

latter are also with us, for in that government Mercy and Truth meet together; Righteousness and Peace kissed each other long ago, and became one, by virtue of the mediation, death, and obedience of Jesus Christ. How all four, hand in hand, do follow us—Righteousness as right as ever, and Truth as truthful as ever—their claims met, their demands satisfied, by Goodness and Mercy! But Goodness and Mercy following next upon the steps of the human traveller, walking nearest to him whom they guard and bless, are most prominently seen. Yet over their shoulders are beheld the majestic forms of the other two, with their radiant panoply, and their star-tipped spears.

Goodness and Mercy are alike; yet are they distinct, and somewhat different. Goodness is benevolence in the largest sense; it is kind dealing, kind feeling, kind doing towards all creatures. Mercy is benevolence in a stricter sense, as regarding sinful beings who have forfeited divine favor, and exposed themselves to righteous punishment. Goodness has a sphere in heaven, no less than upon earth, and there it goes round with its cup of blessings—and there it scatters its richest gifts among the cherubim and the seraphim. But Mercy's sphere is earth, not heaven. It was to do, not with the sons of God, but with the sons of Adam. There was Goodness before there was sin, and Goodness was active before any creature fell; but not till after sin appeared, was Mercy revealed—not till after transgression had brought guilt and misery upon our race, was Mercy needed in the way she now comes to minister. Goodness was with Adam and Eve in Paradise, shining on them through sun and stars, smiling on them through trees and flowers, spreading for them tables of plenty, filling their hearts with food and gladness; but Mercy came when the serpent-tempter had succeeded, and the forbidden fruit had been eaten, and the descending curse was darkening Eden, and the shivering pair stood in the presence of their holy Judge. Goodness ministered to the man Christ Jesus—the perfect man, the ideal of humanity embodied in substantial form in life and deed: it watched over His childhood, brought Him away from Herod, and up from Egypt; was with Him in the wilderness and the garden, and threw its glory over the Mount of Transfiguration; nor was it wholly concealed in the eclipse on Calvary. But Mercy ministered not to Jesus; He stood in no need of it. It never brought Him a cup nor whispered a consolation. It accompanied Him but as a messenger to others—a bearer of His precious gifts to those whom He redeemed.

Goodness belongs to nature and to Providence. It presides over all the resources of creation—opens the mine and covers the field, and adorns the garden—pours out daily the treasures of its full horn into the hands of men. What Goodness giveth, they gather. But Mercy belongs especially to the Gospel; she is seen walking along the paths of patriarchs, prophets and priests—in the tabernacle and in the temple, in worship and in teaching—giving them hints about the Seed of the woman, and the Sceptre of Israel, and the Star of Jacob, and the Man of Sorrows, and the Lamb slain, and the Fountain opened; and then, after this typical and prophetic course, Mercy shows us, at Bethlehem, Christ's manger and cradle; and then, at Calvary, reveals the cross under which she stands.

"God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." There is Mercy. "In the fulness of time, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law." Here is Mercy. Goodness follows every sinner from the womb to the grave; follows him in his earliest, tottering steps, follows him to school, follows him in all his after-works and ways, follows him in his joys and in his sorrows, follows him into the sick-chamber, and stands over him as he gives up the ghost; and Mercy is also with him all the while, for Goodness could not stay with a sinner without Mercy too. Yet Mercy's special work is when a sinner turns to God through Christ; and then Mercy comes with a pardon, to open the prison door, to strike off every chain, and to heal, to clothe, to educate, and to ennoble.