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~~65~~
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614
459
463

~~XIII.~~

The Leprosy of Sin.

Luke vii, 19-23.

Preached Sun. a. m. July 18, 1874, Branchville: - Sun. a.
m. Aug. 16, 1874, Dover: - Sun. ev! Aug. 30, 1874, Anchor
Line Steamship "Ethiopia", Atlantic Ocean: - Sun. a. m. May
23, 1875, Wilson - ave. M. E. ch., Cleveland, Ohio, during General
Assembly: - Sun. ev! Oct. 25, 1876, Branchville a. m.: -
Sun. a. m. Nov. 25, 1877, Scranton: - Sun. ev! Apr. 1, 1883, New
York, "Central": - Sun. ev! Mar. 30, 1884, Bridgeton "West".

Luke vii, 19-23: And John, calling
two of his disciples,
sent them to Jesus, saying: 'Art thou
that should come, or look we for ano-
ther?' And in that same hour He
cured many of their infirmities, and
plagues, and of evil spirits, and unto
many blind He gave sight. Then
Jesus, answering, said unto them: 'Go

your way and tell John what
things ye have seen and heard: how
that the blind see, the lame walk,

the lepers are cleansed,

the deaf hear, the dead are raised, &
the poor the Gospel is preached. And
blessed is he, whosoever shall not be
offended in Me.' "

This narrative, in the graphic style
peculiar to St. Luke, sets before us a
remarkably complete picture of the earthly
work of Jesus our Lord. The severe
prophet of the Jordan, seemingly in
doubt of Jesus - whether because he had
so long lost sight of Him whom he
had baptized or to be uncertain whether
this now famed Teacher were the same,

3 or else because the uncourteousness of Jesus' character seemed to him incompatible with the severity of the Divine Judge — for whatever reason, John the Baptist had sent two disciples of his frankly and directly to our Lord to ask the question: "Art thou He that should come, or are we to look for another?" In answer Jesus gives him no unsatisfactory assertion, but recognizing his anxiety & honorable plainness, delays the messengers that they may ~~for~~ with their own eyes behold the nature of His works. The signs which God had determined He should give to the world as proofs of His divinity ^{of His} mission, are wrought in the very presence of the two disciples. It was in the country of Galilee, perhaps not

very far from Nain, where (Luke vi, 4
11-18) Jesus had just restored to a widow
her son from the dead; a region full
of diseased ones, and those plagued with
blindness, and ^{the} ~~the~~ ^{evil} spirits, and with the
leprosy. From the multitude of these
unfortunates ^{ever speaking things} Jesus of Nazareth chose
^{immediately} ~~some~~ upon whom to work His won-
drous cures; and not until His mi-
raculous power had been fully attested
did He send away the messengers,
telling them then to "tell John the
things which themselves saw & heard;
how that these signs of the Messi-
ah had been fulfilled before them; that
as John had fulfilled the prophecies of
Isaiah concerning himself (xl, 3-8): "The
voice of ~~the~~ him that crieth in the
wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the
Lord, make His paths straight"; so

5 John, was now fulfilling the prophe-
cies of the same prophet concerning Him-
self (xxxv): "God will come & save you,
then shall the eyes of the blind be opened,
& the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped,
then shall the lame man leap as a hart,
& the tongue of the dumb sing"; "the
Lord hath anointed Me to preach good
tidings unto the meek, to bind up the
broken-hearted (lxi)." Thus did it please
our gracious Lord to prove Himself
the true Messiah of God, to His
own prophet John, naming him also
with divine authority: "And blessed
is he whosoever shall not be offended
in Me"; for it appears as tho' John had
been, ^{thus tempted} but had shown a readiness to
honor him on these proofs.

It is by means of such rather than other testimonies
~~So also friends, it has pleased~~
that God has chosen to reveal His Messiah, & to accomplish the

work of salvation of men. So also it ⁶
has pleased God that His holy Son
should make Himself known to us. To
John, lying in prison in (Machaerus) Pe-
rea, eye-witnesses went with this testi-
mony; to us, they have left these ~~but~~
~~writings~~ — that is the whole difference
between him & us. These sacred books
contain for you & me not merely the
fact that Jesus worked these miracles,
& preached to the poor as signs &
proofs of His greater doctrines of sin &
salvation; but they contain for us also
the modes & details of both miracles,
& preaching.

