it to yourselves to judge whether your communications with one another are always such as they should be. Are they always worthy of you?

What communications have you had this morning? Can I make a guess? “Nice and fresh this morning.” “Quite a change in the weather.” Is not this the style? How often we instruct each other about what we all know! When it rains so as to soak our garments, we gravely tell each other that it is very wet. Yes, and if the sun shines, we are all eager to communicate the wonderful information that it is warm.

Dear me, what instructors of our generation we are! Could we not contrive to change the subject? Is it because we have nothing to say of love, and grace, and truth that we meet and part without learning or teaching anything? Perhaps so. I wish we had a little more small change of heavenly converse—we have our crowns and sovereigns for the pulpit—we need groats and pence for common talk, all stamped with the image and superscription of the King of heaven.

O Holy Spirit, enrich us after this sort. May our communications be such that if Jesus Himself were near, we might not be ashamed for Him to hear our voices. Brethren, make your conversation such that it may be commended by Christ Himself.

These conversations were, no doubt, *very beneficial*. As iron sharpens iron, so does a man's countenance his friend. Oh, what a comfort it is to drop in upon a cheerful person when you yourself are heavy! What a ballast it puts into your ship, when you are a little too merry, to meet with one in sore travail who bids you share his burden and emulate his faith. We are all the better, believe me, when our Lord can praise us because our companions listen to our voices.

In fact, our communications with one another ought to be *preparatory* to higher communications still. The converse of saints on earth should be a rehearsal of their everlasting communion in heaven. We should begin here to be to one another what we hope to be to one another world without end.

And is it not pleasant to rise from communion with your brethren into communion with the Bridegroom?—to have such talk with one another that at last we perceive that truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ? We thought that we only communed with our brethren, but lo! we see that the Lord Himself is here. Do not our hearts burn within us?

We two are talking of Him, and now we see that He Himself is here, opening to us the Scriptures, and opening our hearts to receive those Scriptures in the power of them. Beloved, let us try, if we cannot make it so, that as we dwell together as church members, and work together in one common vineyard, we may be always making our fellowship with each other a grand staircase of fellowship with the King Himself. Let us so talk that we may expect to meet Jesus while we are talking.

How sweet to hear and see the Master in the servant, the Bridegroom in the Bridegroom's friend, the Head in the members, the Shepherd in the sheep, the Christ in every Christian! Thus may we rise upon the wings of hallowed communion with holy ones to yet more hallowed communion with the Holy One of Israel.

Thus have we meditated upon two things—we have noted the appointed residence and the recorded converse. We know what we are talking about.

III. Now comes the pith of the text—INVITED FELLOWSHIP—“The companions hear thy voice: cause me to hear it.”

It is beautiful to hear the Beloved say in effect, “I am going away from you, and you shall see Me no more—but I shall see you—do not forget Me. Though you will not hear My voice with your bodily ears, I shall hear your voices. Therefore speak to Me. Unseen I shall feed among the lilies, unperceived I shall walk the garden in the cool of the day, when you are talking to others do not forget Me. Sometimes turn aside, and when you have shut the door, and no eye can see, nor ear can hear, then let Me hear your voice. It has music in it to My heart, for I died to give you life. Let Me hear the voice of your prayer, and praise, and love.”

Now, I note concerning this invitation, first of all, that it is very *loving and condescending* to us that the Lord should wish to hear our voice. I do not wonder that some of you love to hear my voice, because the Holy Spirit has blessed it to your conversion—but what good has Jesus ever derived from any of us? Is it not marvelous that He, the infinitely blessed, should want to hear our voices when all that He has heard from us has been begging, sighing, and a few poor broken hymns?

You do not want to hear a beggar's voice, do you? I expect if the man you have helped a score of times should be tomorrow morning at your door you would say, "Dear, dear; there is that man again." Might not the Well-beloved say the same of you? "There she is again—come on the same errand. Come to confess some new faults, or to ask fresh favors."

But instead of being tired of us, our Lord says, "Let me hear thy voice." O loving Bridegroom! Must He not love us very truly to ask us to speak with Him? See, He asks as though He begged it of us as a favor, "Let me hear thy voice. Your companions hearken—let Me take a share in their communion—they find your voice pleasant, let it be a pleasure also to Me. Come, do not deny Me, your heart's best Beloved! Do not be silent unto Me! Come, speak to Me with your own sweet mouth."

