

# The Displeasure of Jesus

Third Series – Sermon Thirty-Three

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In "The Displeasure of Jesus," MacDonald takes on the truth of God's anger and wrath as a beautiful expression of His love. He uses the story of Martha and Mary and the resurrection of Lazarus. He exposes the lie found in the dramatic example of death as the visible tip of the iceberg of our unbelief. We see all of what we call life through this lens. We are so focused on the temporary that the eternal remains unseen! Our Father is the God of the living, and we live from a stream where there is no such reality as death. This Truth of Life extends into all the everyday parts and moments of our existence. God's Life is abundant Life! We lack nothing in its' flow, only our unfulfilled wants. Martha and Mary wanted their brother now, present to their senses, while he, had just for a moment in time, moved from one room to another. Jesus saw the lie of lack and death in their feelings and actions that they believed Lazarus was no more!

**"Jesus loved them so much that He could not stand to see them in their tears shut out His Father. He was irritated that they could sit in the ashes when they should be out in His Father's wind and sun, and all this pain for a lie! Because the grief in their hearts that made them weep so was false."**

Divine anger is God's love fighting fire with fire. The "Refining Fire" of Divine love destroying sin and darkness for our liberation before the "Consuming Fire" is required for the same!

## Outline

**Was Jesus Angry?** – Yes, he was angry, but not with the people but with the darkness that blinds our minds and hearts!

**The Leper** – The darkness of the leper's selfishness made the world as small as himself.

**The Two Blind Men** – As with the leper everything was about them.

**Anger** – Every expression of Their anger is a gift from Their other-centered and self-giving love!

**Martha and Mary** – Here the paradox of love and anger is revealed within the relationship with His closest friends.

**The Father of Life!** - Our Father is the God of the living, and we live from a stream where there is no such reality as death.

**Unbelief in Life** - It is not just distrusting His Father, but the unbelief in Life itself.

**The Watershed of Life** - Jesus saw what we, Martha, and Mary do not see in our moments of grief that Lazarus had just changed the clothes of his body from night ones to day ones!

**Jesus Wept** - Jesus wept for Martha, Mary, and us who do not know yet what Life is all about!

**The Changeless God** - Death is not defeat. It is defeated! It is victory over sin and darkness for those who know what He knows about death and Life. For in God, there is nothing but Life! There is nothing but redemption and restoration of all that is lost in our moment of time.

### **John 11:33 KJV**

*"When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled."*

## **Was Jesus Angry?**

Here in our text for this sermon, we find a little-used Greek word, *embrimaomai*, which in the King James Version is translated as "*groaned*." In everyday Greek it means "*moved with anger*." so the question is, why did the translators soften the language? It is used two more times by Jesus and treated similarly in Mark 1:43 and Matthew 9:30. In Mark it is translated, "*straitly charged him*," and in Matthew, "*Jesus was displeased!*" Perhaps the Revised standard in the margin in John gets the closest, "was moved with indignation." That is with anger, distress, or displeasure.

We will explore these verses more in-depth as we move along to learn what they say about Jesus. But first, let us look at the one place in the gospels it is used concerning the disciples. In Mark 14:5, it says that the disciples "*murmured at*" the waste of the ointment by the woman who anointed Jesus' feet. Concerning this translation, I say that "*murmured at*" can hardly be strong enough seeing "*they had indignation among themselves*" at the action.

**I must insist that words mean different things in moral weight and color when used by people of different character. The anger of a good man is a very different thing from that of an evil one. The displeasure of Jesus is very different from that of a tyrant. However, they are both anger and displeasure nonetheless.** We have no right to change the root meaning and say in one place that it

means He was "*indignant*," in another it means he "*straitly or strictly charged*," and in the third that He "*groaned*." Surely, by doing this, we cannot arrive at the truth! I have said before, if anything is said of the Lord that seems unworthy of Him, let us reject it. Let us say, "I do not believe that." "There must be something there I do not see, and I must wait for clarity, for it cannot be what it looks like to me or be true of the Lord!" So, if we say this word's meaning expresses one thing when used about how Jesus felt, but it means something totally different when used of the disciples in Mark, it appears to me to be dishonest.

