

S E R M O N,

DELIVERED ON THE

ANNIVERSARY THANKSGIVING,

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THANKSGIVING SERMON

LUKE XII. 48.

For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required.

A PRINCIPLE is here laid down, which like many others contained in the New Testament, approves itself to every man's conscience. One might justly be thought deficient in moral discernment, who should hesitate to admit *that under given circumstances, the measure of our duty is to be estimated according to our ability and means of performing it.* We reasonably expect more labor of a child or servant, who possesses a vigorous constitution, than we expect of a child or servant to whom God has denied this physical advantage. We reasonably expect more practical wisdom, and more extended usefulness from a man of distinguished intellectual endowments than we expect from another man, who is deficient in such endowments. And upon precisely the same principle, when we solicit the contributions of others to relieve the distressed, or to

promote objects of public utility, we reasonably expect a larger bounty from a rich man than from a poor man, and from one rich man than from another, who is less rich. Indeed, so universally applicable is the principle before us, that probably a case cannot be found in the whole circle of human relations, in which the measure of the requisition, other things being equal, ought not to be proportioned to the ability of performing it.

Nor will it be necessary to stop a moment to prove that this principle has the same application to every body politick, or civil community which it has to individuals; for it must be considered, that every body politick, or civil community, is, in its associated capacity, a moral being, subject to moral laws and under moral obligations to itself and other communities. And the obligations of each civil community, must be various, as in the case of individuals, according to its various circumstances. Less is required of a poor, than of a rich state, less is required of a weak, than of a powerful state, and less is required of an ignorant, than of an enlightened state.

To whatever *people*, then, little is given, of that people shall little be required; and so on the other hand, to whatever people much is given, of that people shall much be required. And if, to bring the subject directly home, much has been given to *us* as a people, then much is required of *us* as a people.

Now much has been given to us—I say *given*, because it will not be denied, that the Providence of Jehovah is the source of human blessings and enjoyments. All the advantages and all the means of hap-

pinness possessed by states or individuals are his gift, the bounty of his hand, the gratuitous boon of his own sovereign goodness. And to contemplate the distinguished blessings which our country *enjoys*, is precisely the same as to contemplate the distinguished blessings which God *has given* our country.

Under the full impression of this truth, let us consider,

First—*The natural advantages of our country—its soil, its climate, its harbours, and its ten thousand streams to facilitate internal commerce and every useful mechanical operation.*

The soil is eminently productive of whatever can administer to the sustenance, the comfort, or the luxury of man. Go where you will—to the fields of older Europe, to the plains of more populous Asia, or to the ruder regions of burning Africa, and you see no richer harvests smile with the same degree of cultivation; you see no population more abundantly blessed with food and raiment, and the thousand comforts of home. So various and so abundant are the gifts of nature in this favoured land, that the daily fare, even of the humblest laborer, would in some sections of the globe, be deemed almost princely fare. So fruitful is our soil and so propitious are our suns and skies, that he, who with becoming diligence plies the axe and the plough, will rarely be disappointed in his reward. No inundations, to any wide extent, sweep away the coming harvest—no continued drought, the precursor of famine and death, consumes the hope of man. Few of us remember a more unfavourable season than that of 1816. The monthly

frosts, the chilly days and nights, and the obscured suns of that year spread a gloom over the face of nature and filled the heart with despondency, as though summer had forgotten to return and no harvest was to bless the labour of man. Some, who had little trust in Providence, even predicted a famine. But after all, who in this land of plenty was not supplied with food and raiment? Who lacked occasion of blessing Heaven for its kind and protecting care?

To secure the full benefit of a propitious soil and climate, there must be facilities for turning to good account the surplus produce. The hand of industry will become nerveless, and the advantages of nature will fail of being realized, unless profitable markets can be found, or means of interchanging commodities so as to stimulate enterprise. Now with respect to these advantages, what country is more favoured than our own? The long range of Atlantick states are furnished with numerous harbours, from which, by the aid of navigation, their surplus commodities may be wafted to every continent and island. And the western, or interior states are intersected with navigable streams which form so many outlets to their abounding productions; or if in any case, nature has left the work imperfect, we find from the recent enterprise of a neighbouring state, that the labour of man can open a communication even between the Atlantick and the immense territories which surround the western lakes.