What then shall we learn here in
regard to our Lord, Jesus Christ?

That He came to show & to bestow
the mercy of God upon us; to save
us sinners; yea, "to save unto the ut-

7) tempest (Heb. vii, 25) them that come to God by Him."

The course which our Lord chose to do this by — so vitally interesting because of our absolute dependence upon it for divine clemency — is of the deepest interest too for its beauty. To prove Himself to our darkened vision the Son of God with power, it was not enough to declare the simple truths of eternal Wisdom, but needful to add evidences of miraculous power. These might have been selected without further aim or result than the mere exhibition of divine power; but ~~in the striking summary advanced in our text we discover an adaptation of the miracle to the needs & hopes of men, of most singular, & more than that, most encouraging to men in our fallen condition.~~

~~The purpose of the miracle, being, as we have observed, to exhibit Jesus of Nazareth as clothed with Almighty power, for a certain mission not at first fully declared — their success towards that purpose was the better assured, by their exact adaptation to the condition of those among whom they were done.~~

What do men fear, ~~but~~ ~~after~~ ~~the~~ ~~light~~ & from what would ~~one~~ ~~they~~ most readily pay to be relieved, were a being clothed with supernatural power suddenly to appear among us?

Sickness, often; & so fears gathered about him those that were plagued with various diseases — the blind, the lame, the deaf, the palsied. He worked cures upon these poor distressed bodies, which no man had been able to cure, that they might learn & believe in His Almighty power to do all for them which

9 they needed, as He should teach them.

But most men fear rather not mere disease — even deformity or the 'loss of a member, so that their lives are spared; tho' it was a great, great boon to the sick, that Jesus did heal so many of them. But men do more yet fear death. That is the loss of all, many think. If there were only no death, ~~they~~ ^{some} would care little, perhaps, whether God regarded them at all or not; but death makes them ready to be approached tho' that fear. ~~Well~~ then — the gracious Saviour, humbling himself to their low conceptions, after displaying His power in raising the dead from death, that He might persuade them of the peril of their souls, which He had come from Heaven to avert. When (as St. Luke tells us just before our text) He met the sad widow of Nain in the street, carrying her only

son to his grave, attended by a great
throng — when he came & touched the bier,
& commanded the young man to arise
from death, & delivered him to his mo-
ther — we know how that won his way
to the hearts of the eyewitnesses, for they
said: "God hath visited His people!"

But some know of evils in this
world that are worse than death. Pro-
longed torture (such as the Spanish In-
quisition knew how to put on men) is
worse. Madness is worse than that. ~~And~~
Disgrace — by treason, by appetite that
miss both body & ~~soul~~ mind, by all
forms of baseness — is worse still.
And if they who suffer any of these
profoundest agonies of life could know
a Deliverer, there is no doctrine, there
is no demand which He could preach
to them when He had restored them to
themselves, which they would not heartily

" heartily receive on His authority for
its truth & value. So they did receive
Him & His words, certainly, whom our
blessed Saviour did save: Mary Magda-
lene, out of whom He cast seven dev-
ils; the ^{man} ~~man~~ ~~the~~ among the tombs
of Perea, whom the disciples found sit-
ting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, & in his
right mind, saying that he might be
always with Him (Mark v, 15, 18).

In such a manner did the glorious
Son of God come to us; considering just
our needs, touched with the feeling of
our infirmities." Ah! how fit to teach
us His eternal doctrines! how good to
us, to do more than heal up a dying
body, to teach us how to live forever!

Among the most fearful miseries of
men, our Saviour selected ~~of~~ one upon
which to work His miracle, which most

strikingly typifies all that He would ¹²
teach about the inherent & awful
nature of sin. It is named in our text,
& may chiefly occupy our attention for
the remainder of this occasion.

