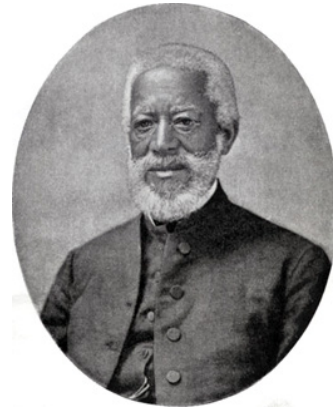


## Spiritual reading

with Alexander Crummell  
(1819-1898)

From three sermons  
in [The Greatness of Christ](#)

Feast Day September 10



*Pathways of Grace Background on this first sermon: For those who may not recall it, Nazareth was home. He was frequently called Jesus of Nazareth. He had lived there until he began his public ministry. Matthew 2:23 notes that Joseph settles his family there after returning from Egypt. For the Biblical story see Luke 4:14- 30.*

### From Unbelieving Nazareth

*And He could do no mighty work, save that He laid His hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them. And He marveled because of their unbelief (Mark 6:5,6)*

There was no faculty of spiritual receptivity in this people; but rather that malignant perversity which makes men, at times, turn their backs upon the very gates of Heaven. ...

Observe that our Lord notices the absence of the conditions which regulate the dispensation of His mercies and His gifts. Here that prime provision was utterly wanting. There was no faith among this people. ...

Abide in Him. It is sweet to abide in Him. It is profitable to abide in Him. To use His own words—"He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit." For then all your powers, all your parts and aptitudes, will be sanctified by His own personal influence operating on you; your life and laborers shall tend to the highest and noblest ends; for Jesus of Nazareth will do mighty works in you through faith, and fill you with the largest capacities for good to others, all your life. ...

If .... you walk by faith and not by sight; if your constant gaze is set upon the things which are not seen, but which are real and eternal; if holy men and women walk with Jesus, if they constantly commune with Him, if there are wont to open their mouth wide, and to expect great things of Him; then you may be assured that Jesus of Nazareth when He passes by this

Lent, will not close His gracious hand, nor shut up His merciful heart. There will be no marveling at your unbelief, no withholding his wonderful gifts; but great and wondrous things, yea “mighty works” shall be done among you ; in your hearts and in your households ; in your children, in your brothers and in your sisters; in Christless parents; and He will come among you, and He will lay His hands, not “upon a few sick folk”, as He did in unbelieving Nazareth, but upon many of you, and He will heal you.

## The Agencies to Saintly Sanctification

The first requirement of the Apostle was— *be* like God. The second one is, *do* as God does. It is laid down, too, as a means toward sanctification, and the relation of the one to the other is manifest. For as the multiplication of evil acts tends to the deepening of depravity in ungodly men, so does the repetition of good acts served to develop the principle of holiness in our own hearts. This is a matter of both experience and observation. People who are given to offices of kindness, such as visiting the poor, or attending on the sick, or nursing little children, or caring for prisoners, at length beget a passion for such duties. At the beginning of such works they may, perchance, have to spur and stimulate themselves to duty. But the multiplication of holy acts fixes the principle of holiness, until at length the gracious habit is formed, the love rises up with desire, and then almost imperceptibly, there is a gracious thirst in the heart for all the duties and offices of charity and kindness. ...

We have belittled ourselves by sin; we are constantly more or less dwarfing our being by transgression. But nevertheless, we are creatures of vast ability; we have natures of the noblest powers. No man here can tell the largeness and the grandeur to which his soul can stretch. No man here can estimate the lofty excellence to which his soul may be fitted. Men do this little thing, they commit that mean act, they go down to vileness, they degrade themselves to infamy. But all this is contrary to our true nature, opposed to the design and destiny for which God made the living spirit of man. “He made him little lower than the Angels”, and for what? “To crown him with glory and worship.” *That* is the end and object of man's existence: glory and worship; and the Holy Ghost is here, *in* the church to correct and rectify the fallen spirits of men, that they may rise up to their original design.

## Christ Receiving and Eating with Sinners

Now, if *justice* alone had been the master attribute of His character, the world would never have seen His wondrous person, nor witnessed His saving works; for the direct and legitimate tendency of simple justice is retribution and wrath. If *power* were His leading quality, it would never have discovered to our site His gracious assiduities. Indeed, neither

of these elements in the divine character, considered by itself, tends to that pitifulness which shows itself in our Lords reception of sinners.

Great and majestic as was the Lord of life, it was not these particularities which made Him the friend of sinners, the benefactor of the lost and wretched. No! that stream of blessedness and restoration burst forth from the everlasting fountain of love which flows from the heart of Jesus. Mercy and pitifulness are the source, the original spring-head from which proceed that graciousness and favor which attract men to the feet of Jesus, and held them there by the magnetic force and the irresistible attractiveness of His glorious person. Now love shows the brightest when bestowed upon the evil and undeserving. Mercy is essentially tenderness to the lost. It may not be bestowed upon angels, for the legitimate objects of mercy are beings who are fallen and degraded. Indeed, all the tender, generous qualities shine more brightly, vividly, and with more burning luster, in proportion to the degradation and unworthiness of the beings upon whom they are bestowed. Generosity to the worthy, kindness to the virtuous, love to the lovable, are always pleasing, and cannot fail to give us satisfaction; but when we see gentleness to the brutal, mercifulness to the violent and cruel, love bestowed upon the hateful and malignant, then it is that our wonder is excited, and we are transported to the profoundest admiration. ...

But how different when you sit down at a table and eat with a man! The act signifies equality. It recognizes the dignity of your fellow-man. It acknowledges his manhood. It indicates respect and fellow-feeling. When you eat salt with a man, when you break bread with him, you show thereby sociality and friendship. Seat a beggar at your table, and you make him your guest. Put your servant at it, and you raise him to be your equal. ...

That spirit of caste which then separated the nations kept men of different tribes apart, and alienated different peoples. But in the Church of God all these distinctions vanish. If men will be disciples of Christ, they must all come as equals in His church and to the same table. They must all eat of the same holy food, they must drink from the same chalice. Jesus can eat at his table with any man, no matter what tribe people he belongs to, what race he hails from, what blood courses his veins, what color tinges his brow. ...

And so you who come here today to be received by Jesus, and to eat with Him, do not fail to be as cordial to your fellow-sinners, your fellow communicants, as Christ Jesus is to you. "Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us, to the glory of God." And therefore I bid you all, coming here to this table, to put aside all animosities, all pride and self-importance, and be kind to one another, tender-hearted and forgiving. "And be at peace among yourselves," "endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit, in the bond of peace."