

His large, loving heart delighted to be with the children of men. He was bone of their bone and flesh of their flesh. His was no mere ideal ethereal humanity that has no thought or feeling in common with the toiling, suffering sons and daughters of men, on the contrary, it was real, living, full of love for brother-man, and sister-woman. Their interests were his interests; their joys his joys; their sorrow his sorrow, and it was their bonds of union that brought such sorrow to his pure heart and holy spirit. They were the fountain from whence flowed the tears shed at the grave of Lazarus, and over impenitent Jerusalem. Moreover, when we look at him in this light, we discover an additional link of affection between us and him, and an additional ground of confidence in him. We are made better acquainted with him; and much of the indefiniteness, dimness and mysteriousness with which we are so apt to surround his person is dispelled. We feel that we have to do with one who is not far off, but near at hand, and whose bosom heaves with all the workings of the purest and kindest of human hearts.

Again:—Looking at Jesus from the same stand-point, we can, in some measure, conceive how He recoiled from the lonely hour to which He had special reference when He spoke the words of our text. He was just entering the cold and saddening shadow of the cross. When that shadow would lengthen and deepen He well knew that all His disciples would leave him alone. He knew that one would betray Him, another deny Him, and all forsake Him. They gone from his side, he would be left in the hands of cruel enemies that would have no thought and no feeling in common with him. No wonder though He who yearned for the love of friendly hearts and sympathetic souls recoiled from this solitariness. No wonder though His words have a ring of sadness and sorrow. Methinks I see the longing look He gave His disciples and hear the half-sorrowful, the half-reproachful accents in which He utters our text. His every look, and tone, and gesture bespeak a heart overpowered with an awful sense of loneliness.

Still this sadness and loneliness are not unrelieved. Deprived of human sympathy, He has yet divine friendship. The disciples would leave Him, yet the Father would be with Him. Thus though His sky is sombre and lowering, yet there are rifts of bright blue. The dark cloud which hangs over Him is not without its silver lining. It is dark night in the West, yet in the East the morning is breaking.

We have then, so to speak, the two-sided experience of Christ; and, if of Christ, so also of all his disciples. We have here the dark and bright, the sad and joyous sides. His separation from the disciples, "ye shall be scattered every man to his own, and shall leave me alone," constitutes the dark side;

while the companionship of the Father, "and yet I shall not be alone, for the Father is with me," constitute the bright side. Our text then suggests for our meditation.

I. The human loneliness of Christ.

II. The unfailing presence of the Father.

I. *The human loneliness of Christ.* As you may learn from the context, our Lord refers here to a particular season and incident in His history. In that hour we may emphatically say that Christ was alone. But as we survey the whole life of Jesus, so different in its purity and charity, in its wisdom and goodness, in its sorrows and suffering, from any others lived in our world, we find many such hours of solitariness. His aims and purposes, His words and deeds had none of that earthliness and selfishness which so mar the fairest life of ordinary man. It is true that outwardly the conditions of His life were in no ways different from those of His disciples. Like them He was subject to the pangs of hunger and thirst, and to fatigues of toil and travel. Like them He found friendship among the children of men, and entered into their joys and sorrows. Witness, for instance, His presence at the Marriage feast of Cana of Galilee, and His relations and familiarity with the family of Bethany—with Lazarus, and Mary, and Martha. Still with these features and lineaments of similarity there was a wide distance in many things between Him and His fellow-travellers in life's journey.

The work, for instance, given Him to do as our Redeemer, and for which He laid aside the glory He had with the Father from all eternity, placed Him on a bright river touched by the foot of sinful man. It made the main current of his life and thoughts to flow in a different channel. It separated Him in spirit wherever He was. Alone He was when having ended the labors of the day He retires to His lone mountain oratory. Alone He was whether He dwelt on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, walked the crowded streets of Jerusalem, or mingled with the throng that flowed and ebbed through the porches of the Temple. Alone did he pace weary and way-worn the path so thickly planted with poison-pointed thorns, that led from Bethlehem to Calvary. Alone did He pass through that dreary period of anguish and pain and death in which from Gethsemane to Calvary he made atonement for and endured the punishment due to guilty millions.

This phase of Jesus' life and works was nothing in common with the life and work of the ordinary actors on life's stage. He is the only Redeemer of man, and mediator between God and man. As such He moves in a different orbit. The spiritual scene in which He is put to do and suffer the will of the Father is far, far away. Still there are phases of His life and work which touch yours and mine, and yet they are surrounded by an air of solitude.