Nor should I omit to mention, that as our country supplies in abundance the raw materials, so it furnishes all the helps and localities which can be necessary

for the most important and the most successful manufacturing establishments.

Secondly—*What a large measure of liberty, secured by a wise constitution, as well as by the habits, the intelligence and the spirit of the people, our country enjoys.*

To obtain this blessing for themselves and their posterity, our fathers repaired to the wilds of America. Subjected to many hardships in the land of their nativity, and seeing no prospect of alleviation, they nobly resolved to make any sacrifice rather than give up their independence, or cease to be freemen. And as the fathers resolved, so resolved their children. Through all succeeding generations, a spirit of freedom has pervaded the counsels and nerved the arm of our countrymen. No arts of the parent state could undermine our cherished liberties, nor have fleets or armies been able to wrest them from us. Our long and painful struggle for independence was finally crowned with complete success; and while the God of armies gave us a name and rank among the nations of the earth, he inspired our counsellors with wisdom to frame a constitution, which experience has shown to be unrivalled in excellency, and to be adapted beyond any other to secure all the ends of a free government. By the operation of this sacred charter, by the impartial administration of laws, by the influence of institutions which originated in the spirit of liberty and are adapted to its preservation, our country has experienced a degree of happiness and improvement, which has no parallel in history.

Deeply ought every man to be impressed with the

importance of liberty—fervently ought every heart to glow with gratitude to Heaven for the grant of so rich a blessing to our country. For of what avail are the best natural advantages without liberty to improve and enjoy them? Of what avail are the fertile lands, the genial skies, the enchanting landscapes, the deep and navigable waters of many sections in Europe and Asia where man is unblest with liberty, where despotism pervades and paralyzes the free-born spirit, where slavery in its most appalling forms, *slavery* without mitigation and without end is the portion of every grade of citizens? When Greece was free, her glories were unrivalled; but no sooner had despotism fastened his chains on this devoted region, than her glories departed; and naught remained to cheer the astonished traveller but the ruins of former greatness, and the remembrance of what she once was. Such too will be the condition of every country who lets go her hold on freedom and yields herself a victim to tyranny and oppression. Take liberty from ourselves, and we should soon learn its inestimable value from the desolations that would follow.

Thirdly—*What abundant means of knowledge our country enjoys.*

While our fathers resolved that this land should be the asylum of liberty, they had the wisdom to foresee that without the diffusion of knowledge among the people, liberty could not be maintained; and therefore made early provision for the erection of schools, and as soon as practicable, endowed higher seminaries of learning. A wise system of education

being thus early incorporated with the views, and habits, and feelings of the people, it has been continually carried forward, and been carried forward with a spirit and energy which have produced the most important effects. Through the operation of literary institutions of various grades, from the common school, the most important of all, up to the university, we have a population enlightened, probably, beyond any other on the globe.

In connexion with schools a free press, contributes largely to this important result. By the former, a foundation for improvement is laid, and by the latter, the business of improvement is carried on. From the press, so constantly employed, ten thousand streams flow forth to fertilize and enrich the mental soil. Books, pamphlets, and journals meet us every where, and amid this profusion of light every person must catch at least a few rays.

Happy, land! we should all exclaim, could we cast our eyes over other regions, where no means are enjoyed of emancipating the human mind from the bondage of superstition, where the ruler and the subject are fast bound alike to the most degrading ignorance; or could we cast our eyes over other regions still, where the higher orders in society are blessed with science and literature, but where the lower orders, the mass of the population, are almost wholly deprived of these advantages.

Think it no slight cause of grateful recognition, when you come before God, that he has blessed our country with knowledge. Take this from the people and the pillars of rational liberty, nay, the glorious

fabrick itself would fall to the ground. Your career of improvement in the arts and charities of life would stop short, and your best social enjoyments, your sweetest communion of soul would be realized no more.

