

food that feeds him—and in all the manifold comforts that crowd within his peaceful dwelling, he will find a just and never-failing theme of thanksgiving and praise; but, in contemplating the goodness of God, he ought to lift his thoughts to a larger sphere and a wider range of the Divine benevolence. Identifying himself with the entire and corporate community of which he forms a member, he will take in a wider and worthier view of the beneficence of Him who is the Supreme Head of all the nations, and the common Father of all the families of the earth. If men were only, *as individuals*, to thank God for the blessings He puts into *their* hands, this would be but a poor and selfish worship. Such a worship would neither be worthy of men nor honoring to God. This would be, to reduce the state of humanity to that of the spider which lurks within its solitary cell and rejoices truly enough over every living morsel that is borne within the reach of its fangs. Christ has taught us that God requires all mankind to pray with and for others, saying, with one accord, "Our Father, which art in heaven." The tendency of this social and public worship is to preserve and strengthen within the heart the ties of human brotherhood, and to elevate the mind to loftier and sublimer views of the Divine character. We know too well, if we have studied our own hearts, that even in our highest and holiest aspirations there is too deep a taint of selfishness, and that the hardest task which we are called upon to perform is to break down the artificial barriers which pride, prejudice and interest have raised up between man and man, and realize that unity of spirit which is the bond of peace.

As a means of enlarging, to some extent, the circle of our sympathies, and helping us to realize the hallowed fellowship of one vast Christian brotherhood, the appointment of a national thanksgiving for common mercies received from the common God and Father of all, may, under the Divine blessing, be in the highest degree beneficial. May not all those who call themselves by the name of Christian lay aside the weapons of their strife for one day in the year?—for one day in the year join hand in hand and say to each other, "Come, let us go up this day to mount Zion together, and worship our God in the beauty of holiness." Such a spectacle as this would be a terror to devils, and a joy to angels.

In this point of view, then, it is evident that, as a people, it is a good thing for ourselves to give thanks unto the Lord, at stated periods, for all the mercies which we in common have received from His hands.

In the second place, it is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, at stated periods, because, if we neglect to do so, we shall soon forget to *feel* thanksgiving. If the feelings of the heart do not find any outward expression in word or deed, it would seem to us all the same as if they did not exist. Nay, the

heart itself, coming thus in contact with no object of regard, will grow less and less susceptible of feeling; a thicker and a harder crust of selfishness will gather over it, until it become impervious to every tender impression. We pass into each other's beings, and become one through the power of expression. You have seen a spring of water gushing fresh from the bosom of the earth. Summer and winter, night and day, every hour and every moment, the liquid treasure wells up from an inexhaustible fountain, always pure and always clear. Stir the muddy bottom, and for a little while the water will be foul, but straightway the impurities are worked off, and you gaze, as before, into a bright and stainless mirror. The cause of this perpetual purity is the perpetual *motion*. Let that motion cease for a few summer days, and you will turn with loathing from a fetid pool swarming with all unclean and creeping things. So it is with the human heart. There must be no stagnation there. The sentiments and affections that lie within must flow forth like the living water of the fountain, otherwise they will corrupt. Better that they should be stirred into motion by the strong hand of suffering, than that they should be stagnant within, and for this very reason it is that God wields so often the stern but merciful rod of affliction. Now, if all this holds true of the feelings and affections of man towards man, more strikingly true is it of the feelings and affections of man towards God. For the sake of illustration, let us suppose a parallel case. Suppose you have, from very early life, been entirely dependent on the benevolence of some good man, who, out of pure regard for your welfare and happiness, took you and brought you up as if you were one of his own. You have been so accustomed all along to his kindness, that you have learned to receive it as a matter of course. You have learned to regard it as the necessary condition of your existence. Never was there a real want you felt which was not supplied, nor a real comfort you desired that was not provided. It is quite obvious that unless you have from the first been frequently reminded of the relation in which you stood to this benefactor, and made it a study to recount the benefits you have received at his hand, you will grow up insensible of the debt you owe to him. The more you think of your dependent position, the oftener you sum up the kindnesses you have received—the more warmly your heart will glow with gratitude—the more anxious you will feel to conduct you self in such a manner as to win the approbation of your benefactor. Now this affords only a faint idea of the position of every living man in relation to God.

The very constancy and uniformity with which the bounties of God flow upon us, have a tendency to beget an utter insensibility of heart to His goodness. And this insensibility is the greater, because, though we receive