

**TWENTY-FIVE
VILLAGE SERMONS**

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Twenty-five village sermons by Jun. Kingsley

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JUN. KINGSLEY

**TWENTY-FIVE
VILLAGE SERMONS**

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Theol.

TWENTY-FIVE

VILLAGE SERMONS.

BY

CHARLES KINGSLEY, JUN.,

RECTOR OF EVERSLEY, HANTS,

AND CANON OF MIDDLEHAM, YORKSHIRE.



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CONTENTS.

	Page
SERMON I.	
GOD'S WORLD. (PSALM civ. 24.)	1
SERMON II.	
RELIGION NOT GODLINESS. (PSALM civ. 13-15.)	12
SERMON III.	
LIFE AND DEATH. (PSALM civ. 24, 29-30.	22
SERMON IV.	
THE WORK OF GOD'S SPIRIT. (JAMES I. 16, 17.)	31
SERMON V.	
FAITH. (HABAKKUK II. 4.)	42
SERMON VI.	
THE SPIRIT AND THE FLESH. (GALATIANS v. 16.)	58
SERMON VII.	
RETRIBUTION. (NUMBERS xxxii. 23.)	64
SERMON VIII.	
SELF-DESTRUCTION. (1 KINGS xxii. 23.)	73
SERMON IX.	
HELL ON EARTH. (MATTHEW viii. 29.)	81
SERMON X.	
NOAH'S JUSTICE. (GENESIS vi. 9.)	92
SERMON XI.	
THE NOACHIC COVENANT. (GENESIS ix. 8, 9.)	101
SERMON XII.	
ABRAHAM'S FAITH. (HEBREWS xi. 9, 10.)	110

	Page
SERMON XIII.	
ABRAHAM'S OBEDIENCE. (HEBREWS xi. 17-19.)	122
SERMON XIV.	
OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN. (1 JOHN ii. 13.)	131
SERMON XV.	
THE TRANSFIGURATION. (MARK ix. 2.)	141
SERMON XVI.	
THE CRUCIFIXION. (ISAIAH liii. 7.)	153
SERMON XVII.	
THE RESURRECTION. (LUKE xxiv. 6.)	159
SERMON XVIII.	
IMPROVEMENT. (PSALM xcii. 12-14.)	169
SERMON XIX.	
MAN'S WORKING DAY. (JOHN xi. 9, 10.)	177
SERMON XX.	
ASSOCIATION. (GALATIANS vi. 2.)	186
SERMON XXI.	
HEAVEN ON EARTH. (1 COR. x. 31.)	194
SERMON XXII.	
NATIONAL PRIVILEGES. (LUKE x. 23, 24.)	202
SERMON XXIII.	
LENTEN THOUGHTS. (HAGGAI i. 5.)	211
SERMON XXIV.	
ON BOOKS. (JOHN i. 1.)	219
SERMON XXV.	
THE COURAGE OF THE SAVIOUR. (JOHN xi. 7, 8.)	228

VILLAGE SERMONS.

SERMON I.

GOD'S WORLD.

PSALM civ. 24.

O Lord, how manifold are Thy works! in wisdom hast Thou made them all: the earth is full of Thy riches.

WHEN we read such psalms as the one from which this verse is taken, we cannot help seeing, if we consider, a great difference between them and any hymns or religious poetry which are commonly written or read in these days. The hymns which are most liked now, and the psalms which people most willingly choose out of the Bible, are those which speak, or seem to speak, about God's dealings with people's own souls, while such psalms as this are overlooked. People do not care really about psalms of this kind when they find them in the Bible, and they do not expect or wish nowadays any one to write poetry like them. For these psalms of which I speak praise and honour God, not for what He has done to our souls, but for what He has done and is doing in the world around us. This very 104th psalm, for instance, speaks

entirely about things which we hardly care, or even think proper, to mention in church now. It speaks of this earth entirely, and the things on it; of the light, the clouds, and wind—of hills and valleys, and the springs on the hill-sides—of wild beasts and birds—of grass and corn, and wine and oil—of the sun and moon, night and day—the great sea, the ships, and the fishes, and all the wonderful and nameless creatures which people the waters—the very birds' nests in the high trees, and the rabbits burrowing among the rocks,—nothing on the earth but this psalm thinks it worth mentioning. And all this, which one would expect to find only in a book of natural history, is in the Bible, in one of the psalms, written to be sung in the temple at Jerusalem, before the throne of the living God and His glory which used to be seen in that temple,—inspired, as we all believe, by God's Spirit,—God's own word, in short: that is worth thinking of. Surely the man who wrote this must have thought very differently about this world, with its fields and woods, and beasts and birds, from what we think. Suppose, now, that we had been old Jews in the temple, standing before the holy house, and that we believed, as the Jews believed, that there was only one thin wall and one curtain of linen between us and the glory of the living God, that unspeakable brightness and majesty which no one could look at for fear of instant death, except the high-priest in fear and trembling once a-year—that inside that small Holy House, He, God Almighty, appeared visibly—God who made heaven and earth. Suppose we had been there in the temple, and known all this, should

we have liked to be singing about beasts and birds, with God Himself close to us? We should not have liked it—we should have been terrified, thinking perhaps about our own sinfulness, perhaps about that wonderful majesty which dwelt inside. We should have wished to say or sing something spiritual, as we call it; at all events, something very different from the 104th psalm about woods, and rivers, and dumb beasts. We do not like the thought of such a thing: it seems almost irreverent, almost impertinent to God to be talking of such things in His presence. Now does this show us that we think about this earth, and the things in it, in a very different way from those old Jews? They thought it a fit and proper thing to talk about corn and wine and oil, and cattle and fishes, in the presence of Almighty God, and we do not think it fit and proper. We read this psalm when it comes in the Church-service as a matter of course, mainly because we do not believe that God is here among us. We should not be so ready to read it if we thought that Almighty God was so near us.

That is a great difference between us and the old Jews. Whether it shows that we are better or not than they were in the main, I cannot tell; perhaps some of them had such thoughts too, and said, 'It is not respectful to God to talk about such commonplace earthly things in His presence;' perhaps some of them thought themselves spiritual and pure-minded for looking down on this psalm, and on David for writing it. Very likely, for men have had such thoughts in all ages, and will have them. But the man who wrote this psalm had no such thoughts. He