Fourthly—*The important religious institutions, which our country enjoys.*

The fathers of New-England were men of grace and of prayer. They came to this land that they might find a resting place for the ark of God; and form a people on whose banners should be written *holiness to the Lord*. Hence almost every settlement embraced a church, and almost every church had a minister to break to them the bread of life. The religious institutions thus begun have continued through succeeding generations. The Bible, the Sabbath and the Sanctuary have kept their place to the present time, though it must be confessed, in some cases, with diminished influence. Amid declensions, and partial desolations, the voice of salvation is still heard. Christianity still holds her empire over the hearts of thousands, and preserves by her light and influence our valuable institutions, and to a considerable extent, those moral habits which form the only basis of national prosperity.

True indeed, the number of qualified religious teachers, does not bear so great a proportion to the whole population now, owing to its astonishing increase, as in earlier times; and I am sorry to add, not so great a proportion, as in every other christian nation. Still the means of grace are probably more efficacious, and in some respects, more abundant in this, than in al-

most any other country. The Bible is more read, because there is a better supply of Bibles, and a far greater proportion of the people are able to read it. Christian institutions are preserved in a more *simple*, and therefore in a more *efficient* form. They are not here incorporated with secular interests—not made the engine of state policy nor trammelled by national establishments. Conscience is free, enquiry is free, and therefore the gospel is far more likely to have free course and to be glorified. Our want of religion which every good man, and every friend of his country must lament, is certainly not owing to the lack of means, for on no people does the light of truth shine brighter and on no people are greater or more valuable religious privileges conferred.

Nor let it be supposed that our religious institutions have little or no influence on the happiness and prosperity of the nation. If history has established any truth, it has established this, that the christian religion has done more for the improvement of mankind in government, laws, manners, refinement, and virtue than all other causes combined. And I have no fears that any sober man will deny the position that our country is principally indebted to christianity for whatever is great and honorable in its character, or happy in its condition; or, that if the institutions by which this influence is maintained should be abolished, the glory would depart from us.

When we consider, therefore, the important connexion which christianity holds with all that is valuable in civil society, with all that can adorn and dignify a nation, and at the same time consider that it confers

blessings infinite and unspeakable on the individuals who embrace it, that it is their best solace in adversity, their only guide through the dark valley and shadow of death, and that when all which is earthly has faded away, it conducts the immortal spirit to mansions of eternal glory, we may well exclaim, *this is the crowning gift of heaven.*

But while we contemplate the numerous and important blessings which the Father of all has bestowed on our country, while our hearts exult in view of its natural advantages, its free constitution of government, its means of knowledge and its religious privileges, let us not be unmindful,

That as, much has been given to us, so, much is required of us. And this observation, we have already proved is just as applicable to a *state*, as to an *individual*.

Therefore, the only question now is, what may justly be required of a people favored like ourselves? I answer,

First—*We ought to render gratitude to that August Being who doeth his pleasure in the armies of Heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth.*

It would be atheism to deny that the many advantages which our country enjoys, whether natural or moral result from the sovereign Providence of Jehovah, and no better, surely, to admit this and yet withhold the devout acknowledgment, and fervent thanksgiving which such advantages so loudly demand. Nothing can be more obvious in the present happy condition of our country, than the propriety of days and seasons like the present, when the people assem-

ble by the call of authority, and in all the impressive forms of devotion pour forth their anthems of praise to *the king of kings and Lord of Lords.* But besides these publick and occasional expressions of thanksgiving, gratitude requires, that we cherish a constant impression of the Divinity; that we keep in view the design, with which he confers upon us his favours; that we endeavor according to the measure of our ability to answer that design; that we constantly exhibit the best fruit and evidence of a grateful heart *contentment* in our highly favored condition, or, that we hold in due estimation the important blessings which God has given us, and discharge our various duties without envying others their lot and without indulging unreasonable disquietude, because our own is not still more favourable.

