

worthless without the root—and a rootless sermon is like such a tree, fit only to be burned. No sermon is worthy of the name—it may be an essay, but it cannot be dignified into a sermon—which does not strike itself into the scripture, and draw up out of that its meaning and its life. A sermon should be evolved out of the scripture, like a tree out of its root. An address, ready made, which goes mousing about the Bible, seeking a text which it may use as a “motto,” or “by way of accomodation,” stays an address forever, and cannot become a sermon. To preach is to declare the Word of God, and the Word of God is the Bible, and the Scripture must always sustain an organic and vital relation to the sermon. The impulse to the sermon should come from the Scripture, just as the impulse toward the tree originates in the seed.

Patient, laborious, thoughtful study of the word is, then, the first duty of the man who would really preach. The seed of the sermon should lie in the text, and then all varying influences of experience and reading, and the needs of the congregation, should foster and minister to it, just as air and rain and light serve the tree.

And it is marvellous—the freshness and variety of these suggestions of the scripture to a man who keeps his heart sensitive toward the Bible, and his eyes open toward life. I remember once climbing a mountain in Connecticut. Several were with me; among them an old man who had lived all his life at the foot of the mountain. His father was a kind of doctor, and much of the medicine he administered was made from herbs growing on the mountain. He had taught the son the healing properties of the various herbs, and his son, in his old age, had not forgotten. We clambered up the sides, urged our way through thickets, over and around rocks, through ravines, interested in this thing or the other. But every now and then the old man would stop and pluck some herb. He found them everywhere; buried beneath leaves, nestling close under the shadow of rocks. This was for scrofula; that for asthma; that for a cough; that for rheumatism. And so, after a little, the old gentleman had his pockets filled with all sorts of remedies. And there they were growing right under our feet, as well as his; only we knew nothing of them. So do many of us go through the Bible, just as all the rest of us were climbing that mountain. But sometimes it comes to pass that we meet some old saint who has stopped to attend to what grows in it, and who utterly astonishes us at the wealth of healing of all human distresses it contains, where we had expected it the least. Now, the man who preaches the Bible should know it—before all other things—and in just this intimate, exact way. And the man so knowing it will be full of genuine sermons—fresh, various, helpful, fascinating.

Every preacher should ponder those words of Robertson's:—“Do not be dismayed or discouraged if the reading of the Scripture does not suggest as yet. Receive, imbibe, and then your mind will create.” But our mistake lies in thinking that we can give out before we have taken in. In all things this is the order; poets are creators because recipients. They open their hearts wide to nature, instead of going to her with views ready-made and second-hand. They come from her and give out what they have felt, and what she said to them. So with the Scripture—patient, quiet, long; revering listening to it—then suggestiveness.—*Presbyter.*

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How to do Good.—Dr. Johnson wisely said; “He who waits to do a great deal of good at once, will never do anything.”