

THANKSGIVING FOR PEACE.

A

SERMON,

*Delivered in Christ's Church, on Thursday
the 13th April,*

BY THE

REV. JAMES MUIR.

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We present to the Public a *Sermon* delivered on the 13th, the day recommended by the President of the United States, at the request of both houses of Congress, to be observed as a day of Thanksgiving for the restoration of Peace. The clergy officiating in the *Episcopal, Presbyterian* and *Methodist* churches having consulted together, appointed the religious services appropriated to the joyful occasion: Service was accordingly performed at "Christ Church." Two of the officiating clergy being from home the religious duties of the day devolved on the Reverend *Oliver Norris*, and *Dr. James Muir*. Mr. Norris read the prayers, and selected proper lessons. Dr. Muir delivered the sermon. The assembly was large and respectable, seldom on any former occasion have we observed more deep and solemn attention.

We believe our readers will be gratified in the perusal of the sermon now offered them. The most important of all truths is illustrated in a language easily to be understood, and at the same time, well calculated to excite great interest.

MATTHEW VI. 13.

—"Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory."

IN the preceding verses we have the model upon which Christians are to form in their addresses to the throne of grace. "After this manner, therefore, pray ye: Our father which art in heaven; hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." Then follow the words of my text, "For thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory."

To God belongs, The kingdom of universal nature,—The fulness of Almighty power,—The glory of what can render creatures safe or happy, now or afterwards, in life or in death, in time or in eternity.

To God belongs *The kingdom of universal nature.*

The kingdom is the Lord's, and he is governor among the nations: He is king of kings, and Lord of lords, he ruleth over all. Let all his works praise him in all places of his dominion: "Praise ye him, all his angels: Praise ye him, all his hosts. Praise ye him, sun and moon: praise him, all ye stars of light. Praise him, ye heaven of heavens, and ye waters that be above the heavens. Let them praise the name of the Lord: for he commanded, and they were created. He hath also established them for ever and ever: he hath made a decree which shall not pass. Praise the Lord from the earth, ye dragons and all deeps: Fire, and hail; snow, and vapours; stormy wind fulfilling his word; Mountains, and all hills; fruitful trees, and all cedars; Beasts, and all cattle; creeping things, and flying fowl; Kings of the earth, and all people; princes, and all judges of the earth; Both young men and maidens; old men and young children; Let them praise the name of the Lord: for his name alone is excellent; his glory is above the earth and heaven." "Let Israel rejoice in him that made him; let the children of Zion be joyful in their king."

Nebuchadnezzar blessed the Most High, he praised and honored him who liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, & his kingdom is from generation to generation. And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, "What doest thou?" The wrath of

man praises him,—“ Behold *the works of the Lord*, what *de-*
solutions he hath made in the earth.” The remainder of
 wrath he restraineth—“ He maketh wars to cease unto the end
 “ of the earth. He breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear
 “ in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire.” He speaks,
 and his word is obeyed. “ Be still, and know that I am God:
 I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the
 earth.”

An argument ariseth from these considerations by which
 we may urge our requests unto God. Abraham expostulated
 “ Wilt thou destroy the righteous with the wicked? That be
 “ far from thee! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?”
 Job filled his mouth with arguments. Prayer is intended to
 affect the heart of man; not to alter the purpose of God: to
 make the world sensible of their dependence on God; not to
 direct God in his government of the world.

When we pray, “ Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom
 come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven,” the ar-
 gument by which that prayer is urged is “ Thine is the king-
 “ dom,” Honor is due to thee from all, and obedience. Thy
 law is universally binding; make thy name known to thine
 adversaries, let the nations tremble at thy presence; His
 name shall be known to his adversaries, and the nations shall
 tremble at his presence; The rage of the heathen shall be inef-
 fectual, and the imagination of the people vain. Men may de-
 termine to burst asunder the bands of religion and to cast its
 cords from them; but God laughs at their folly, and holds
 them in derision. He has set his *anointed*, King on the hill
 of Zion, he has given the Heathen for his inheritance and the
 uttermost parts of the earth for his possession; men shall serve
 him with fear, and rejoice with trembling; but opposers he
 shall rule with a rod of iron, and dash in pieces as a potter’s
 vessel, they perish if his wrath be kindled but a little.

To God belongs—*The fulness of Almighty power.*
 “ Thine is the Kingdom,” expresses the right which God has in
 all: “ Thine is the power” expresses his absolute authority:
 the one expression is an amplification of the other: Presumptu-
 ous is it to doubt either his right, or his authority: Let such pre-
 sumption at any time appear, he is able to render both respected.

