

**A SERMON, PREACHED AT THE
INSTALLATION OF REV. GEORGE
W. BRIGGS, AS PASTOR OF THE
FIRST CHURCH IN SALEM,
JANUARY 6, 1853**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649333059

A Sermon, Preached at the Installation of Rev. George W. Briggs, as Pastor of the First Church in Salem, January 6, 1853 by John Hopkins Morison

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

JOHN HOPKINS MORISON

**A SERMON, PREACHED AT THE
INSTALLATION OF REV. GEORGE
W. BRIGGS, AS PASTOR OF THE
FIRST CHURCH IN SALEM,
JANUARY 6, 1853**

©

A

SERMON,

PREACHED AT

THE INSTALLATION

OF

REV. GEORGE W. BRIGGS,

AS PASTOR OF

THE FIRST CHURCH IN SALEM,

JANUARY 6, 1853.

BY JOHN HOPKINS MORISON,

PASTOR OF THE FIRST CHURCH IN MILTON.

SALEM:

GAZETTE PRESS, 191 ESSEX STREET.

1853.

SERMON.

I PETER, v. 2—4. Feed the flock of God which is among you. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

The great office of the Christian ministry is to feed the flock of God, and thus sustain within their souls the divine life which may fit them for his service here, and his kingdom hereafter.

I. But, in order to do this, we must believe that men have souls. In looking around, we see every one busy and anxious. Trains of merchandise come and go. Ships, laden with the products of every clime, pass from shore to shore, followed by the ardent wishes and expectations of men. Wharves are extended. Houses are built, and furnished with every luxury that can please the palate or the eye. Costly delicacies and garments are sought, with endless labor, from all the remote quarters of the globe, to feed and adorn these mortal bodies. Everything tells of what is outward and material. Everywhere

men are devoting themselves to it with all their energies of thought and life. Speak to them of the soul and its immortal wants; they hastily assent to what you say, and hurry on, as if nothing were worthy of their serious attention but outward, material, interests and pursuits. The young have their pleasures, the middle aged their business, and the old cling with a more desperate tenacity to the things of time, as the hour approaches when time shall be with them no longer. In short, all that we see around us, in the habits, pursuits, and conversation of men, savors of an exclusive devotion to what is outward and material. Churches, indeed, are found; but they are closed six days in the week, and, when opened, their services do not come home to the hearts of the worshippers with the same sense of substantial interest and reality, that they feel when engaged in their other pursuits.

Yet, underneath all this show of our superficial activity, are the great and solemn realities of life. The heavens, bending over us, an image of God's protecting Providence, and telling of his glory and his handy-work, do not seem to find in the hearts of men, any response to their profoundest teachings. The words of eternal life, which Jesus declared, seem to fall upon the multitude, like hail upon the frozen earth, unable to penetrate its depths, or to find any

life there to feed and sustain. But, could the bosom of society be laid open, and all its secret workings for this one hour—its silent prayers and curses, the throbs of joy and pain, the undivulged crimes and struggling virtues, the pangs of remorse, the aspirations of faith and hope, for this one hour,—be laid open to us, never again could this smooth, empty, superficial world be to us what it now is. For, underneath these outward forms are agonies of soul, compared with which bodily tortures are but as flowery beds, and inward joys, which transcend all that the noisy world knows of pleasure, as far as God and eternity transcend our earthly time and sense. There, are sorrows too deep for utterance, and passions leading on to crimes at which the very stars might grow pale. There, perhaps in the souls of the guiltiest of our race, may be the germs of virtues never to be born; emotions, principles of duty, which might be sanctified to the holiest ends, and love which can be satisfied with nothing short of the love of God;—all cut off like an untimely birth, lost forever, for want of seasonable encouragement and support. The vision, seen in the Apocalypse, of angels and dragons, saints and devils, of seas turned to blood, and the heavens dissolved in fire, of the holy city coming down from God as a bride adorned for the marriage, and of the bottomless pit, where the beast and the false prophet

shall be tormented forever and ever, is but a shadowing forth of what we at this moment might behold, if we could lift the veil, and see as God sees, into the souls and secret thoughts of men. At this moment, in a spiritual sense, men are dying, and men are being born. To some, a new heaven is just opening; to others, scenes of darkness and despair. Here, the sinful soul is struggling up into life, and there the pure spirit is sinking down into sin. One timely word, one act of Christian sympathy or warning, may save him yet. O, feed the flock of God,—feed these immortal souls, and, amid such infinite abundance, leave them not to perish with hunger.

For, what we see is not the whole of life. In the soul are capacities and wants which cannot be satisfied by any earthly food. In the dwelling near you, everything may wear the appearance of tranquillity and peace. Yet, connected with it, may be a story of deeper tragedy than ever yet was enacted on any stage, or of a sublimer triumph than ever swelled aloft in a national Te-Deum. There, life's great end, for this world and the world to come, has been gained or lost. There, weak and sinful man has awakened to a consciousness of the divine love, and lived in daily communion with Christ and with God. There, while all without is calm, and friends are near, and hopes seem bright, and virtue easy, and no great in-

terests at stake, another, through misdeeds which no one near him suspects, is cutting himself off from the very mercies of God, and giving himself up relentlessly to the horrors of utter ruin and despair. And there, at this very hour, while the light of heaven rests so peacefully upon him, another, in the conflicts of his own breast, is settling, as, sooner or later, every human being must, the great question whose consequences, for weal or woe to him, shall reach beyond the grave. To you, to himself, he may seem only a man of society or of pleasure. But to the Omniscient God and to his own future self, he is far more than that. He has a soul to be saved or lost. He has misgivings, questionings, strugglings, and eternity alone shall unfold their momentous results. He has faculties which cry out for the living God, and which find their life and their support only in Him.

Now, the great design of the Christian ministry, the great design of life, is, to call out these inward powers; to make distinct and real, as objects of thought and affection, these unseen but eternal interests; to lay open before men the endless provisions which God has made for their spiritual advancement, and thus feed them with the bread of life. And standing, as we do, in the presence of God and of these immortal spirits, looking through the perishing form to the imperishable soul within, through the

shadows of time to the realities of eternity, what to us are all the distinctions of this little life? The places of labor and business, of feasting and of mourning, of poverty and of wealth, are but fields in which God's flock may range, and in which, through the heavenly food with which we are to feed them, whatever is pure and holy may spring up into life, and ripen for eternity.

We are, first of all, to have faith in the soul, in God, and in all the rich gifts which He in his mercy has made, to provide for its immortal desires and wants. On this point I have already spoken.

II. In the second place, we are to make use of all these gifts of love and mercy to awaken and sustain a divine life in the soul, and thus to feed the flock of God. This is the great end of the Christian ministry. By the terrors of the law, by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, by the boundless munificence of God's mercy towards us now, and the promises of a richer glory hereafter, by the teachings, the labors, and the sufferings of Christ, by the holy and affecting emblems of his love, by all that is to be hoped of inward comfort here, or happiness hereafter, we are to awaken and sustain a divine life in the souls of our people. In all our walks, in our secret prayers, our private studies, and our public instructions, we are to labor for this end. Living in Christ, till his great