## The Leper

We will first look at the healing of the leper in Mark 1:40-45 KJV, "*And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean. And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed. And he straitly charged him, and forthwith sent him away; And saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man: but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them. But he went out, and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places: and they came to him from every quarter.*" Let us focus on our word in verse forty- three, "*and he straitly charged him.*" Literally, it seems to me, it reads, "and being angry, displeased, or vexed with him, he immediately dismissed him." There seems to me even some dissatisfaction implied in the word I have translated "dismissed." The same word translated in John 9:34 as "they cast him out," and is translated here with a little more intensity.

These changes in words add some insight to the story and raise some new questions. Why should Jesus be angry? If we can find no explanation for His anger, we must leave it as something we cannot understand. However, I do not know where to find another meaning for the word, except in the despair of a would-be interpreter.

Jesus had healed the leper not only by His words but with His touch. A touch that defiled Him in the eyes of the Jews, but satisfied His heart in identifying with the man. The leper, however, did not appreciate the beauty of the divine tenderness given. Jesus, discerning his heart, recognized that the man's response had not reached his heart by awakening faith and drawing him into a relationship. The leper was jubilant in the removal of his pain and his freedom from his isolating uncleanness. **Yet, he was probably moved with pride in having received a miracle and was full of himself, not thinking humbly and seeing and understanding the intent of the one who healed him.**

**The Lord, I think, saw something like this and was troubled and displeased. Jesus had wanted to give the leper more than clear skin and had only roused in him an unseemly delight in his cleanness. An inappropriate response, in that he intended to immediately disobey his command of silence. The moral position the man took was what displeased the Lord and made Him angry. Jesus saw in him unrestrained self-will and disobedience with shameless self-confidence and self-satisfaction.** He was not filled with the delight of childlike merriment mingled with tears that would have been expected at such a deliverance. Nor was he filled with gratitude, but self-gratification made more evident because of his history of rejection by the people. He was filled with arrogance because of the favor shown to him and went out to boast in direct violation of what his healer had said to "*tell no one what has happened.*"

He so published his fame that Jesus could no longer openly enter a city but was forced into the desert places.

## The Two Blind Men

Next, let us look at the account of the two blind men given in Matthew 9:27-31, "And when Jesus departed thence, two blind men followed him, crying, and saying, Thou son of David, have mercy on us. And when he was come into the house, the blind men came to him: and Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this? They said unto him, Yea, Lord. Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you. And their eyes were opened; and Jesus straitly charged them, saying, See that no man know it. But they, when they were departed, spread abroad his fame in all that country." As in the account of the leper in Mark, Jesus instructs them "*straitly charged them*" to tell no one what has happened. So again, Jesus is displeased.

**Surely here we see why Jesus is displeased. They, too, revealed themselves, determined to do as they pleased and cared nothing for His command. Doubtless, they were, in part, moved to spread His fame, thinking they were helping Him become famous. They never suspected that He needed no notoriety, cared nothing for glory, and felt its pursuit foolish. They did not understand someone desiring to help others might not want crowds to obstruct His objective.** These men would repay their healer with disobedience, making sure He did not go without His reward! Through them, Jesus would reap the reward of the praises of men! They were too grateful not to tell all, but not grateful enough to obey Him.

**Indeed, we cannot be amazed at their self-sufficiency. How many of us can do anything for the church except the one thing the Lord cares about, that they should do as He says! Jesus would deliver us from ourselves into the liberty of sons and daughters if we would only but obey! We leave Him to promote the church instead. It was not, I think, the obstruction to His work, nor the trouble it would cause Him that made Him angry. But that they would not be children of His Father, and help Him save their brethren!**

## Anger

Does saying the Lord got angry lower your view of Him? If so, do you recognize only one kind of anger? There are both good and bad. There is the anger of man that fails to produce righteousness and the wrath of God. Anger's expression can be as varied as the colors of the rainbow. God's anger can be nothing but Godly, therefore divinely beautiful and at one with His love. His anger is helpful, healing, and restorative. Yet, it is still what we call anger. How different is the wrath of one who loves from one who hates! Yet, anger is anger. There is a degraded and impure human variety and the great, noble, and eternal divine one.

