

VILLAGE SERMONS

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Village Sermons by Brooke Foss Westcott

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BROOKE FOSS WESTCOTT

**VILLAGE
SERMONS**

VILLAGE SERMONS

BY THE LATE

BROOKE FOSS WESTCOTT, D.D., D.C.L.

BISHOP OF DURHAM

SOMEWHAT REGIUS PROFESSOR OF DIVINITY IN THE UNIVERSITY
OF CAMBRIDGE AND RECTOR OF EGBURSHAM

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PREFACE

FOR twelve years my father, as Regius Professor of Divinity at Cambridge, was also Rector of Somersham; but in 1882, to his great relief, the Somersham Rectory Act disannexed that Rectory from the Regius Professorship. The major portion of the sermons contained in this volume were preached either in Somersham Church or in its daughter churches at Pidley and Colne. For a few years my father was happy in securing the services of his old friend the Rev. H. R. Alder for the charge of Somersham, and on p. 170 a feeling reference to Mr. Alder's departure from Somersham will be found.

Other sermons belong to earlier years of my father's life and were preached in Harrow and its neighbourhood or at places visited by him during his holidays, such as St. Leonard's in Bucks (Mr. Alder's old parish), and Moseley (his parents' home). I have endeavoured as far as possible to give the dates and localities of the sermons, and have added within brackets particulars as to earlier use of certain

of them. I have not included any definitely School Sermons, though some of those here printed were originally intended for Harrow School Chapel and were afterwards adapted for parochial use. In the later years of his life my father could not find time to write out Village Sermons at length, and the memorials of many such that he preached only survive in careful notes scribbled on odd half sheets of note-paper.

My hope in bringing to light these sermons is that they may prove as helpful and suggestive to other country parsons as they have to me.

A. W.

CRAYKE,
16th November 1906.

I

And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest.—ST. MATTHEW xxi. 9.

THE Advent, or coming of Christ, which we begin to celebrate to-day, in one sense or other is the message of all Scripture. From the first book to the last His coming is proclaimed, now in prayers of thankful humility and now in songs of joyous exultation. The first promise which is contained in Genesis is that a Saviour shall come: the last words of our Blessed Lord are that He will come again. Thus Christ's Advent is no event accomplished once for all, and then to be put aside from the common course of our thoughts; but rather, as it forms a very important part of our Christian creed and our Christian prayer, so should it also fill us with serious and heart-searching questioning at such times as these. The patriarchs and prophets looked to it through long ages with earnest and inquiring hope. The apostles and martyrs looked to it, in fearful and lasting tribulations, with sure and quickening faith. The believer in our time looks to it when fainting and wearied with his work, and so labours on with active and self-denying love.

This coming of Christ, you will remember, is manifold in its nature. Once Christ came meek and lowly, despised and rejected of men, the teacher and companion of the poor, the scorn and the victim of the proud. This was His first Advent—the Advent of love.

Once again Christ shall come, on the clouds of heaven; angels and apostles and saints shall attend Him then. The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall hear His voice, and every eye shall see Him in His kingly state. This is His second Advent—the Advent of judgment.

And there is still one other way in which Christ comes—comes, or waits to come, into the heart of each one of us, as we listen to His voice and open to Him when He knocketh, and this is a third Advent—the Advent of faith.

At this solemn season it is natural that our thoughts should turn to meditate on these things, and on the work for which He came. It is, I say, very natural, and may God grant that it may be useful to ponder on these things! Like all the truths of Holy Scripture, Advent truths must have a very deep and real influence upon our life if we rightly believe them. If we rightly believe them: for in some sense we do all believe them, if we mean anything by joining in the service of God and bearing the Christian name. From day to day we profess to acknowledge that "the only begotten Son of God came down from heaven for us men, and for our salvation." From day to day we profess to look for Him "to come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead." From day to day we pray that

His kingdom may come—not only in the world, but in us, and in our souls. And if then we do indeed believe this, and pray for this sincerely and thoughtfully—if we simply and faithfully declare that God was made man for us—if we hopefully and humbly look forward to a great day of account—if we patiently and zealously strive to hasten the time when the kingdoms of this world shall be the kingdom of the Lord—what manner of men must we be, my brethren, in all holy conversation—loving one another even as Christ loved us—forgiving one another even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us—exhorting one another in all meekness and long-suffering, that men may see our good works and glorify our Father.

At first, we say, Christ came to visit us in great humility. The prophet of old prayed in passionate words that God would *rend the heavens and come down*. The heavens, indeed, were opened, but the Spirit descended like a dove, and not as a consuming fire. God came down; but this glory was veiled in the form of man, that men might be able to have faith in Him. I will not now anticipate Christmas time in calling to your minds all the marvellous details of Christ's lowly state. The stable of the village inn was indeed a fit birthplace for One who was a pilgrim on earth, and had not where to lay His head. The end was as the beginning. At first men found no room for Him, and then they slew Him. There were occasions, however, when the power of His divine majesty claimed their wonder and adoration even at this season. So was it when He entered the Holy City for the last time. A great multitude

spread their garments in the way as though He were some mighty king; others strewed palm branches before Him, as though He were some triumphant conqueror; and all cried to Him as unto their Saviour—*Hosanna. Save now, we pray Thee, O Thou Son of David. Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.* They sang to Jesus the hymn which they were soon to sing again at the coming feast. They consecrated Him—our great Passover—with the same words as those with which the legal sacrifice was offered. And so the glorious train passed on. The Temple was cleared. The questions of the Jews were answered. And yet in one short week the King—the Conqueror—the Saviour—was forgotten; and men cried *Away with Him—Crucify Him*—and mocked Him as He hung upon the Cross.

Now all this, my brethren, has a meaning for *us*. This advent of Christ into Jerusalem is but a figure and a pattern of His general reception in the world. At first when men hear of Christ and of His mighty works they are moved, and prepare to celebrate His triumph. They are willing to welcome Him in great and glorious pomp, for then they share in the honour which they give. They follow Him when He passes through the city sweeping away vast and terrible evils. But then the trial comes. He is slighted by the learned and the powerful, and how shall the ignorant and weak hold fast their faith? They have not learnt to suffer with Christ that so they may reign with Him; but rather they have sought to reign first before suffering. God's order is broken, and their strength fails them: for only patience