That creatures, now alive on the earth, or who have lived in
 time past, should have found in succeeding ages, and should
 now find, their wants abundantly supplied is astonishing; con-
 sider the immense multitude to be supplied, and the supply
 which is necessary, whence can it proceed?—Elisha as-
 sured Benhadad, during a famine which wasted Samaria, *to-*
morrow you shall have abundance; one of his courtiers derided
 the idea, “ if the Lord would make windows in heaven might
 this thing be? “ The Lord promised to give Israel flesh to
 eat in the wilderness, for a whole month, the people were 600,000
 footmen, it staggered the faith even of Moses “ shall the flocks
 and the herds be slain for them, to suffice them? or shall all

the fish of the sea be gathered together to them, to suffice them?”
 If the supply of one city and of one nation was so incredible,
 how much more so, the supply of every city and every nation
 on earth, and of every inhabitant of the one, and member of the
 other. We are lost in the thought; but nothing is impossible
 with God. He has hitherto supplied his creatures, he supplies
 them now, and shall supply them for time to come; few are the
 instances of those who perish for want, supply often comes to
 men in a surprising manner. Their bread shall be given and
 their water made sure, their God has promised, and his promise
 never fails; their bread is given them, and their water made
 sure.

An omnipotent arm supports creation, and provides for the
 necessities of all; it may be resisted, but in vain, so far resis-
 tance is permitted, but no farther, there the mad attempt is ar-
 rested, & the bold assailer is crushed as a moth. “ The enemy
 said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my
 lust shall be satisfied upon them, I will draw my sword, my
 hand shall destroy them. Thou didst blow with thy wind, the
 sea covered them; they sunk as lead in the mighty waters.
 Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the Gods? Who is like
 thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders.
 Thou stretchest out thy right hand, the earth swallowed them.
 Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast
 redeemed: Thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy
 holy habitation. Tremble thou earth, at the presence of the
 Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob.”

“ *Thine is the Glory*” of what can render creatures safe or
 happy now or afterwards, in life or death, in time or eternity.

Angels of the highest rank owe their distinctions to God.
 He has prepared the meanest insect for the station which it is
 intended to fill. Men are made a little lower than the Angels,
 rising by capacity and intelligence above the beast of the field,
 and the fowls of the air. When degraded by his own folly, God
 interposed, he has contrived the means of our deliverance and
 renders these means effectual. All was forfeited, but all is
 freely restored. By grace we are saved.

It belongs to God to forgive sin: the offence is immedi-
 ately against him. It sets his law at defiance and is extremely a-
 trocious; it involves in disgrace, and incurs punishment. Them
 Jews said justly, God only can forgive sin; our Lord indeed
 exercised this power on earth; but remember *he is God* as well
 as man; he exercises the same power now in heaven: He gives
 repentance and remission of sin, he says to whom he pleaseth,
 “ thy sins are forgiven thee:” He preserves his people and
 shall present them faultless before the presence of the divine
 glory.

Let angels review their dignities: Let men review the
 grace and mercy which prevent their ruin. Let both direct
 their eyes to the throne of God, from that throne the stream is-
 sues which is the life and refreshment either of angels or of man.

Such views of God enlarge and ennoble the soul; they incline men to sanctify his name, to submit to his government, to do his will, and to shout aloud his praise.

Let these observations intended to illustrate the doctrine contained in my text be applied to what has occasioned our assembling this day for public worship.

We have suffered much as individuals, & in our various relations with society. Our sky has been *stormy and tempestuous*. Was there no covert from the storm?—No hiding place from the tempest?—There was; but where?—In man?—No, man is a weak and changing creature, his power is limited, and his disposition variable; cursed be the man who trusteth in man and maketh flesh his arm. Who can control his own destiny? Who can say to the winds, be calm; or to the waves, thus far but no farther? No man can control his own destiny; any of them may speak to the winds or waves, but regardless of his voice, the wind continues to rage, and the waves to rush impetuously forward. But is there no power which indeed controls the destiny of men, and speaks with an efficacy which neither winds nor waves can resist? Yes that power does exist; exerted at first, creatures of various names and various distinctions sprung into life; and through its continued exertion, the world is preserved, regulated and governed. The weakest, the meanest the most insignificant are not overlooked. This power exalteth the humble, but debaseth the proud; killeth & maketh alive; bringeth down to the grave and bringeth up:—Maketh poor and maketh rich. Where, O where is *he* in whom such power resides? Let me know my benefactor, that I may go and worship in his presence. He is not far from any one of you: He comes to you on the wings of the wind; he speaks to you in the thunder; see him glorious in the lightning flashing from his countenance. He clothes the grass of the field and feeds the birds of the air. The young lions rear after their prey, and seek their meat from God.

God assigns each of us his allotment. Exalted or depressed; in health or sickness, abounding or suffering want; at home or abroad; among friends or enemies; in danger or safety; God's hand guides your journeying; puts your tears in his bottle; delivers your feet from falling; that you may walk before him in the land of the living so circumstanced as he may be pleased to direct.