It is to me a good thing, a happy thought that Jesus came so close to us to be angry. The more we understand Jesus' anger towards us, the more we will be drawn nearer to Him. Closer to Him within the circle of His wrath against sin. That is, out of the evil that angers Him, getting nearer to Him where sin cannot come. There is no quenching of His love and anger against sin. This anger is Jesus' response to our choices and that we are to blame. If we were not responsible, Jesus would never be angry with us. We would not be His brothers and sisters created in His image and likeness and therefore subject to His blame. To recognize we are responsible is to say we should be better and able to do what is good. To

acknowledge we can turn our faces to the light and come out of the darkness. Jesus is at work for our growth.

**It is a serious matter that the disobedience of the men He had set free from their blindness and leprosy would hinder His work for His Father. But Peter, His disciple and best friend, did the same when he opposed the will of His Father in his own way, saying, "That be far from thee Lord!" Jesus called him Satan and ordered him behind Him. It was a horror to His disciples that Jesus would be crucified! They intended to make Him king, and that would have ruined His Father's work. Jesus preferred the cruelty of His enemies at times to the kindness of His friends. The former with evil intent would work His Father's will. The latter, with good intentions, would have frustrated it. His disciples angered Him with their unbelieving objections. We need to understand the destructiveness of our wrong ideas of Jesus and their subsequent disobedience! These ideas would have hindered Jesus' progress to victory and delayed the coming of His Kingdom.**

Many a person dedicated to Christ, but not understanding Him, lays on himself and others burdens contrary to our being and nature. By these burdens, we labor under a worship of the will and false service for which Jesus is displeased. This displeasure is what is motivating His anger. Our doing what we should not moves Jesus' anger against us! Please, Lord Jesus, do not treat us as if we were not worth the trouble of your displeasure. Do not let our faults pass as if they did not matter. Be angry with us, holy Brother, where we are to blame. Be patient with us where we do not understand and open our eyes to see and give us strength to obey until we become sons and daughters of our Father like you. You are Lord of the growing, perfect Lord of the free who lives in the Light with joy. It is our choices that limit your Lordship of us. Jesus, make us able to be angry and not sin, angry without seeking revenge, and angry and full of forgiveness. We will not be content until our very anger is love!

Jesus did not withdraw His healing of the leper who disobeyed. He may have deserved it, but He did not do it. Jesus did not return blindness to the self-confident seeing men either. He let them go. Of course, they suffered in their well-being because of it. **A person cannot disobey and there be no consequences. That would be to say no could be yes, and light could sometimes be darkness. It would be to declare God's will is not our eternal joy.** Jesus, however, did not directly punish them any more than He does thousands of other wrongs in the world. Wrongs punish themselves when they run into the natural laws of life. Like the prophets of Baal, many wrongdoers cut themselves with the knives of their own injustice, and it should be so. However, whether the punishment is direct or indirect, He is always working for our deliverance. I think sometimes His anger is followed by incredible gifts fresh from His heart of grace. **He knows what is needed, for He is love. God is love when He gives. He is love when He withholds. Love when He heals and when He slays. Lord, if your anger is from love, what must the full gaze of your eyes of love be!**

## **Martha and Mary**

Let us look at the last case where the Greek word *embrinnaomai* is used in the story of Jesus. John 11: 30-34 *"Now Jesus was not yet come into the town, but was in that place where Martha met him. The Jews then which were with her in the house, and comforted her, when they saw Mary, that she rose up hastily and went out, followed her, saying, She goeth unto the grave to weep there. Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also*

*weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled. And said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see."*

In the thirty-third verse, we determined that the proper reading was. *"When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he was moved with indignation in the spirit and was troubled."* Also, in verse thirty-eighth, it reads, *"Jesus therefore again being moved with indignation in himself cometh to the tomb."*

**Jesus is indignant at the tomb in the presence of Martha and Mary, whose hearts are torn at the loss of their brother Lazarus, whom He Himself loved! Yes, these are His friends! Why is Jesus moved with such indignation and anger in such a situation at this moment? Why is it right that the heart of Jesus should feel this way? I'm sure He was likewise moved to see other believers at their death beds and graves act like pagans in the presence of death. So, what had they gained by being the Christians they claim to be? They still fix their eyes on the awful illusion they call Death and not raise their eyes to the radiant Christ that is standing beside their bed or grave! They do not believe that Christ has conquered Death.**

You are our king, O Death! to you, we groan!

