

**THE LIFE, SERVICES, AND
CHARACTER OF EDWARD
EVERETT:
A SERMON PREACHED IN THE
FIRST CHURCH, JAN. 22, 1865**

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The Life, Services, and Character of Edward Everett: A Sermon Preached in the First Church,
Jan. 22, 1865 by Rufus Ellis

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RUFUS ELLIS

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THE
LIFE, SERVICES, AND CHARACTER
OF
EDWARD EVERETT:

A Sermon

PREACHED IN THE FIRST CHURCH, JAN. 22, 1865.

BY RUFUS ELLIS,

MINISTER OF THE FIRST CHURCH.

With an Appendix,

CONTAINING

THE ACTION OF FIRST CHURCH ON THE OCCASION OF THE DEATH OF MR. EVERETT,
AND THE ADDRESS OF THE PASTOR AT THE PUBLIC FUNERAL,
THURSDAY, THE 19TH OF JANUARY.

BOSTON:
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1865.

18 Oct., 1898.

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Rev. John D. Wells (57)

EDWARD EVERETT.

BORN 11TH APRIL, MDCCCXIV.
DIED 15TH JANUARY, MDCCCLV.

S E R M O N .

Psalm viii. 5. — "AND HAST CROWNED HIM WITH GLORY AND HONOR."

THERE is an exaltation of man, which is a forgetting of God. Born of irreverence and of folly, it can issue only in mischief. What is the ray without the sun? what is the branch without the vine? what is the creature without the Creator? what is the Son without the Father? — God's image, when God himself is withdrawn? I need not say that this is not the spirit of the Psalmist. He is celebrating the Divine Majesty, the nightly heavens, with the moon and stars which God has ordained; and, at first, in the presence of such sublimities, his soul is overawed, and man seems to him utterly insignificant: but soon he takes courage, with looking, it may be, upon a fair and noble face, or upon some form of majesty and beauty, and the being which he had almost been ready to despise becomes radiant with divine light, — a splendid illustration of the power and love which pervade the world, and are best manifested in the mind and heart and body of man.

The words of the Psalm are strong beyond our English rendering of them. "*Thou hast made him,*" we read, "*a little lower than the angels;*" but the Psalmist

sang, "*A little lower than God.*" And, from first to last, the Bible speaks very bravely, and, if it were not the Bible, there are those who would say, with a certain audacity, of man. He is made in the image of God; he is not merely a creature, but a son of God; his nature and his capacity supplying the ground for that stern and persistent arraignment of him as a sinner, which makes the book so solemn; for that steady prophecy of his redemption, which, as a line of light, threads the pages of Scripture, and makes them one, from Genesis to Revelation.

There is a revering and religious study of human nature and human character. The Eternal Light is not yet revealed, save in symbols and types, until it becomes the life of men. When dust was fashioned into man; when, in the fulness of the times, after those long and weary though needful ages, whose record of vegetable and animal existences is written only on the rocks, man became a living soul, with speech for God and speech for his fellows, and knowledge and love and peace and the hope of immortality all infolded in his wondrous being, looking upward, looking forward, the world's high priest, heaven's prophet from the first,—lo, at length the true light, an imperishable being in a perishing form!

Nature reveals God, but only to the soul of man. Only so much of that mystery as is already written upon our minds and hearts are we able to decipher. Until the great astronomers come, there is no true celestial mechanism for man. God tells his thought to a favored soul, and then we find it in the universe,

and praise the Creator's wisdom, wrought into his works,—the crystal, the sunbeam, the sun. And the mind of man brings to light no wonder so wondrous as the mind itself, though it were the humblest human intelligence. "*Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise.*" The argument for the divine attributes is radically incomplete until our own being has testified. "*Doth God care for oxen?*" asks the earnest apostle to the Gentiles. Nay, it is upon man that he expends himself; no creature between God and man is the teaching of the highest religion, the mystery of ages and generations, the revealed fact of the gospel; and when we speak in the truest and highest strains, I do not say of what man is, but of what he was created to become, it may seem to the world that the good matter which we are inditing is a Messianic Psalm, though indeed we have regard only to our common humanity. How this humanity, even in its ruins, witnesses for God,—reason, conscience, aspiration, affection, marvellous even then,—how indestructible is the moral nature! how ineffaceable the moral image!

And thus far in the divine providence there have always been those to whom He has given most abundantly of the gifts which He denies altogether to none. He groups his children about one and another son of man. His revelations are through persons, his teachings through examples; and, to our great joy and edification, He places before us those whom we can revere and love. There are who tell us, that the age of great men is passed, and that we must reconcile ourselves henceforth to ages of mediocrity, as to a new divine order;

that, at all events, by lifting up, if not by dragging down, we shall all find one level,—it may be a very high one. Now, let us lift up men all we can; let us try to instruct and inspire them unto individual manhood; let us believe also, that, where princes fail us, there will be a certain mind and heart of the whole people, which, under the divine providence, shall devise and execute great things: and yet may God still grant us princes, heroes, giants,—crowning a portion of the sons of men with glory and honor! We do not want an earth without mountains,—a dead level with no peaks towering to heaven to welcome the morning splendor, to detain the lingering ray. The words, “*Let us now praise famous men,*” are written in the Apocrypha; but they are good scripture nevertheless. There must be some who are like cities set upon a hill. Loyalty needs to be guided, not eradicated. There is a grain of truth even in the Romish superstition of saint-worship. We want persons, not abstractions; examples, not precepts; truth incarnate, the body and the blood, the human word and work, all the way onward and upward, from the humblest of earth’s children, through sages, seers, prophets, apostles, to that Express Image of the Divine Person, who, to meet this necessity of our being, was found in fashion as a man, bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh. Need I say, in this connection, that the highest examples are instances of truth and love? and that, for this reason, the lowliest life may be more significant than the most exalted, the widow with her mite more than all the rich devotees of Jerusalem? Whenever a singular fidelity does get before the world, from some

hiding-place of love, it accomplishes a huge work ; but we must remember that in the providence of God this is not often the case, because, doubtless for some good end, He hides away his most splendid jewels, to bring them forth in the great day. Some of the grandest and sweetest moral qualities are of too private and domestic a character to be greatly useful as examples ; but, though the unknown good are hidden from us, God makes their graves as He made the grave of Moses, and their names are written upon the palms of his hands who knoweth all souls, and gathers about his throne alike the small and the great. Let the preacher use such examples of the humble, so far as he may be able, remembering Him who is no respecter of persons ; and let him not fail to testify out of his wide observation to the strength which is made perfect in weakness, and that some of the highest seats in heaven shall be filled by the lowliest of earth. Nevertheless, in order that a life may impress itself upon the world, it must be projected in grand proportions ; it must stand forth of itself ; and it must not be needful for us to set upon a pedestal of our own making, the figure towards which we would turn the eyes of men : indeed, their gaze must already have been arrested and occupied, or the words that we may speak will have no power to detain them. The illustration must demand its sermon ; not the sermon its illustration. And so even in the house of God, and on his day who is King of all the earth, not through might, not through wisdom, but simply through an omnipotent love, we must praise famous men, — those who have been crowned, in very high