This is the leprosy. It is worse than
death, for it is the agonies & horrors
of death yet in life. Vividly described
in the Levitical law (Lev. xiii), it is known
to us only so & by report of travelers
& historians. From a small bright
spot on the skin, it spreads all
over the body, carrying gradual morti-
fication wherever it goes; ~~more fatal~~
~~than any wound, putrefying to the~~
~~most intolerable foulness, it kills &~~
~~carries away the members piecemeal.~~
~~its first destructive~~ ^{but producing} steadily a growing
intolerable putrefaction, ~~but destroying~~

13 producing a steady increasing intoler-
ble putrefaction, but reaching with its
decay the extremities first, so that the
unhappy victim literally dies by pieces.
For this appalling melody there is no re-
edy — the miseries of a slow death
ing thus intensified by certainty; and to
the worse, under the abandonment of
another of its awful characteristics
es. The disease is ~~highly~~ contagious,
so dangerously so that its victim may
~~be~~ not only deserted by friends
& driven to the wilderness but there re-
quired to avoid ^{the use of all steams or jells} ~~all~~ ~~waters~~ which might
~~be~~ ~~visited~~ even there be approached by
~~less~~ wretched wanderers. ~~Besides this~~
~~open of seclusion, another~~ misery may
seem perfectly to fill up the cup of
sufferer; the power of the disease to
~~reproduce itself in the next generation~~
But if the by

For sin also, tho' it ~~has a see~~ appears to us by its outer manifestations, like the pox, on the skin, has its source within. It does indeed show itself in bright spots of the character, ~~but its power~~ in daily petty acts of various forms of wrong, or in great offenses that seem as the wide spread disease upon the body. But the acts are only the outer signs. Within, at the heart, there is a secret power, the love of self selfishness, which enters the soul's life at every avenue, as the poisoned blood at the veins, & courses throughout. From part to part of the soul it runs, dealing its death; to the affections, the purposes, the senses, all shown in the acts but fatally poisoned at their source. One by one the wonderful attachments of life are torn away; the assassination of the holy, their respect, at best perhaps even the love of the nearest & dearest of kin. Nothing can cure sin: it has become part & parcel of the very life itself; & ~~after it has been shown every sign~~

It not only destroys every good power of the
soul of the sinner himself, but commu-
nicates its evil to those with whom he
comes in contact, ^{contaminating} corrupting them also, &
leaving its effect, it may be, for genera-
tion after generation. As leprosy, showing
itself on the surface, discloses the terrible
secret of corruption at the seat of life,
so sin, ~~in~~ in the acts of life betrays
the evil spirit of selfishness enthroned
in the soul; & as that leprosy, reaching
out to every part, is certain to destroy
all at last, so the sins that appear, & their
penalties sometimes seen, are but the
infallible evidences of death that has fastened
its power upon the soul.

here, in enduring this fearful disease, ¹⁴
deprived the comforting aid of his
own children, yet another feature of it
would seem utterly to fill up his cup of
misery: the leprosy is not only conta-
gious, & incurable, but capable of re-
producing itself as a hereditary disease.
Thus, full of anguish with his own
intolerable pains; certain to die by a ling-
ering death, forsaken by all men, yet
~~but~~ still ~~perhaps~~ involuntarily destroying
other, ^{perhaps the dearest,} lives in the same horrible manner;
~~what other form of human suffering~~
~~could have been chosen, so fitly to sug-~~
~~gest at once the evil of sin, & the~~
~~glorious~~ the unhappy leper is the most
vivid type of sin's evil power & con-
sequences. What other miracle could
so perfectly attest the divinity of
Jesus, as the cure of leprosy? By
what act ~~of grace~~ could He so glori-

15
ously manifest the love of God, as
by the healing of a leper? My friends,
how more forcibly could the sacred mi-
ters commend the Savior to us here
today, than by telling us that He did
such a work in the days of when some
of them were "eyewitnesses of His glo-
ry"?

The narrative in the first chapter
of Mark is so given to us. When Je-
sus was preaching & casting out devils,^{in the early part of His ministry}
, throughout all Galilee — a region spe-
cially full of these most forms of evil
— "there came a leper to Him, beseeching
Him, & kneeling down to Him, & saying
unto Him: 'If Thou wilt, Thou canst make
me clean.'" What a conviction of the
Savior's power this man must have had,
thus to fling himself against everything
but that one bare hope! & yet with

what a sick man's weakness he speaks ^{to}
after all - not 'to make me clean', but 'if
Thou wilt Thou canst.' And Jesus was
moved with compassion". So might have
been any humane man; but he would
have fled, in dismay & horror, at the
mere sight of ~~such~~ a leper. Jesus
honored the man's faith with a wonder-
ful grace; being "moved with compas-
sion, He put forth His hand & touched
him, & ^{said} ~~saying~~ unto him: 'I will; be thou
clean.'" What love, what sympathy may
this! Surely, He who rebuked the wind
& said to the sea: 'Peace, be still'; who
stood at the mouth of the grave & said:
'Lazarus! come forth!' who bade evil
spirits obey His mere word - He need
not, ^{in order to cure him,} have reached forth His hand to
share the contagion & the uncleanness
of the leper! No, but He would; He