Regulating the affairs of men, God exercises a *secret*, but at the same time, an *effectual control* over the most irregular and turbulent. Folly and prudence; rashness and deliberation; anger and love are overruled to promote his purpose and to bring it to perfection. This truth is taught, in scripture, in words deserving marked attention, "the wrath of man shall praise thee, and the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain."

The providence which God exercises over the animate and inanimate creation; over things in heaven and things on earth; over men destined to have a transient connection with the pre-

sent world, but a lasting connection with the future, is immediately the object of the christian's faith; and has been admitted at all times, and by every nation.

It must often have struck persons conversant with the history of Greece and Rome, how exact the Greeks and Romans were in the performance of their religious duties. They did not know the true God; but they believed in powers superior to men, and whom in the mortal state they do not see, who govern the world. They undertook nothing of importance without seeking their aid, and ascribed to their influence all their success. In every change, when their circumstances were adverse or prosperous, they hastened to their temples to deprecate their wrath, or to acknowledge their favor.

Alexander of Macedon entered on his splendid career; encouraged, as he said, by a dream promising him aid from above. He was approaching Jerusalem with the fixed purpose to lay the city in ashes, when the appearance of the High Priest, in his pontificals, arrested his purpose. That was the very person seen in my dream, assuring me, in the name of God before whom he ministers, that my undertaking shall have a prosperous issue. He directed sacrifices to be offered in his name at Jerusalem, and ever after gave the Jewish nation every mark of his favor.

The Athenians multiplied their altars. It is easier, said a stranger who visited their city, it is easier to find a *God* at Athens than a *man*; nay so anxious were they that no invisible power from whom they received benefit should be overlooked, that, on some calamity which continued after application to the Gods whom they already worshipped, they erected an altar to *the unknown God*, whose aid they sought, and sought it not in vain: This, as the apostle declared when he preached among them, was the God of Israel, the King of the nations, whom Christians worship, and who claims the worship of all. The anxiety of the Heathen to honor the powers whom as they supposed governed the world, may well confound and abash those nations who enlightened with the light of revelation, live neglectful of *the living and true God*.

This country is under peculiar obligation to the providence of God, and you are this day, called together by the existing authorities, publicly to acknowledge your obligation.

For years past, and during the last year, how often did our hearts sink within us: our fears were awake, and not without cause: a cup was in our hand, bitter as the worm-wood and the gall.

A state of war is at all times a state of danger. Even the shout of victory is attended with the shout of mourning. A victory is the purchase of blood, *our friends have fallen*, and in the fall of those called *enemies*, we recognize *brethren*, to whom we ought to have been united. In war the tie of humanity is broken, and *men* inflict injuries upon *men*, who ought to be known to one another only by acts of kindness. God permits

these evils that they may discover the sad depravity of the human heart and as *fires* may purify the earth.

The destinies of the nations were weighed in a balance. *The invader*, with few exceptions, and those of less importance was overwhelmed with disgrace and defeat; but *the invaded* were successful beyond what they could have ventured to anticipate. *The reformation*, not the *ruin* of the country was evidently the design of providence.

If we rejoiced for a moment it was with trembling. In the calm the tempest was collecting new strength.

Brethren, what were your feelings when the stately buildings in a neighboring city, the pride of the country, were in flames?—When the invader on the wings of the wind flew and seized you as a prey?—Were you not dismayed and ready to give all up for lost? No means of defence! and no expectation of any! but you had put yourselves under the protection of omnipotence; and he did protect you, otherwise your houses had now been in ashes, your temples destroyed, and you, without shelter and without property, had been scattered like sheep without a shepherd. God has indeed been kind to you. The bird has escaped from the snare of the fowler.

Still the calamities of war afflicted the nation; our councils were perplexed, our treasury exhausted, and our youth ready to be torn from the bosom of their families, to endure in a camp every deprivation, and every danger.

Anxious and despondent, our hearts failed, anticipating future evils. At this awful moment God spake, and all was calm. Peace is restored to us, we again dwell in safety. No invader breaks in to spoil our property; none go out to desolate and to destroy. It is *the Lord's doing* and *marvellous in our eyes*.

You have done well to repair to the Sanctuary, to acknowledge before God, "Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory."

Bless the Lord, this day, & let all that is within you bless his holy name. Be glad in the God who made you, and triumph in the rock of your salvation.

You have been taught by the dispensations of providence, that vanity and vexation of spirit mark present pursuit, and present enjoyment. Set not your heart on the world. It offers husks, a portion fit for swine: seek God as your portion, consider his favor to be better than life.—Rejoice as though you rejoiced not, buy as though you possessed not, use the world without abusing it.

In the fear, in the service, and in the worship of God, spend your future days. Then indeed you shall triumph. You shall escape from trouble and enter into rest. You shall taste fullness of joy and pleasures for evermore.