

glances, to find this great and good Teacher treating him like a human being,—*also* a son of Abraham like Himself,—to find this pure and holy Prophet coming like a friend to his house, and sitting at his table. It was long since the poor publican had been used to kindness and respect; there was something wonderfully fresh and new about them; and his heart, so long shut up and hardened, swelled out in kindly charity at once. That moment he devoted half of all his wealth to the poor, and declared that he would restore fourfold all that he had ever unjustly taken. Ah, brethren, if Jesus had cast a stern look up into that plane-tree, or if He had severely bidden the publican to keep his distance, do you think *that* would have converted Zacchæus and saved him? No; he would have gone home harder and bitterer in heart than ever; and the next time he had tribute to collect, he would have ground and squeezed and cheated worse than ever. But our Blessed Redeemer, notwithstanding this manifest and instant reformation which a kind word had wrought upon the poor extortioner, knew that some folk would find fault with what He Himself was doing. He is going towards the publican's house; and He hears the murmur, perhaps only in self-righteous hearts, that says to Him, What are you doing there? Do you know into whose house you are going? You are going to an evil-doer's house; and not going as a judge, or as an officer of justice,—*that* would be all quite right,—but going as a guest, a friend. "He is gone," they murmured, "to be guest with a man that is a sinner!" As if He could have gone to be guest with any man who was not! Am I here, the Saviour seems to say, in the house of a poor lost creature from whom you would hold apart? Even you could not say worse of him than that he is quite a lost creature. Am I here?—then I am just where I ought to be? "for the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost!"

How mercifully, you see, the Saviour puts the case! How differently from the severe fashion in which the murmurers put it! He is gone, said the murmuring Jews, to be guest with a man that is a sinner. He is gone, they said, to a bad man, a wicked man. They never think of his peculiar temptations; they never think of his secret repentance; they never think of that poor, weary, burdened heart, that needed but the slightest touch of kindness to make it melt and glow. They put the thing severely: gone to a man that is a sinner. The gentle words of Jesus seem to rebuke that severity. He does not say that He is come to save the cheating, griping, traitorous publican: No; He is "come to seek and to save that which was lost." No doubt, the Blessed One seems to say.—No doubt the publican is a sinner, if it comes to that; and so are you. But, He seems to say, We will not call him *that*. You will never

win and save a man by calling him by harsh names. Let us take a word that shall speak rather of his misery than of his guilt. No, not sinner, though the word would be perfectly true. Call him a lost creature; call him a lost sheep, a poor, weary wanderer from the Fold.

And yet, merciful as it is, there is no undue laxity in Christ's estimate of sin. There is do shading away the evil of sin, and speaking of it as if it were no such very great matter after all. There is none of the cant, which prevails in a certain portion of our literature, about human weakness, about strong natural propensities,—about passion with its witching voice, which oft hath led men wrong. The essential evil that is in sin is not extenuated, though of the two things which always go together in sin, misery and guilt, the Saviour puts prominently less the guilt than the wretchedness. No, there is no treating sin as a small matter here. You never can represent sin as anything much more serious than utter destruction,—final perdition and ruin and despair: and you see Christ describes the sinful soul as a thing lost: He came "to seek and to save that which was lost"; and the very word which means the last and lowest extremity to which a human being can go down,—the word *perdition*,—as many of you know, it just means *loss*; it just means the state of being lost. And it is in that woful state that even the kind Redeemer puts it we are by nature; for the text was not spoken of Zacchæus only: it describes the state and condition of every soul for whose sake Jesus came to this earth and died. "That which was lost": that phrase names the condition of every soul with which the Redeemer has any concern. He came, He tells us expressly, "to seek and to save that which was lost";—it is only with lost ones He has to do. If there be any mortal that is not lost, then he has no part in the Gospel salvation;—it was not for any save the lost that Jesus died. *Lost*. He says; oh, surely, *that* is not making light of sin. *Lost*. He does not say through whose fault; but the poor sinner would remember well. But while the Pharisee would say, That man is a sinner, thank God I am not like him, let me stand off from him and have nothing to do with him,—Christ says, That man is lost; he has wandered away like the lost sheep, and of himself he never would return; the more need then that I should go to his house, and treat him like a human being: *that* may melt his heart and bring him back; holding him at arms' length never will. *Lost*: and among such lies my occupation! I see my work, the Redeemer seems to say, wherever I see a lost soul. It was to seek and save such I came!

So, for one thing, we find in our text *Christ's estimate of the condition of humanity*. It is something that is lost. Man is a *lost thing*. He is many things more. You may