Christians would violently reject the thought of saying it so plainly. However, their mourning says it with the bitterness of their tears, despair, and black clothing. In their instant retreat from the light into the heart of darkness. So, would you have us not weep? Weep freely, my friends, but let your tears be those of expectant Christians, not hopeless pagans. So, finally, we come to the point of the stories.

## **Father of Life!**

**Jesus had been, from the beginning, trying to teach His friends about His Father. Teaching them what a wonderful and perfect Father He was. His Father had sent Him so that we could look at His very likeness and come to know Him through the Son. All they had learned meant nothing when the touch of Death had come. He had shown many things to Martha and Mary that are not recorded, but the love of the Father and Lazarus being with Him meant nothing because their brother was gone! Jesus himself, their history, and His presence with them could not console them because of the bodily absence of their brother. I do not mean that God's presence should cause us to forget or not miss our friends. God forbid!**

Instead, the love of God is the perfecting of every love. The Father is not the God of unconsciousness but eternal consciousness and remembrance. There is no past with Him. All things are present. He is not jealous of anyone or anything, as we have been told. He desires that all His sons and daughters will love one another perfectly. He gave us to one another that we would belong to each other forever. He does not provide us with loved ones to take them away. With God, there is no change or shadow of turning.

**Must they be miserable without him? Their cry was, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died." You could say they did not know Him well enough, and you would be right. Jesus had hoped for more and was disappointed. How could that be, you could say, seeing that He knew what was in man? I doubt we understand what Jesus gave up to come close to us. Perhaps our idea of how much He had to let go of is limited, or rather how much the Father limited Him without touching His Sonship. Jesus maintains His connection, the eternal to the eternal, and reveals that relationship's**

depth and closeness. It is clear from His own words and signs that He did not know everything in this world. I could not imagine that this limitation touched the relationship of the Trinity or hurt Their devotion to one another. This view enriches my idea of the Godhead.

Here, I repeat, I think He was disappointed with His friends Martha and Mary. Had He not been able to reach their hearts more than this? Was His Father and their Father unable to comfort them? Did His best friends not know their Father was doing everything possible for them that a Father can do for His children. Jesus loved them so much that He could not stand to see them in their tears shut out His Father. He was irritated that they could sit in the ashes when they should be out in His Father's wind and sun, and all this pain for a lie! Because the grief in their hearts that made them weep so was false.

Understand, this was not coming from their love for Lazarus but a false notion of their loss. Were they no nearer to the Light of Life than this? To think they believe more in death and the grave than in Him, the Life! Why should death so trouble them? Why resent the release of the body, the resurrection of it from where it had come, because Lazarus had gone home to God and needed it no more? I suspect Jesus saw, looking into their hearts, that their feelings and actions were because they thought Lazarus was no more.

## Unbelief in Life

*"Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. Even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You."*

*"Your brother will rise from the dead."*

*"I know that he will rise in the resurrection on the last day." "I am the resurrection and the life; the one who believes in Me will live, even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die."*

I will not now plumb the depths of the resurrection. It is enough for our discussion to say that the sisters knew that He had raised the daughter of Jairus and the son of the widow of Naim. He had just said, *"Thy brother will rise from the dead!"* Maybe it seemed too much that He would raise him now, but they seemed to believe He would be raised. However, why did they not know that if He did not do it now, it must be for reasons as lovely as any that He would have had for doing it? If He could and did not, it must be for good reasons that He did not, yes, even better than if He had?