It was a great sin in the sight of God, and a curse to themselves, that the people of Israel, blessed as they already were, with a *land flowing with milk and honey* and with the best practicable constitution of civil government, could not rest satisfied; but must demand a king to reign over them after the fashion of the surrounding nations. And there is probably no one circumstance which would more decisively prove us to be unworthy of the distinguished advantages which we now enjoy, and which would more certainly deprive us of these advantages than the prevalence of an innovating spirit, and a disposition to introduce a new order of things, which the waywardness of the human mind might imagine would be more favorable, but which experience might show to be fatal to our prosperity and happiness,

Secondly—*We ought to make a proper use and improvement of all those blessings which God has bestowed on our favored country.*

If, in the sovereign allotments of his Providence, he has given us a propitious soil and climate and other natural advantages, then doubtless, it is our duty, by industry, and diligence, and a wise application of labor and means to answer the design of the Giver, that we may realize the full benefits of his grant.

If, he has set over us a wise constitution of government, which secures the highest practicable measure of civil liberty, then we are bound, not only, to exercise unceasing gratitude for so important a blessing, but to guard the sacred trust with vigilance, and to use our liberty, not as a cloak of licentiousness, but in aid of all those improvements, which can exalt us in the scale of nations and of moral being.

If, he has furnished us with abundant means of knowledge, then all classes in society are bound to preserve these means, and as far as possible, to render them efficacious. As knowledge lies at the foundation of whatever is dignified or worthy of respect in the human character; as it is the very corner stone of a free government, and the guardian of public morals, every individual in the community should not only endeavor to possess it, but to extend its benign influence. If the people of the United States, with their schools and higher seminaries of learning, with their lecture rooms and countless variety of books, should fail of being an enlightened, and therefore, a free and happy people, indelible disgrace must attach to them

for their neglect or perversion of the means of knowledge.

If, he has blessed us with christian institutions, then we are bound, not only, to maintain such institutions, but as individuals and as a nation, to yield to their influence. While we walk in the light of Heaven, it may well be expected that we shall exemplify the superiority of our privileges, by purity and elevation of moral character. While we enjoy the best christian instructions, it is but reasonable that in the true and legitimate sense of the term, we should be a christian people.

Thirdly—*We ought to do all we can to promote the happiness of other nations and of human nature in general.*

I repeat, what I said at the beginning of this discourse, every state or body politick is a moral being, subject to moral laws and under moral obligation to perform its relative and social duties. When twenty, or a thousand individuals enter into the social compact for mutual benefit they do not become exempt from the obligations which attach to them as individuals. This doctrine is sanctioned by an able writer on the law of nations. "A body politick" he says "has her affairs and her interests—she deliberates and takes resolutions in common; thus becoming a moral person who possesses an understanding and a will peculiar to herself, and is susceptible of obligations and rights." He says again, "as men are subject to the laws of nature and as their union in civil society cannot have exempted them from the obligation to observe those laws, since by that union they do not cease to be

men—the entire nation, whose common will is but the result of the united wills of the citizens, remains subject to the laws of nature, and is bound to respect them in all her proceedings.”

It appears then, that nations are under the same essential obligations to nations, that individuals are to individuals. As one man is bound by the law of nature and of nature's God, to afford assistance to other men in distress, and to do all he can for their improvement and happiness, so, one nation is bound to assist other nations in distress, and to do all she can for their improvement and happiness—And further, as the obligation will be greater or less in proportion to the advantages for doing good enjoyed by the *individual*, so it will be greater or less in proportion to the advantages for doing good enjoyed by the *nation*. Now let us apply this principle to ourselves. Favored, as I have shewn, with those physical, intellectual, and moral advantages, which exalt a nation, and at the same time, secure to it the means of doing good, not only by a commanding example, but by positive and beneficial exertions in the cause of humanity, are we not sacredly bound, I mean in all practicable cases, to stand forth as the helper of other nations less favored than ourselves? Are we not bound to impart something of our civilization, our principals of liberty, our knowledge in the arts of life, and above all, of our religion to those portions of our fellow creatures who are unblest with these important privileges? If it be admitted, that *God has made of one blood all nations to dwell on the face of the whole earth*, that mankind are children of one common fath-

er and brethren of the same great family, I see not how the obligation stated above can, in any manner be dispensed with.

And to pursue the principle still further; if Moses could not see a brother oppressed by an Egyptian task-master, without interposing, even to the destruction of the oppressor; and if no one of us could see an innocent and defenceless family overcome by a band of ruffians, without feeling the obligation of flying to their relief, then I ask, what kind of morality is it, which can justify an enlightened and powerful and christian state in standing an inactive spectator of the most horrid oppressions practised, by tyrannic power on an innocent and defenceless people?