It is condescending and gracious, and yet how *natural* it is! How like to Christ! Love always seeks the company of that which it loves. What would a husband say if his wife were seen to be chatty and cheerful to everybody else, but never spoke to him? I cannot suppose such a case. It would make too sorrowful a household. I should pity the poor, broken-hearted man who should be forced to say, "My beloved, others hear your voice and admire it. Will you not speak to me, your husband?"

O believer, will you let the Lord Jesus as it were with tears in His eyes, say to you, "You talk to everybody but to Me. You lay yourself out to please everybody but Me. You are a charming companion to everybody but to Me"? Oh, our Beloved, how ill have we treated You! How much have we slighted You!

In looking back, I fear there are many of us who must feel as if this gentle word of the Lord had also a sharp side to it. I remember my faults this day. The text goes like a dagger to my soul, for I have spoken all day long to others, and have had scarce a word for Him whom my soul loves. Let us mend our converse, and henceforth show our Lord a truer love.

We may truly add that this invitation to fellowship is a *blessed and profitable* request. We shall find it so if we carry it out, especially those of us who are called by God to use our voices for Him among the crowds of our companions.

I address some brothers and sisters here who are preachers and teachers. What a relief it is, when you have been letting the companions hear your voice, to stop a bit and let Jesus hear it! What a rest to leave the congregation for the closet, to get away from where they criticize you to One who delights in you. What a relief, I say. And what a help to our hearts!

Jesus gives us sweet returns if we commune with Him—and such as speakers greatly need. The apostles said that they would give themselves to the Word of God and to prayer. Yes, we must put those two things together. We shall never fitly handle the Word of God without prayer. When we pray, we are taught how to speak the Word of God to others.

Salvation and supplication are a blessed pair. Put the two together so that, when you speak to others about salvation, you do it after having baptized your own soul into supplication. "The companions hear thy voice: cause Me to hear it. Before you speak with them, speak to Me. While you are still speaking with them, still speak with Me. And when your speaking to men is done, return unto your rest and again speak with Me."

This invitation is a *many-sided one*, for when the bridegroom says, "Cause me to hear it," he means that she should speak to him in all sorts of ways. Frequently we should be heard in praise. If you have been praising the Lord in the audience of others, turn aside and praise Him to His face. Sing your song to your Beloved Himself. Get into a quiet place and sing where only He can hear. I wish we had more of that kind of music which does not care for any other audience than God.

Oh, my God, my heart shall find *You*, and every string shall have its attribute to sing, while my whole being shall extol *You*, my Lord! The blessed Virgin had none with her but Elizabeth when she sang, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit doth rejoice in God my Saviour."

Oh, let the Lord hear your voice! Get up early to be alone with Him. So let it be with all your complaints and petitions—let them be for Jesus only. Too often we fill our fellow creature's ears with the sad tale of all our cares. Why not tell the Lord about it, and have done with it? We would employ our time far more profitably if, instead of murmuring in the tent, we inquired in the temple.

Speak with Jesus Christ, dear friends, in little broken sentences, by way of frequent exclamations. The best of Christian fellowship may be carried on in single syllables. When in the middle of business you can whisper, "My Lord and my God!" You can dart a glance upward, heave a sigh, or let fall a tear—and so will Jesus hear your voice!

When nobody observes the motion of your lips, you may be saying, "My Beloved, be near me now!" This is the kind of fellowship which your Savior asks of you. He says, "The companions hear your voice: cause Me to hear it. Be sure that when you speak with others, you also speak with Me!"

This is such a blessed invitation that I think, dear friends, we ought to avail ourselves of it at once. Come, what say you? The best Beloved asks us to speak with Him—what shall we say at once? Think for an instant! What shall I say? Perhaps I have the start of you, because I have my word ready. Here they are—"Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices."

"Why," say you, "that is what the church said in the last verse of the Song." Exactly so, and that is what we may wisely say at this moment. We cannot improve upon it. "Come quickly; even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus."

Often and often, then, when you are about your business, say, "Come, Lord Jesus! Come quickly! "It is a sweet frame of mind to be in to be willing to invite Christ to come—and whenever you cannot do so, let it be a warning to you that you are in dangerous waters.

I can imagine a man in business calling himself a Christian about to engage in a doubtful transaction—how is he to discern the danger? Let him ask the Lord Jesus Christ to come while he is doing it. "Oh dear, no," cries one, "I had rather He should not come until that matter is finished and forgotten."