Martha had moved on for the moment, a little comforted. Now Mary came, who knew Jesus better, but alas, she had the same bitter tears and the same hopeless words of reproach falling from her lips! **At the sight of her weeping and the Jews following her, Jesus was moved with indignation. They all wept as those who believed in death and not life. Mary wept as if she had never seen with her eyes or touched the Word of Life with her hands! He was troubled with their unbelief and angry with their troubles. What was He to do for His brothers and sisters who were so miserable? Those who would not believe in His Father! Theirs was a life of pain! How was He to comfort them?**

**They had not received His comfort! What a world this was that could go on like this, not welcoming Life and freeing itself from the hold of death. Not freeing itself even after He had shown death was dead but would continue to weep, weep for years to come, holding on to the heart of dying Death! Was this existence the glorious gift of His Father? Is not this illusion of death the most terrible of**

**miseries because some must go home before others? It was all so sad! So sad because they would not choose to know His Father! At this thought, came the release from His anger in tears.**

## **The Watershed of Life**

Jesus was standing, as it were, on the watershed of life. On the one side is what Martha and Mary called life. On the other what He, His Father, and now Lazarus call abundant Life. Jesus saw into both worlds. He saw the sisters weeping, and He saw their brother at peace waiting for them. He would now do His best for the sisters, but not for Lazarus. It was hard for Lazarus to come back into the fabric of his body. Lazarus was called to sacrifice for their faithlessness, but it had to be done! Lazarus would suffer for his sisters! Through his suffering, they would be persuaded to believe in the Father and so be delivered from the bondage of death! Death would no more have power over them!

**He was angry with their unbelief in His Father and theirs, and at the same time, deeply troubled by their struggle. The cloud of His loving anger and disappointed sympathy broke out in tears. The tears eased the weight of His heart from His divine grief. He turned now to them, not to punish them for their unbelief. Nor to scold them for their sorrow, but to turn to His Father in thanksgiving.**

He thanks Him for hearing His prayer. Surely, He had spoken about raising Lazarus and found His Father in agreement. *"Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. But I knew that You always hear Me; nevertheless, because of the people standing around I said it, so that they may believe that You sent Me."* He spoke His thanksgiving out loud for the sake of the people. He and His Father were always in conversation and agreement, but He wanted the credit to go to His Father. Once again, He wanted the people to know the goodness of His Father.

**As I have said, the trouble of the Lord was that His friends did not trust His Father. Jesus did not want credit and reception for Himself that did not give the same to His Father. It was His Father's work, not His! It was from this disappointment that came His sorrowful cry, *"When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?"* Luke 18:8 NAS.**

**The reason for saying this prayer aloud was not for His justification but His Father's revelation to His children. Whenever the Son is revealed, it is for the sake of His Father and His children that His brethren will see His Father and receive Him who sent Him. If Jesus had wanted credit, what He was about to do would have been powerful to that end. However, He wanted everyone to understand that the Father was one with Him. That They were working together, and it was His Father's will to raise Lazarus.**

Jesus needed Lazarus to help Him with his sister's distrust! Lazarus had tasted death and knew what it was. He must return and testify to the truth! Because they could not see him and thought in their unbelief that he was no more then He must come forth and come out of the unseen. Together we will give them rest. It was hard on Lazarus, for he was better where he was. However, he must return and share the Lord's company on earth a little longer and then be left behind with his sisters after His death. **This resurrection was for them and millions of others like them so we could know that God is the God of the living, not the God of the dead!**

## **Jesus Wept**



The Jews said, "*Behold how he loved him!*". Can any Christian believe that it was for the love of Lazarus that Jesus wept? It was from the love of God for Martha and Mary that He wept. He had not lost Lazarus, but Martha and Mary were lost to their Father's embrace. Come my brother, and testify, "*Lazarus come forth!*" He cried, and Lazarus came forward, bound hand and foot. "*Loose him and let him go.*" **Jesus said this, that he might be living truth to the world by walking around. Lazarus had never been dead, but alive to them again. He had not been lost, but restored! It was a strange door he came through, back to his own, a door seldom used, but there he was!** Oh, the joy in the hearts of Martha and Mary. Surely Jesus was rewarded for His troubles in seeing their joy!