17 chose to take even that misery to
Himself, & by touching, disannul'd of
its power. Oh! how that act, which ac-
companied the mighty word, must have
mored the heart of the sufferer! how
irresistibly must it have convinced all
who saw it not only that their Lord
was indeed come, but that He was
come with a love ^{for men} as boundless as the
~~sky~~ heavens and as deep as the sea!

Yes, so indeed was He come; to show
& to bestow the mercy of God upon
them, upon us. But Oh! no mere
bodily misery was it which He came
to assuage. His mercy reaches deeper
than a leprosy, and higher than to
physical health. He had His doctrine
yet to teach, the truths of God to
make known; & the healing of dis-
ease was but the chosen form by

19 a leprosy of the soul; nay, that it
has already its power upon us; that
we are dying fit, & no man can
save us.

The marvelous healings of the Saviour
did not more potently bring out the
Galilean lepers to His feet, than do
His teachings expose our wicked
souls. ~~Love you~~ When He saw the leper
He was moved with compassion to touch
him; but that is not our way, alas! &
so when we read ~~of~~ His parable of
the Good Samaritan who did a kind
deed of humanity which the priest &
the Levite ~~of~~ proud Judaea would not
do, he perceives that in the light of the
^{divine} truth of God there is a spot on our
souls worse than leprosy before God,
the spot of selfish indifference ~~will~~
but one of His human creatures. He

follow this selfishness up & are aston-²⁰
ished to find how it has spread through-
out our ^{whole} being, how hopelessly incurable
it appears, & what awful contagion it
contains & gives!

~~Christ bids us love our
enemies, remembering that our Father Who
is in Heaven maketh His sun to rise on the
evil & on the good, & sendeth rain on the just
& on the unjust; & that if we salute our
brethren only, we are no better than the
publicans & sinners, ^{whom} we count ourselves
above; but we do salute our brethren~~

~~only, &~~

He discovers, on a close ex-
amination that we are living almost or
quite wholly, for self. To deny ourselves for
our friends' sakes we may - do not even the
publicans the same? but to deny ourselves
for the sake of the right, or from a sense
that the sacrifice would please the God
Who gave His life for us - do you do it?
He has not only said He ~~wishes~~ ^{wishes} that we sh.
lay up for ourselves treasures in Heaven, but

21 that even a true self-regard would
counsel it; yet since we began to call
ourselves, by the sacred name of Christ
in the Church, have we advanced
most in ~~the pursuit~~ familiarity with di-
vine truth, Christ's character, & the
promises, or in this world's good? Judg-
ing the future from the past, are we
likely to recover? or is self-love gain-
ing in its profits, its power, & its
torment in the halls of conscience, day
by day? Considered in its relations to
those under our influence: does our
example teach holiness & emulation
of X^c to our companions, in street
or store or house daily, or are men
more & more commending our cheap
worldly successes? In fine, our Lord
Jesus X^c has shown us the pure,
peaceable, fruitful truth of God;

have we ~~that light~~ the health & 22
wealth of that unplanted & growing
mitten us, or the leprous sore of
selfishness? Our Saviour has taught in this world, &
by miracles in leprosy, that we might know the end of our own hearts.

2. God is willing to save us, &
able. — But we are to learn further,
that God is ~~able~~ willing & able to save
us from our leprosy. Do we want to
be less selfish, less worldly, more pleas-
ing to God? Do we mourn, that
the blessed Saviour sees us so poor
& bad & imperiled in spite of all His
grace? The leper of Galilee was healed
to show us that it is not deformity,
nor misery that turns Jesus away,
even a leper, who cries low, if Thou
wilt! may expect grace; for the
Thou Who was in the beginning, &
Who is, & Who shall be, has not
changed, & will not change. ^{22 A. B. (Mar. 30/54)} ~~It is~~

To one who realizes in any degree
 the enormity of sin; its offensiveness-
 ness to a just Being, its intensity, its
 of offensiveness to the Just God; it
 may well seem ~~that~~ to one perceiv-
 ing this, & yet feeling that he is a
 sinner, that his sin cannot be forgiven.