Then be you sure that you are moving in the wrong direction. Suppose you think of going to a certain place of amusement about which you have a question? It is easy to decide it thus—When you take your seat, your first thing should be to bow your head and ask for a blessing. And then say, "Lord, here I sit waiting for Your appearing."

"Oh," say you, "I should not want the Lord to come there." Of course you would not. Then do not go where you could not wish your Lord to find you. My text may thus be a monitor to you, to keep you from the paths of the destroyer. Jesus says, "Let me hear your voice," and let your voice utter these desires—"Even so, come quickly; come, Lord Jesus!"

Alas, time reproves me. I must hasten on.

IV. I have a fourth head, which shall be very briefly handled. I find according to the Hebrew that the text has in it a REQUESTED TESTIMONY.

According to learned interpreters, the Hebrew runs thus, "*Cause to hear me.*" Now, that may mean what I have said, "Cause me to hear," but it may also mean, "Cause them to hear me." Now hearken, you that are in Christ's garden—make those who dwell in that garden with you to hear from you much about HIM.

In the church everyone has a right to talk about the Head of the church. Some of our brethren in this Tabernacle kindly undertake to speak to individuals about their souls, and now and then they receive very sharp rebuffs. "What right has he to put such a question? How dare he intrude with personal remarks? What! Is the man poaching?"

No, these are the Lord's preserves, and the Lord's gamekeepers have a right to do as they are bidden by Him. They are not poaching in this place, for they are on the Master's own land. Anywhere inside these four walls you may speak to anybody about Christ, and no man may forbid you.

Speak lovingly and tenderly and prudently, but certainly the law of the house is that here we may speak about the Lord of the house. There are some other things you may not talk about, but about the Lord Jesus you may speak as much as you will. In the garden, at any rate, if not in the wilderness, let the Rose of Sharon be sweetly spoken of. Let His name be as an ointment poured forth in all the church of God.

Again, you, according to the text, are one that can make people hear, so that, "the companions hearken to thy voice." Then make them to hear of Jesus. You have the gift of speech—use it for Christ crucified. I always feel regret when a powerful speaker espouses any other cause but that of my Lord. Time was when I used to wish that Milton had been a preacher, and instead of writing a poem had proclaimed the Gospel to the multitude. I know better, now, for I perceive that God does not use learning and eloquence so much as knowledge of Christ and plain speech.

But still, I am jealous of any man who can speak well, that he should not give my Lord the use of his tongue. Well-trained tongues are rare things, and they should be all consecrated to Christ's glory. If you can speak to the companions—make them hear about Christ. If you can speak well, make them hear attractive words about Christ.

If you do not speak about Christ to strangers, do speak to your *companions*. They will hearken to you. Therefore let them hearken to the Word of the Lord. I have heard of men who called themselves Christians, who yet never spoke to their children about their souls, never spoke to their servants nor to their work people about Jesus and His love.

This is to murder souls. If tongues can bless and do not, then they in effect curse men by their silence. If you have a voice, make the name of Jesus to be sounded out all around you. Many are the voices that strike upon the ear—the world is full of din, even to distraction, yet the name which is above all other names is scarcely heard. I pray you, my brethren, you that are like silver bells, ring out that name o'er hill and dale. As with a clarion, trumpet forth the saving name of Jesus till the deaf hear the sound thereof.

Whatever is left out of your testimony, be sure that Christ crucified is first and last in it. Love Christ and live Christ. Think of Christ and speak of Christ. When people go away from hearing you preach, may they have to say, "He kept to his subject—he knew nothing but Jesus."

It is ill when a man has to say of preachers, "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him." Yet in certain sermons you meet with a little about everything except the one thing. They offer us what we do not need, but the need of the soul is not supplied.

Oh, my brethren, cause Christ to be heard. Hammer on that anvil always. If you make no music but that of the harmonious blacksmith, it will suffice. Ring it out with sturdy blows—"Jesus, Jesus, Jesus crucified." Hammer away at that.

"Now you are on the right string, man," said the Duke of Argyle, when the preacher came to speak upon the Lord Jesus. It needed no duke to certify that. Harp on that string. Make Jesus to be as commonly known as now He is commonly unknown.

So may God bless you as long as you dwell in these gardens, till the day break and the shadows flee away. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—PSALM 5

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—5, 811, 784

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.