Any Christian who has read this far, I now ask you to reflect on what I am about to say. Lazarus would have to die again and would thank God for the opportunity. What would you think of his sisters' reaction if he once again died and left them behind? Would they again refuse to be comforted, and if so, what would that say about them? That they had been unthankful of the favor shown to them? It would be to behave like the naughtiest of faithless children. **Would they not know now that he was not lost? Know that he was with his Master, who had Himself seemed lost for a few days and then returned? He would be no more lost this time than he was before! Could they now trust that He who had raised him before would not take care of him so they could have him forever at last!**

Would they not speak after such a fashion? Would they not remember that He, the good shepherd, will see that they are united with their loved ones again? United again, but perhaps in different pastures for a time? It might be hard to persuade Martha and Mary that they had behaved poorly before? **They must now recognize that he was gone but for a minute. That is gone from this room into the next. However much they might miss him, it would be a shame not to be patient when they knew there was nothing to fear. All was well with him and would soon be the same with them!**

"Yes," I imagine you saying, "that is just how they would feel!"

"Then," I say, "why are you so miserable yourself in your loss? So, why is it but only the frost of time and forgetting that allows you to be less miserable than you were a year ago?"

"Ah," you answer, "but I had no miracle done for me! If I had, you would see where I would be then!"

Do you mean that if your husband, son, father, or lover had been taken and returned that you would let them go and not dream of calling them back again from their good heaven? You would not be cruel enough for that! You would not mourn and weep excessively! You would not grieve the heart of the Lord with your hopeless tears! Oh, how little self-aware you are! Do you not see the reality that you are now in the same position as the sisters with their brother? You know as much as they knew then. They had no more revelation than you do concerning Lazarus. You profess to believe the story, though you make that doubtful by missing the heart of it. What difference is there between your position now and theirs? Lazarus was with God, and they knew he had gone and come back again. You, too, know that he left and came back again. Your friend has gone as Lazarus, and you behave as if you don't know anything about him. You, too, act like them with your behavior, angering Jesus with your distrust! When Martha and Mary behaved as you do, they had not had their brother raised. You know Lazarus was raised, yet you go on weeping as they did before!

## **The Changeless God**

You might offer two good reasons for thinking this way if the same thing happened to you. You might say he was not really dead, only experienced a seizure and couldn't move, or perhaps you don't believe that God is unchangeable but acts one way one time and another way another time on a whim? He might do for His friends what He would not do for you? If so, why would you worship such a God?

"But you know He is not consistent! That was an exceptional situation."

"If it was, it is worthless indeed, as worthless as your poor seeing could perceive it. However, you are as dull of heart as Martha and Mary. **Do you understand that He is continually restoring as He is taking away? That every loss is a restoration in the end! When you are weeping with empty arms others, who love as much as you, are embracing again in the ecstasy of reunion?**"

"Alas, we know little about that!"

"If you have learned no more than that, I must leave you alone. You have no good ground on which my words can fall. You fooled me, calling yourself a Christian. You cannot be following the Father and Son, or you would not be acting as you are."

"Ah, but you do not understand my loss!"

"Indeed, it must be a great loss, for it includes the Father as well! **If you understood what He knows about death, you would be clapping your listless hands. So, why should I try in vain to comfort you? You need to be made miserable so that you can wake from your sleep and know God. If you do not find Him, your mourning for those living that you have lost will remain unendurable for you.** The true knowing in your own heart will teach you this. But not the head knowledge you have, but the knowledge that suffering will bring. Then you will feel that existence itself is the source of evils, without the righteousness which is of God by faith."

## CLIFFNOTES WITH ORIGINAL MACDONALD QUOTES

### Was Jesus Angry?

It is indeed right and necessary to insist that many a word must differ in moral weight and colour as used of or by persons of different character. The anger of a good man is a very different thing from the anger of a bad man; the displeasure of Jesus must be a very different thing from the displeasure of a tyrant. But they are both anger both displeasure, nevertheless.

### The Leper

He was probably elated with the pride of having had a miracle wrought for him. In a word, he was so full of himself that he did not think truly of his deliverer.