Does any one of you, my hearers,
 feel this? Does it seem to you
 that it is of no use for you to be-
 concerning yourself with your
 past ~~that~~ evil, that you may as
 well drift on, do as well as you
 can now & let the past go?

Oh! hearers to me! what token
 could be like this token of lepro-
 sy - healing, for you? Is not lepro-
 sy among the diseases like unto

sin among the miseries, of
 mankind! If Jesus wished to
 give you a ~~token~~ that He can
 heal you of sin — both its guilt
 & its power — could He give
 you a ~~better~~ than this? Loath-
 some to Him; inevitable; self-
 perpetuating; present & hideous;
 He spoke it out of existence! He
 put His finger upon its contami-
 nations! He did it as a type &
 so described it ^{to John} as an evidence of
 His divine mission! He can
 heal you; He wishes to; He
 offers to; He is only restrained, with
 in the boundary of His own holy
 laws, by your delay to ask Him!

23 Jesus, the Son of God, Who is passed
into the heavens, touched with the feel-
ing of our infirmities; & ^{is able to save unto the uttermost all who, come to God by Him, because} He ever liveth
to make intercession for us. ~~But it is,~~
~~Who~~

3. We should receive the wonderfully-
substantiated testimony of Jesus to our
danger & need, & to His willingness to save.

- I remark in conclusion, that a
duty presses upon every one of us, to
receive the wonderfully-substantia-
ted testimony of Jesus to our danger,
& need, & to His power & willingness
to save.

~~The~~ It will be diffic-
ult for you to explain, my friends,
why the Bible should have been
preserved till now, if it was not to
warn ~~you~~ & persuade you to be saved

in Christ. The Savior of men 24
sent now to John Baptist: "The lep-
ers are cleansed, & blessed is he,
whosoever shall not be offended in
Me." My hearer! it is a message
of great import to you that Jesus
can & will cleanse lepers. He did
that to show himself the Christ
of God in so gracious an attitude
as should at once awaken the con-
science & encourage approach. It
is a message of wonderful love with
which our text closes: "Blessed is he
whosoever shall not be offended
in Me!" Ah! what higher desire
can you have than this — to please
God, to honor Christ, to accept Jesus
of Nazareth to do the work He offered

25
Himself on earth & on the Cross
to do? What hope is the world holding
out to you, that you can fail to
listen to Christ's offer: You shall
be blessed? This is His offer: For every
conscienceness you have of a radical
fault, a wicked & destroying disposi-
tion of heart, He will be Himself
the cure. Sin shall be rebuked in
your heart, where your unaided touch
can never reach it. The Lord God
will put forth His hand & touch
your heart, and give you His presence
that you may commune with Him.
No matter how defiled - He is touch-
moved with compassion. It is His
glory to do it. He asks of you but one
thing: will you come to Him, as the

26
Lepers did? Will you give over
~~every other thing, & realize~~
attention to other things, & acknow-
ledge your leprosy of sin? Will you
abandon all other sources of healing,
& seek Jesus of Nazareth as they did?
Prayer will reach him now as easily
as then. He waits for you — for
us every one. Oh! that we might
all seek him; that ^{for us,} now, as in
the days of John Baptist, it might
be said to ~~The~~ the glory of the
Savior: "The lepers are cleansed."

which He made known to His people 18
first His power to heal all their di-
eases" (Ps. ciii, 3) & then to "forgive all
their iniquities."

What He said of that power, we
have long since learned thro' the ev-
angelists. What He taught of the
nature & evil of sin, we have read
there. And we shall draw the bene-
fit ~~which~~ from ~~our~~ text that is in-
tended for us, if we will now recur
to the teachings of our gracious Lord,
and seek His aid, ~~as~~ ~~the~~ ~~cup~~ of
Galilee, from our fatal, incurable, in-
tolerable malady.

1. We are exposed to a moral
leprosy. — I remark first, that our
Lord would have every soul of us
know, that we are each exposed to