Yet such oppressions are practised at the present time, and the nations of Christendom, we among the rest, are the cold and inactive spectators of these unparalleled wrongs.

I allude, you will readily understand, to the Greeks as the sufferers, and to the Turks as their inhuman and blood-thirsty oppressors. I would not, if I could, harrow up your souls by a full detail of these wrongs. In the face of Europe, with shame be it spoken, and before the eyes of some of her ambassadors, not only the venerable patriarch of Constantinople, but other bishops and ministers of our holy religion, have been dragged to execution; churches, and towns, and villages have been consumed by fire; thousands, and tens of thousands of innocent victims have been put to the sword; while the unfortunate survivors of this extensive massacre have

been sold in public markets, and thus doomed to a servitude more terrible than death.

Take a few extracts from the picture which the Greeks themselves have given us of their sufferings, at Scio. "What more dreadful" they exclaim, "than the knowledge that our innocent and illustrious countrymen—ten of them in prison here" (at Constantinople) "and those in the castle of Scio, ninety-five in all—universally esteemed and respected—chosen and held as hostages for more than a year past—without a single motive—without even the shadow of a personal accusation against them, have been barbarously executed!" Again, "who can, without shuddering, read of the total ruin, of the universal desolation of our famed and once happy isle—the destruction of all its inhabitants, nearly one hundred thousand, who, except a very few, that almost miraculously escaped from these ill fated shores, have fallen victims to the sword, to fire, hunger and slavery, that worst of all evils—our celebrated school, library, hospital for the sick and for the lepers; lazaret for those attacked with the plague, hundreds of churches richly adorned, *all, all* in one confused mass of smoking rubbish!" "But the most dire of all our calamities," they continue, "is the slavery of so many respectable women, young people and children of both sexes, sent off to the different parts of Asia. The markets of this city and of Smyrna are filled with women and young people of the first rank, and who have received the best education. Picture to yourselves" they add "children of the tenderest age, till now nursed with the most delicate attention, driv-

en about, with only a piece of cloth about their infantile limbs—having nothing to live upon but a piece of bread thrown to them by their inhuman keepers—ill treated, and sold from one to another."

These suffering Greeks, let it be remembered, are the legitimate descendants of the most illustrious people of all antiquity—of a people, immortalized in history, not only, by their feats in arms and their invincible love of liberty displayed on many occasions; but by their renowned cities, their artists, their orators, their poets, their men of science and of learning, and finally, by their religion; for it was among this people, principally, that the great head of the church was pleased to set up his *seven golden candlesticks*. These suffering Greeks are not only our brethren as members of the human family, but brethren, I might almost say, in the faith and fellowship of the gospel. Their religion, if less pure, is the same with our own.

And with these circumstances to enhance their claims to the sympathies and aid of universal christianity, with the horrid picture of their sufferings fully before us, can we as a people, *innocently* look on, and attempt nothing to relieve our brethren in this hour of unutterable distress? Will it be said, that the christian powers of Europe are under much greater obligations to afford assistance, than we are; both on account of their proximity and their more efficient means? I grant it. But those powers *will not*, we have reason to apprehend, afford their assistance. The principal of those powers are bound together by what they call "a holy alliance." I fear it is *unholy*—an alliance to put down the rising spirit of lib-

erty and to perpetuate despotic rule under the imposing name of *legitimacy*. Russia, from whom we expected the most, was ready with her allies, to exert her power *against* the liberties of Naples. And after this, it was wonderful to hear the apologies of Russia for not employing her force already on the field, in aid of the suffering Greeks. It would be interfering, she said, with the rights of a *legitimate* government, and it would be giving aid to rebellious subjects. "But it is clear" says a writer in a highly respectable English publication,* "that there are, in the present case, circumstances which Russia and the governments in alliance with her, would consider as justifying their interference in the internal affairs of other states.