The Lord, I say, saw this, or something of this kind, and was not satisfied. He had wanted to give the man something so much better than a pure skin, and had only roused in him an unseemly delight in his own cleanness—unseemly, for it was such that he paid no heed to the Lord, but immediately disobeyed his positive command. The moral position the man took was that which displeased the Lord, made him angry. He saw in him positive and rampant self-will and disobedience, an impertinent assurance and self-satisfaction.

## **The Two Blind Men**

'But they went forth, and spread abroad his fame in all that land.' Surely here we have light on the cause of Jesus' displeasure with the blind men! it was the same with them as with the leper: they showed themselves bent on their own way, and did not care for his. Doubtless they were, in part, all of them moved by the desire to spread abroad his fame; that may even have seemed to them the best acknowledgment they could render their deliverer. They never suspected that a great man might desire to avoid fame, laying no value upon it, knowing it for a foolish thing. They did not understand that a man desirous of helping his fellows might yet avoid a crowd as obstructive to his object.

We cannot surely be amazed at their self-sufficiency. How many are there not who seem capable of anything for the sake of the church or Christianity, except the one thing its Lord cares about—that they should do what he tells them! He would deliver them from themselves into the liberty of the sons of God, make them his brothers; they leave him to vaunt their church. His commandments are not grievous; they invent commandments for him, and lay them, burdens grievous to be borne, upon the necks of their brethren. God would have us sharers in his bliss—in the very truth of existence; they worship from afar, and will not draw nigh. It was not, I think, the obstruction to his work, not the personal inconvenience it would cause him, that made the Lord angry, but that they would not be his friends, would not do what he told them, would not be the children of his father, and help him to save their brethren.

## **Anger**

It is a serious thought that the disobedience of the men he had set free from blindness and leprosy should be able to hamper him in his work for his father. But his best friends, his lovers did the same. That he should be crucified was a horror to them; they would have made him a king, and ruined his father's work. He preferred the cruelty of his enemies to the kindness of his friends. The former with evil intent wrought his father's will; the latter with good intent would have frustrated it. His disciples troubled him with their unbelieving expostulations. Let us know that the poverty of our idea of Jesus—how much more our disobedience to him!—thwarts his progress to victory, delays the coming of the kingdom of heaven.

for to say a man might disobey and be none the worse, would be to say that no may be yes, and light sometimes darkness; it would be to say that the will of God is not man's bliss.

He knows what to do, for he is love. He is love when he gives, and love when he withholds; love when he heals, and love when he slays. Lord, if thus thou lookest upon men in thine anger, what must a full gaze be from thine eyes of love!

## **Martha and Mary**

Indignation—anger at the very tomb! in the presence of hearts torn by the loss of a brother four days dead, whom also he loved! Yes, verily, friends! such indignation, such anger as, at such a time, in such a place, it was eternally right the heart of Jesus should be moved withal. I can hardly doubt that he is in like manner moved by what he sees now at the death-beds and graves of not a few who are not his enemies, and yet in the presence of death seem no better than pagans. What have such gained by being the Christians they say they are? They fix their eyes on a grisly phantasm they call Death, and never lift them to the radiant Christ standing by bed or grave! For them Christ has not conquered Death:

### **The Father of Life!**

The Lord had all this time been trying to teach his friends about his father—what a blessed and perfect father he was, who had sent him that men might look on his very likeness, and know him greater than any likeness could show him; and all they had gained by it seemed not to amount to an atom of consolation when the touch of death came. He had said hundreds of things to Martha and Mary that are not down in the few pages of our earthly gospel; but the fact that God loves them, and that God has Lazarus, seems nothing to them because they have not Lazarus! The Lord himself, for all he has been to them, cannot console them, even with his bodily presence, for the bodily absence of their brother.

Must they be absolutely miserable without him? All their cry was, 'Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died!' You may say they did not know Christ well enough yet. That is plain—but Christ had expected more of them, and was disappointed. You may say, 'How could that be, seeing he knew what was in man?' I doubt if you think rightly how much the Lord gave up in coming to us. Perhaps you have a poor idea of how much the Son was able to part with, or rather could let the Father take from him, without his sonship, the eternal to the eternal, being touched by it, save to show it deeper and deeper, closer and closer. That he did not in this world know everything, is plain from his own words, and from signs as well: I should scorn to imagine that ignorance touching his Godhead, that his Godhead could be hurt by what enhances his devotion. It enhances in my eyes the idea of his Godhead.

