

Sacramental addresses

Rev Andrew Thomson

Before distributing the elements

Before presenting yourselves at a Communion Table, I trust, my friends, that you have studied to become acquainted with the nature and purposes of the Ordinance in which you are about to engage. Possessing the means of acquiring a sufficient knowledge of it and yet, through carelessness or unconcern, to remain in a state of ignorance, is an aggravated sin in the sight of God and must unfit you for approaching Him with acceptance. And, independently of the sinfulness which such conduct involves, there would be an obvious impropriety – a violation of all that is decent and rational – in observing an institution whose meaning you had been at no pains to comprehend, though it professes to be a solemn transaction with Him who is the searcher of hearts and the Judge of all.

I would, therefore, hope that you have been careful to inform your minds respecting the Sacrament of our Redeemer's Supper, the authority by which it is sanctioned, the event which it commemorates and the doctrine which it exhibits, the reasons for which it ought to be celebrated, the dispositions and conduct which it requires, the effects which it is calculated to produce, and the peculiar obligations which it imposes upon all who have partaken of it.

It is of much consequence, also, that in coming to the Lord's Table you act under the influence of suitable and worthy motives. If you come here merely to support a good reputation or to promote your worldly advantage, to comply with the custom of the country or with the wishes of your friends, to atone for past irregularities or to hide them from the eye of your fellow men: if these be the considerations by which you are actuated, I need not tell you that your service is vain, that it is hateful to God and must prove injurious to yourselves.

I trust, however, that your views are more rational, more spiritual, more holy. I trust that you come to the Lord's Table from respect to the authority of Christ, who has commanded you to do this in remembrance of Him: from ardent love to Him for the goodness and mercy which He has manifested in suffering and dying for your redemption, from a desire to keep up the remembrance of Him in your hearts and in the world, from a wish to make a public and solemn profession of your faith in the truth of His mission and in the doctrine of His cross, from a view to the experience of that comfort and that improvement which this ordinance is calculated to impart, from the conviction that it is an appointed token of your acceptance of the Gospel and of God's favour to you, and from the pleasure you expect to feel in holding communion with Christ your Saviour and with one another as believers in Christ and expectants of His salvation.

If these be your motives, communicants, for partaking of this Sacrament, if you have felt in any considerable degree their constraining power and are sincerely desirous to have them confirmed and enlivened and pressed more powerfully upon your minds, then I would congratulate you on an attainment which divine grace alone could confer upon you, and which is a good earnest of the advantages that flow from a service so lovely and divine.

I trust also that you have not presumed to engage in this Ordinance without suitable preparation. Have you carefully and impartially examined yourselves as to the state of your heart and character? Have you laboured to acquire those qualifications which are necessary to make your work of communion acceptable to God and profitable to yourselves? Has it been your prayer and your endeavour to have all the graces of the Spirit in lively exercise? And are you now ready to devote yourselves without reserve, in soul and in body, to the service and

the glory of the Redeemer? I trust, communicants, that this is your situation in the sight of Him who sees your inmost thoughts, whom it is impossible for you to deceive by any appearances of piety, who is jealous of the honour both of His character and His ordinances, and who will not be mocked with impunity. I trust that you have been paying more than ordinary attention to the subject and taking more than ordinary pains to understand its nature, and to feel the obligations which it implies. I trust that you have a lively faith in the divine mission of Him whom you propose to remember, and a cordial dependence upon the merits of His death which you are to show forth. I trust that you have repented sincerely of all your past offences and that you feel a decided hatred of sin as the cause of your Saviour's sufferings. I trust that your hearts are warm with supreme love to your God and Redeemer, with kind affection for one another and with disinterested benevolence to all mankind. I trust that you have formed the holy resolution of denying yourselves to every thing which is contrary to the precepts, or inconsistent with the spirit, of the religion you profess – of performing every duty which is required of you in your various circumstances and relations – of cultivating that purity of heart and that righteousness of deportment which become the followers of Christ and the expectants of heaven.

If, communicants, you are thus faithful, thus penitent, thus affectionate, thus holy in your purposes and your conduct: if you can lay your hand upon your heart and say with truth that you possess in any good measure these necessary qualifications – and if, with all these, you are yet humbled under a sense of your imperfections and are earnestly praying for mercy to pardon and for grace to sanctify and assist and guide you – then may we safely declare that for you this table is spread and this feast prepared and confidently promise that your service will be acceptable to the God of ordinances, and that it will prove a savour of life unto life to your souls.

Eat and drink, then, in remembrance of Christ, according to His dying commandment. And may the Lord Himself be with you, to bless you with the comforts of His presence, to accept your offering, to grant you according to your own heart, and fulfil all your petitions!

After distributing the elements

Having partaken of the Ordinance of Communion, let me now exhort you to act suitably to the profession you have made and the privilege you have enjoyed. Live by faith on the Son of God, who loved you and gave Himself for you, and whose atoning death you have solemnly commemorated, as the foundation of all your hope. Renounce sin, in all its various forms and degrees, as that whose odious nature and bitter fruits you have seen exhibited in the symbols of Christ's body which was broken and of His blood which was shed to deliver you from its guilt and power. Be careful to perform every duty to which you are called, as followers of Him who died that He might purify you unto Himself, a peculiar people, zealous of good works. And do not rest satisfied with a mere general or partial obedience, but recollecting that you have given yourselves away to God, study to be righteous before Him, walking in all His commandments and in all His ordinances, blameless. Remember that this is necessary, both for your own salvation and for the credit of your religion in the world – that unless you are thus faithful and circumspect and holy, you mar your spiritual comfort, unfit yourselves for entering into heaven, bring discredit on that worthy name by which you are called, and do material incalculable injury to the everlasting interests of your brethren. And to encourage and support you in the path of righteousness, reflect often on the engagements which you have contracted at a communion table, habitually anticipate that period when He who "was once offered to bear the sins of many" shall "appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Hebrews 9:28), and fervently pray for the aids of that divine Spirit who is promised to them that ask Him, and who will make you "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light" (Colossians 1:12).

“Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen” (Hebrews 13:20,21).