

**FOUR SERMONS ON THE
"COMFORTABLE WORDS"
IN THE OFFICE FOR THE
HOLY COMMUNION**

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Four sermons on the "comfortable words" in the office for the holy communion by Alexander Goalen

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ALEXANDER GOALEN

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BY

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TO

MY VERY KIND

FRIEND AND KINSMAN,

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

WILLIAM EWART GLADSTONE, M.P. D.C.L.

CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER,

IN TOKEN

OF GRATITUDE AND AFFECTION.



SERMON I.

ST. MATTHEW XI. 28.

"Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

EVERY here and there in Holy Scripture, we find sentences which stand out from the rest like stars in the deep blue vault of heaven, or like flowers of the field, arrayed in living beauty fresh from their Creator's hand, shining forth from amid the surrounding green-sward. Such sentences are often expressive of the very sum and substance of God's Gospel, as it is a message of mercy and loving-kindness to perishing human souls: And here, in the words of my text, we have an utterance of this very kind, from the lips of Him who was the chiefest Minister of the Eternal Father, in conveying that mercy, and in manifesting that loving-kindness, to His world. Precious words indeed are these, my brethren, infinitely precious as

coming from Him who is a partaker with us, His members, in all our sorrows and in all our care. Words such as these should come to us like music in the night, sweet and soothing, as a very power of blessing to our souls.

If then, dear brethren, these words are so precious, if they have such a claim on our respect, let us now, from love to God, from anxiety for our own spiritual welfare, endeavour so to lay them to heart, so to meditate upon them, so to receive them at once into our understandings and our affections, that they may not have come to us in vain ; but may rather, by God's blessing, be effectual towards an increase in us of love to that gracious Saviour, who thus lovingly calls us to Himself.

Now, first, you must fully understand that these words of the text are a gracious and loving invitation. And herein is a great truth for you all. It is "*Come*," not "*Go*"—the call of one who loves you ; not the order of your tyrant, who cares for nothing but being obeyed. Rather does it come from your best and truest Friend ; a truer Friend than father or mother, wife or child. These may forsake you ; these may even deal with you falsely, and selfishly make your interest give way to their own. But this Friend *never*. He cannot deal falsely, for He is the Truth. There is no selfishness in Him ; for to save you, and to bless you, each mother's child of you, He was content to give up all—even His very life.

Now, just think for one moment, how you would feel

towards a man who, at the very risk of his own life, had saved yours. Suppose you had been drowning, just at your last gasp, sinking for the last time, never again to rise; and that just then, this man, thinking of nothing but your safety, willing to die rather than make no attempt to save you, should throw himself into the raging waves and bring you safe to land. Then how would you delight to honour that deliverer of yours! How would you think that gratitude all too little, which would refuse to do anything in reason, which he might ask of you! How unkind would be your conduct if you should ever doubt the well meaning of one who had done so much for you, to whom, under God, you owed your very life! And will you, can you, think less highly of this Divine Friend, this true Saviour of your soul, who has not only risked His life, but has freely laid it down; who has not delivered you from temporal death (staved off for a time an inevitable necessity), but has done and suffered, that you might not fall a prey to death eternal, the death of your soul, formed as it is in God's own image?

And I freely tell you, that until you understand *somewhat* of this wonderful love of Christ, you will not be so much as able to listen, with good effect, to this His gracious invitation, for it will come to you like the words of a strange tongue, mere sounds in the air, empty sounds, and nothing in the world besides! I know that this is more or less hard to you. I know