Here, I repeat, I cannot but think that he was disappointed with his friends Martha and Mary. Had he done no more for them than this? Was his father and their father no comfort to them? Was this the way his best friends treated his father, who was doing everything for them possible for a father to do for his children! He cared so dearly for their hearts that he could not endure to see them weeping so that they shut out his father. His love was vexed with them that they would sit in ashes when they ought to be out in his father's sun and wind. And all for a lie!—since the feeling in their hearts that made them so weep, was a false one.

Remember, it was not their love, but a false notion of loss. Were they no nearer the light of life than that? To think they should believe in death and the grave, not in him, the Life! Why should death trouble them? Why grudge the friendly elements their grasp on the body, restoring it whence it came, because Lazarus was gone home to God, and needed it no more? I suspect that, looking into their hearts, he saw them feeling and acting just as if Lazarus had ceased to exist.

### **Unbelief in Life**

Then it was—at the sight of her and the Jews with her weeping, that the spirit of the Lord was moved with indignation. They wept as those who believe in death, not in life. Mary wept as if she had never

seen with her eyes, never handled with her hands the Word of life! He was troubled with their unbelief, and troubled with their trouble.

What was to be done with his brothers and sisters who would be miserable, who would not believe in his father! What a life of pain was theirs! How was he to comfort them?

They would not be comforted! What a world was it that would go on thus—that would not free itself from the clutch of death, even after death was dead, but would weep and weep for thousands of years to come, clasped to the bosom of dead Death! Was existence, the glorious out-gift of his father, to be the most terrible of miseries, because some must go home before others? It was all so sad!—and all because they would not know his father! Then came the reaction from his indignation, and the labouring heart of the Lord found relief in tears.

### **The Watershed of Life**

He was vexed with them, I have said, for not believing in God, his and their father; and at the same time was troubled with their trouble. The cloud of his loving anger and disappointed sympathy broke in tears; and the tears eased his heart of the weight of its divine grief. He turned, not to them, not to punish them for their unbelief, not even to chide them for their sorrow; he turned to his father to thank him.

I have said the trouble of the Lord was that his friends would not trust his father. He did not want any reception of himself that was not a reception of his father. It was his father, not he, that did the works! From this disappointment came, it seems to me, that sorrowful sigh, 'Nevertheless, when the son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?'

The thought of the Lord in uttering this prayer is not his own justification, but his father's reception by his children. If ever the Lord claims to be received as a true man, it is for the sake of his father and his brethren, that in the receiving of him, he may be received who sent him. Had he now desired the justification of his own claim, the thing he was about to do would have been powerful to that end; but he must have them understand clearly that the Father was one with him in it—that they were doing it together—that it was the will of the Father—that he had sent him.

### **Jesus Wept**

'Loose him and let him go,' he said—a live truth walking about the world: he had never been dead, and was come forth; he had not been lost, and was restored! It was a strange door he came through, back to his own—a door seldom used, known only to one—but there he was! Oh, the hearts of Martha and Mary! Surely the Lord had some recompense for his trouble, beholding their joy!

Did they not know that he was not lost?—that he was with the Master, who had himself seemed lost for a few days, but came again? He was no more lost now than the time he went before! Could they not trust that he who brought him back once would take care they should have him for ever at last!

They must have felt that he was but 'gone for a minute ... from this room into the next;' and that, however they might miss him, it would be a shame not to be patient when they knew there was nothing to fear. It was all right with him, and would soon be all right with them also!

## **The Changeless God**

Do you not see that he is as continually restoring as taking away—that every bereavement is a restoration—that when you are weeping with void arms, others, who love as well as you, are clasping in ecstasy of reunion?’

If you knew what he knows about death you would clap your listless hands. But why should I seek in vain to comfort you? You must be made miserable, that you may wake from your sleep to know that you need God. If you do not find him, endless life with the living whom you bemoan would become and remain to you unendurable.