

**SPEAKING TO THE
HEART: OR, SERMONS
FOR THE PEOPLE**

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Speaking to the Heart: Or, Sermons for the People by Thomas Guthrie

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OR,

Sermons for the People

BY

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NEGLECTED WARNINGS.

"Gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not."
—HOSEA vii. 9.

FIRE low--the order which generals have often given to their men before fighting began--suits the pulpit not less than the battle-field. The mistake common both to soldiers and speakers is to shoot too high, over people's heads; missing, by a want of directness and plainness, both the persons they preach to and the purpose they preach for. So did not the prophet Nathan, when, having told his story of the little ewe lamb, and kindled David's indignation, he fixed his eyes on the king to say, Thou art the man. So did not the Baptist, when, recognising in the crowd Pharisees swollen with pride and rich with the spoil of orphans, he cried, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? And, though with speech less blunt and rude and unpolite withal, as some might say, so did not the great apostle of the Gentiles, but directed his addresses, like arrows, to the hearts and habits, the bosoms and business of his audience. In Athens, full of false

gods, he proclaimed the true one ; in Corinth he denounced the vices which made her name so infamous. Before the Hebrews, who clung so tenaciously to the sacrifices of lambs, bulls, and goats, he set forth the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world—like an expert physician applying to each disease its own direct and appropriate remedy.

Arraigned at a judgment bar, it furnished him with a topic of discourse. He proclaimed the judgment to come, and, with the skill of an orator and the courage of a martyr, preached to an intemperate and unrighteous judge of temperance and righteousness, till, as the captive flashed and thundered from the bar, the judge on the bench grew pale and trembled. In this he followed the example of Him, the Prince of Preachers, whom the common people, enchanted and enchained with his speech, heard gladly—speaking, in the judgment even of his enemies, as never man spake.

With matter divine and manner human, our Lord descended to the level of the humblest of the crowd, lowering himself to their understandings, and winning his way into their hearts by borrowing his topics from familiar circumstances and the scenes around him. Be it a boat, a plank, a rope, a beggar's rags, an imperial robe, we would seize on anything to save a drowning man ; and in his anxiety to save poor sinners, to rouse their fears, their love, their interest, to make them understand and feel the truth, our Lord

pressed everything—art and nature, earth and heaven—into his service. Creatures of habit, the servants if not the slaves of form, we invariably select our text from some book of the Sacred Scriptures. He took a wider, freer range; and, instead of keeping to the unvarying routine of text and sermon with formal divisions, it were well, perhaps, that we sometimes ventured to follow his example; for may it not be to the naturalness of their addresses and their striking out from the beaten path of texts and sermons, to their plain speaking and home-thrusts, to their direct appeals and homespun arguments, that our street and lay preachers owe perhaps not a little of their power?

Illustrating the words of the great English dramatist—

“ Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
Sermons in stones, and good in everything,”

our Lord found many a topic of discourse in the scenes around him; even the humblest objects shone in his hands as I have seen a fragment of broken glass or earthenware, as it caught the sunbeam, light up, flashing like a diamond. With the stone of Jacob's well for a pulpit, and its water for a text, he preached salvation to the Samaritan woman. A little child, which he takes from its mother's side, and holds up blushing in his arms before the astonished audience, is his text for a sermon on humility. A