The conduct of the allied powers towards Naples is a proof of this. In the spirit of this precedent, they would surely be entitled to interfere for the protection of the *people* against the oppressions of their government, no less, than for the protection of the *government* against the encroachments of the people. And having interfered for the latter purpose, in the case of Naples, it would manifest an excess of fastidiousness to pretend, that it would be unjust to restrain the Turkish government from trampling under foot the dearest rights of its subjects, and setting at naught every law, divine and human, for the gratification of its vindictive and relentless fury."

But what ought to do away every scruple, arising from the supposed unlawfulness of interfering with the internal concerns of the Ottoman government, is the fact, stated by Lord Erskine, that the dominion of the

*The Christian Observer.

Turks, "over the beautiful and extensive regions, which include ancient Greece," is altogether an unlawful dominion, a dominion of usurpation and not of right. Any interference therefore, in favour of the oppressed Greeks, is an interference in favor of the common rights of humanity, and an interference *against* the most barbarous cruelties and oppressions. But even admitting that the fact was otherwise, still, I maintain, that it is our duty, in common with every christian nation, to aid and assist the oppressed, whatever may be their political relations. Such, I understand to be the opinion of Vattel, one of the most distinguished and approved writers on the law of nations. "When a neighboring nation is unjustly attacked by a powerful enemy, who threatens to oppress it; if you can defend it, without exposing yourself to great danger, unquestionably it is your duty to do so."

It seems plain, therefore, from whatever view we take of the subject, that it is the duty of the christian powers, to endeavor to succour the Greeks. But the christian powers of Europe *will not*, we have reason to fear come forward in this good cause. Whatever may be the feelings and wishes of the people, the governments seem resolved to do nothing. The only alternative then is, *we* must come forward in aid of our oppressed and afflicted brethren, or, they must be left to their fate, and probably to a fate, the most disastrous. In what *way and manner* such aid ought to be given; whether by an act of the government, or by the voluntary contributions of individuals legally made; whether by men or arms, money or provisions, I leave it for

wiser men to determine. The Greeks themselves, sickened at the indifference and selfish policy of the christian governments of Europe, turn an imploring eye to the United States. They *expect* assistance from a people, so widely famed for their justice, their love of liberty and their national privileges. And must they be disappointed? must they find in the day of their visitation, in the time of their utmost peril, that humanity has quite left the world? Surely, after all that has been said, no one can entertain serious scruples about the lawfulness of interfering in their behalf. No American, that I have heard of, has felt scruples of conscience about the assistance afforded by France, during our struggle for independence; and yet, the wrongs suffered on our part, which gave rise to that struggle, bear no comparison with those endured by the Greeks. We complained of a stamp act, an unlawful tax upon teas, and of principles assumed by the mother country, which we feared, would one day, operate to the prejudice of our liberties. The Greeks actually suffer cruelties and oppressions too horrid to relate.

But doubtless, the most formidable objection of all, is an objection of policy—by intermeddling with the concerns of the Greeks, we may possibly bring ourselves into unpleasant collisions with other governments. I have only to answer, there is a cold, and calculating and selfish policy, a policy which prevents the duties of humanity and interferes with the highest obligations, which no people, instructed like ourselves in the principles of christianity, ought to pursue. If

there be an American, who can witness unmoved, the tide of oppression rolling onward, sweeping away every thing that is sacred in religion, and depopulating the fairest portion of Christendom; if there be an American, who can remain silent and unwilling to do any thing, in view of such tremendous cruelties, as the Ottoman government is inflicting upon the Greeks, merely from the *apprehension* of some possible evil which might result to ourselves from the jealousy of European governments, I envy him not his courage, his principles, or his confidence in Heaven.

But I have done with this subject; and will only remind you, that of our many causes of gratitude on this joyful anniversary, it is surely not the least, that in this land of peace and security, we can *sit under our vines and our fig-trees, with none to molest or make us afraid*. And while we show becoming gratitude to Heaven for our numberless blessings, let us endeavor to fulfil our duties, as men, as citizens, and as candidates for immortality.

Let us so improve our means of grace that we may arrive at last, to that haven of rest, where the noise of battle, the groans of the oppressed and the abominations of the *false prophet* will disturb us no more; and where, instead of the feeble songs we now offer, will be heard the loud Hosannahs of saints and angels.